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Education for Refugee Children in Cairo and the Role of the Adoption of the Sudanese Curriculum

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the recent adoption of the Sudanese curriculum at ‘refugee schools’ in Cairo, Egypt. It is based on material collected through qualitative research methods during two field studies. The aim of this paper is to describe how and why the Sudanese curriculum was introduced in Egypt, to outline refugees’ opinions about the curriculum and its adoption, and to analyze the role it plays in view of the overall context of this urban environment. In the theoretical framework, this thesis presents concepts regarding the phenomenon of ‘waiting’. The paper gives an overview of the specifics that refugees are confronted with in urban settings, and highlights the importance of education. Moreover, the thesis presents background information about refugees living in Egypt and their access to rights, and points out the obstacles they face regarding public education. The results of this study show that the new curriculum is valued by students, teachers, and parents, as it offers the opportunity to acquire official school documents that are required to enter university. A number of aspects that refugees criticize about the Sudanese curriculum, such as its contents, are also brought up. This thesis concludes that the Sudanese curriculum plays a significant role for refugees in Egypt, as it gives students perspectives for the future and thus has a positive effect on their experience of waiting.

Key words: Education, refugees, Egypt, Cairo, discrimination, waiting, Sudanese curriculum

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Egypt has been hosting foreign residents all throughout history. Although forced migrants do not constitute the majority of Egypt's foreign population, the number of refugees who fled conflicts in the Middle East and across Africa and who are unable to return to their countries of origin, has been increasing in the last decades. Among them, a significant number does not have an official refugee status and lives on the margins of society (Grabska 13, 2006). As Egypt's capital, Cairo hosts a diverse refugee population which is faced with a difficult urban environment (Buscher and Heller 21). Egypt's official position towards refugees shows unwillingness regarding the facilitation of refugees' legal integration (O Ensor 25).

This position is also evident if we take a look at refugee children's access to education: Refugee children who do not possess a legal status, are prohibited from attending public schools. Other obstacles such as bureaucratic procedures and overcrowded schools constitute further barriers. Therefore, attending unaccredited learning centers presents the only realistic option for many children and youngsters (O Ensor 26). As my research in Cairo has shown, one of the most serious issues that these refugee schools faced in the past was their inability to provide their students with officially recognized certificates. Lacking valid qualifications, these students were thus unable to attend university education after graduating from upper secondary school. Recent developments regarding this issue have improved the situation: The Sudanese government has helped the Southern Sudan Teachers' Union in Cairo to adopt the Sudanese curriculum at Cairo's refugee learning centers. For the first time, children attending these centers can receive valid documents. As students' ages do not constitute an issue in attending classes, even older refugees can benefit from the Sudanese curriculum. However, the title of this thesis is limited to "refugee children" as this group is the focus of my study.

For this paper, I will use the term "refugee" to refer to all displaced persons, regardless of whether or not they possess an official refugee status. My field studies have shown, that many issues regarding educational opportunities and barriers for foreign residents, especially among the Sudanese community, do not significantly differ with regard to the individual's legal status.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the impact of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum in Cairo, considering the context of educational opportunities for refugee children and other aspects concerning Egypt's refugee communities. My research question hence deals with the role of the adoption of the curriculum and, accordingly, with the newly given possibility for many refugees to take an officially recognized school leaving examination, the so called Sudanese school certificate. Besides providing the reader with a general overview of the situation regarding education for refugee children in the urban context of Egypt's capital, this thesis aims at answering the following questions: How and why did it come to the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum at several learning centers for refugees in Cairo? What function does the Sudanese curriculum take considering the context of educational opportunities for refugee children? What does the change to the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum entail? How do students and students' parents perceive this change? What do teachers and other personnel working at schools think about this development? What does the possibility of taking the Sudanese school certificate mean for the future of the children? Does the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum also play a role with regard to other aspects?

1.3 Structure of the Paper

The paper is divided into eight major parts: After this introduction, chapter 2 will outline the thesis' underlying research methods. This section will cover relevant information about my field studies in Cairo, outline my choice of methods, cover a section about chosen principles of selection, present aspects regarding validity and reliability, and address ethical considerations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 3 constitutes the theoretical framework of this paper, where the phenomenon of waiting will be discussed. Chapter 4 forms the research background of the paper. It will provide the reader with general information about refugees in urban settings and outline aspects concerning the role of education for refugee children. Chapter 5 will take a look at the situation in Egypt. Here, previous research will be reviewed by summarizing major issues such as refugees' legal situation and their perspectives for the future. There will be a special focus on the access to education for refugee children. Some of the results of my research will be incorporated in this section. In chapter 6 of this thesis, the results of my empirical research will be presented. I have chosen to limit this chapter to results regarding the role of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum and to technical information about its adoption. As the results of my study are, however, not only limited to the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum, additional outcomes of interviews and observation will, as outlined above, be incorporated in other chapters. This is in conformity

with my research question and improves the readability of the paper. In chapter 7, the results shall be analyzed and discussed. This part will be divided into two sections. Firstly, I will analyze and discuss the results of my research question regarding the role of the Sudanese curriculum before, secondly, discussing the outcomes in view of the phenomenon of waiting. Finally, a conclusion will summarize this paper.

2 Methods

2.1 Introduction

In the following paragraphs I will explain where the information presented in this study was gathered and which methods I chose to employ. Moreover, I will give an overview of the empirical material and outline the principles of selection. Next, I will refer to aspects of reliability and validity, before finally outlining ethical considerations and the delimitations to this study.

The information gathered for this thesis mainly derives from a minor field study in Cairo in June, July, and August 2009, and an additional study visit in December 2009. Financed through a scholarship by SIDA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, I spent two months (June 12th until August 12th 2009) in Cairo, where I conducted interviews, performed observations and home visits, gathered literature, and took field notes. These weeks allowed me to understand my research topic from a broader perspective, because I had access to the American University's library which has large collection of literature on refugees in the MENA region, and because I met many actors who are – in some way or another – part of the refugee community in Cairo. In order to collect more information that would help me in answering questions about the role of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum, an issue which is not dealt with in previous literature, I travelled to Cairo once more in December 2009 to round up my empirical research material.

2.2 Choice of Methods

This thesis is based on qualitative research methods. While chapters four and five are for the most part based on selected previous research about refugees in urban settings and the role of education for refugee children, both from a general perspective and more specifically about the Egyptian context, the chapters presenting the results and the analysis of this paper are built on my own field studies in Cairo.

More information on which literature was used in chapters four and five, can be found in the introductions of the respective chapters. Regarding the empirical part of this thesis, I chose to employ interviews as the key method to gather information during my field studies. Using interviews suited the aim of this thesis, as it allowed me to learn about people's opinions on the recent development within the field of education for refugee children in Cairo. It matched my research question about the role of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum, because through talking to people I got an insight into their thoughts about what the adoption of the curriculum means for the present and future of refugees living in Cairo.

Tim May's statement mirrors this consideration: He points out, that interviews "[. . .] yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings" (May 120). The majority of interviews that I conducted are semi-structured. Outlines of the questions that my respondents were asked can be found in appendix #2. Due to the explorative nature of my first field study, the interviews during this visit were rather informal interviews, conducted without a specific framework of questions. In contrast to interview questions asked during my second visit which followed a clear pattern, questions asked within the context of my first field study are, therefore, not outlined in appendix #2. In addition to interviews, I also made use of a number of observations which I was able to work with by taking field notes and keeping a field diary. More information about the composition of the empirical material that this study is based on can be found in the following section.

2.3 Empirical Material and Principles of Selection

In addition to conducting interviews, I also performed several participant observations, made home visits, and took field notes. While my first field study had a broader focus and aimed at getting an overview of the refugee situation in Cairo, the purpose of my second visit was to get more in-depth information on the role of the Sudanese curriculum and school certificate. Therefore, all interviews conducted during my second stay (December 2009), but only the relevant interviews and additional material of my first stay (summer 2009) are being used as empirical basis of this thesis.

The empirical material used for this thesis consists of a total of 27 files: 20 of them are based on interviews which have either been transcribed or summarized as interview reports, five files are taken from field notes and include a drawing of a child, and two are observation reports. In response to the two field studies, the empirical material is divided into two parts: *Part A* covers interviews, observations, and field notes from the first visit that were selected and analyzed for this thesis (18 files), and *Part B* covers all interviews from the second stay in Cairo (9 files). The following paragraphs will further outline the two parts.

With regards to the first part of the empirical research (Part A, see Appendix #1) the data that is being used in this thesis consists of the following material:

Firstly, there are eleven interview reports- or transcriptions:

- one of them based on a meeting with the director of a learning center for refugee children of a church (A 6)
- one of them based on an informal conversation with an Egyptian woman (A 4)
- one of them based on a conversation with a Sudanese man when visiting his home in the district Medinet Nasr (A 8)

- two of them based on focus groups interviews with mainly Sudanese refugees living in El Maadi (A 9 and A 11)
- one of them based on an informal interview with a Sudanese primary school teacher who teaches at a learning center for refugees in El Maadi (A 10)
- one of them based on an interview with the administrator of a high school for refugee children in El Maadi (A 16)
- one of them based on an interview with a human rights advocate working in Cairo (A 14)
- one of them based on a meeting with a woman who leads a project for Sudanese youngsters that aims at eliminating the violent gang activities among refugee youth (A 15)
- one of them based on an informal interview with the spokesperson of the Southern Sudan Teachers' Union (A 17)
- and one of them based on conversations with two Southern Sudanese men (A 18).

Secondly, there are five field notes:

- one of them based on an informal conversation with the director of a learning center for refugee children (A 1)
- one of them based on an observation of a church's children's ministry (A 2)
- and three of them based on observations and conversations during art classes of a school's summer program (A 5, A 12, and A 13).

Thirdly, there are two observation reports:

- one of them based on a visit of a preschool in Cairo's suburb Arba wa Nuss (A 3)
- and one of them based on a visit of four homes of refugees in Medinet Nasr (A 7).

Most of the material of Part A (12 out of 18 files) was collected in the district El Maadi.

During the second part of the research (Part B, see Appendix #1) I have asked a number of individuals specifically about the role of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum. In order to obtain general information about the introduction of the curriculum and the possibility to take the Sudanese school certificate at Cairo's refugee learning center, it was important to get first hand information, since no previous research that I know of has been done. Hence, I chose to interview the chairman and some other members of the executive committee of the Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union (SSTU), since it was the initiative of this union to have the curriculum from Sudan adopted in Egypt. While the contents of this interview provided me

with important technical background information, I conducted other interviews in order to find out people's opinions about this recent development. My aim was to get opinions from a number of different perspectives, which of course influenced my principles of selection.

The material of my second visit to Cairo hence comprises the following interviews:

- an interview with the Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union's chairman and some other members of the executive committee of the SSTU (B 8)
- two focus groups interviews with groups of students, who are about to take the Sudanese school certificate (B 1 and B 2)
- an interview with the headmaster of the interviewed students (B 3)
- two interviews with teachers who teach the Sudanese curriculum (B 5 and B 6)
- three interviews with parents of students who are attending a school which employs the above-named curriculum (B 4, B 7, and B 9)

The geographical focus of these interviews was on the city district El Maadi; all interviewees, with the exception of the representatives of the SSTU whose office is located in another part of the city, live in this district. I found my interviewees at two learning centers that I knew from my previous visit. Due to ethical considerations, I decided not to interview young children, but those in the highest grade ("senior year three"), who are also the closest in terms of taking the Sudanese school certificate and hence may more easily see a direct impact of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum compared to students in other grades. The two focus group interviews took place at the "Found African Children Learning Center". There, I introduced myself to two classes, and three students from each class agreed to be interviewed. With regard to teachers and parents, I decided to conduct the interviews at the primary school section of the "African Hope Children Learning Centre", where the Sudanese curriculum is employed in all eight grades of primary school. It was easy to find two teachers who are interested in being interviewed, but with regard to the parents I was dependent on the headmaster's help. She explained that it is difficult to have parents come and talk to me, which is why she suggested to interview parents who are also employed at the school. I was therefore not able to choose a random sample. This, I believe, can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. The disadvantages are going to be mentioned in the section about reliability and validity. As for advantages, one could say that since those parents are closer connected to the school environment than other parents, they have a better understanding of the impact of the Sudanese curriculum.

As the two documents covering the empirical material (Part A and part B) comprise over 100 pages, I have chosen not to attach the files to the appendices of this thesis. However,

a summary of each file is to be found in appendix #1. These summaries aim at giving the reader a general understanding of the context and the contents of the respective interview or other research situation.

In the interest of improving readability, I have made modifications of direct quotations wherever it was necessary. I have, however, paid attention not to change the meaning of the respective statement.

2.4 Reliability and Validity

While reliability refers to accurate measurement, validity is concerned with the question of whether or not the employed methods and procedures correspond to the aim and research questions of the respective study (May 92). In order to ensure the reliability and validity of this study, I paid attention to a number of aspects: Firstly, I made sure to get an understanding of the research context, secondly, I considered aspects regarding trust and ensured anonymity, thirdly, I tried to limit misunderstandings with regard to the use of different languages, and finally, I documented the empirical research carefully.

During the academic year 2007/2008 I worked as a teacher at an international school in Cairo, and became interested in issues of education in the Egyptian context. However, prior to this study, learning centers for refugees, as well as other institutions and actors in this framework, were new to me. Therefore, it was crucial to get an idea of Cairo's refugee situation before going deeper into my actual research question. Through a scholarship financed by SIDA, I was able to spend two months in Cairo, where I visited several educational institutions for refugees and participated as a volunteer teacher at one of the schools. I got an insight into how these learning centers work and I met many people of different ages and backgrounds, who told me about their lives in Egypt. These experiences made me aware of the issue of valid schools certifications, so I decided to narrow my research down question to the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum, which was the focus of the latter part of my first stay in Cairo, as well as of my second visit. Through having a more general perspective at the beginning of my minor field study, I got an understanding of the research context. I got an overview of different issues such as the hope for resettlement, the work situation of parents, experiences of discrimination, and the role of religion as a coping strategy, before limiting my research question to recent developments in the access to education for refugee children.

In order to gain the respondents' trust, which was important to facilitate the validity of their answers, I considered certain points. Firstly, I always introduced myself clearly and

informed prospective interviewees about the purpose of my research. Especially the facts that it was only a minor field study and that I was not working for any governmental body or specific organization were important pieces of information that made people less suspicious. Often, I was introduced to prospective interviewees by informants of the refugee community, which resulted in greater confidence towards me and my study. Often, it was also simply my interest in their opinions and the fact that I was able to speak Arabic that enabled a feeling of trust towards my questions. There is another point that concerns the aspect of gaining trust: Since my research topic is sensitive, and the legal status of some of the people I talked to can bring about problems, I paid attention to their privacy. Informing the interviewees that they would stay anonymous except if they wished other than that, enhanced the accuracy of their comments. Moreover, I recorded interviews only if the respondents agreed, and often refrained from recording whenever I expected that questions about the possibility to record the conversation may cause feelings of discomfort among the respondents. I also informed each respondent about the possibility of refraining from answering certain questions.

When conducting interviews, either English or Arabic, or a combination of the two languages was used. During interviews that were conducted in English, I made sure that somebody was present who would help me with clarifying comments that I did not fully understand. Only if the respondent's level of English was good enough to be understood without problems, we decided to use English.

The empirical research was documented thoroughly. The majority of interviews was recorded with a digital voice recorder; some were documented through field notes. Later, the interviews were either transcribed according to clear transcription guidelines, or summarized in a report. I also kept a field diary during my time in Cairo, which allowed me to reconstruct experiences and conversations during a later stage of this work.

However, there is also a need to state the limitations of this study. These limitations include aspects related to: firstly, the scope of the research, which will be outlined in the section "delimitations", secondly, the selection of interviewees, thirdly, language issues, and finally, security concerns among the respondents. The selection of interviewees might have been done in a more structured and neutral matter. Using the help of informants in order to get in touch with prospective interviewees can have advantages, but certainly also poses questions regarding the validity of the research. Moreover, interviewing only refugees and people working with refugees may not be sufficient to present a valid picture of certain issues that are brought up in this thesis; interviewing other actors such as governmental bodies and individuals of the host community (which I have not done with the exception of one

conversation with an Egyptian woman, presented only as additional material in appendix #6), would indeed improve this study. Using English and Arabic as means of communication may have caused misunderstandings in certain interviews, since the two languages are neither my, nor the majority of my respondents' first languages. Moreover, due to security concerns, some respondents might have decided to keep certain information and opinions to themselves. Hence, although I tried to consider the principles of reliability and validity as much as possible, I recognize that this study contains a number of limitations.

2.5 Ethical Aspects

During the empirical research that this thesis builds on, I tried not to violate ethical values. Apart from ensuring respondents' anonymity, there are some other aspects that need to be mentioned. My initial idea was to conduct a study about children's understanding of receiving school education at refugee learning centers, and their general experiences of living in Cairo. I participated as a volunteer teacher in a primary school's summer program and planned to collect research material through participant observations and posing research questions during the program's art classes. Soon, however, I realized that this kind of research goes against my personal ethical values. Two aspects kept me from sticking to my initial plan: Firstly, I realized that many issues that refugees in Egypt including children are confronted with, are too sensitive to discuss with children. Secondly, I learned that the aim of my initial plan did not go along with the aim of the school's summer program which was to provide the children with enjoyable activities, fun being the determining factor of all activities. These aspects are outlined further in appendix # 3. Another aspect regarding the ethics of this study is the fact that many of the people I talked to have had traumatic experiences both before they left their country of origin and since they have arrived in Egypt. I avoided asking questions about their lives in Sudan or elsewhere and did not request information about their reasons of applying for asylum in Egypt. This aspect will be further explained in the following section.

2.6 Delimitations

This thesis is based on two rather short field studies and hence is not aimed at being a comprehensive research paper. The fact that I avoided asking too sensitive questions is one delimitation. Although it might have been valuable to get an insight into people's motives behind coming to Egypt, this study focuses on the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum and therefore is limited to people's thoughts about the life in Cairo and their thoughts about the future. Another limitation of this study is the strong focus on Sudanese refugees. Egypt also hosts a considerable number of refugees from other countries such as Iraq and Somalia. Due

to the fact that the learning centers for refugees, where the great majority of both students and staff are Sudanese, were the starting point of my research, other refugee communities are more or less excluded from this study. Although the findings probably also reflect views of other refugee communities, especially those from other countries on the African continent, some refugee children such as those from Palestine and Iraq are, at this point, not confronted with the exact same issues as Sudanese refugee children. Also, the results of this study only show a trend of views about the recent adoption of the new curriculum. In order to be more representative, further research material would have to be collected and analyzed.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

As theoretical framework for this study I have chosen to take a look at the phenomenon of waiting. With regard to my research questions and in light of refugees' experiences of life in Egypt, I found this discussion suitable for the thesis. As my fieldworks and previous literature have shown, refugees in Egypt are waiting. They are waiting for the possibility to resettle, waiting to be able to return to their country of origin, and in a more general understanding waiting to pursue a normal life. They are also waiting to complete their education, and until recently, their waiting for the possibility to acquire valid documents of their educational achievements seemed to be in vain.

In this chapter I will outline thoughts about waiting by presenting the Norwegian sociologist Jan-Paul Brekke's publication "While we are waiting. Uncertainty and empowerment among asylum-seekers in Sweden". His study tries to give a starting point for the understanding of waiting in the particular condition of being outside of one's country of origin. The chapter is not aimed at being a comprehensive theoretical discussion about *waiting*. Instead, a limited number of ideas on this matter will be brought up. In the analysis of this thesis, some of these aspects will be discussed with reference to the results of my study.

3.2 The Phenomenon of Waiting

In this section I will take a look at Jan-Paul Brekke's report "While we are waiting. Uncertainty and empowerment among asylum-seekers in Sweden." The underlying research questions for his study are concerned with how asylum-seekers experience waiting for a decision for their asylum application and what consequences the time of waiting has, regarding integration or repatriation. The starting point of his research is the ambivalence that characterizes policies: As the decision often takes time, reception policies should simultaneously prepare the individual for two possible outcomes: integration, and return (7-8). In this regard, Brekke points out the importance of understanding "the psychology and sociology of waiting" (8). Brekke portrays different concepts of waiting by referring to previous literature. A number of theories can be derived from Brekke's chapter about research on asylum and waiting. He for example mentions Blüchers, who in one of her studies concludes that the strain of waiting may increase with time (qtd. in Brekke 16). Brekke also refers to Antonovsky, a sociologist who has developed the concept of the *sense of coherence*

(SOC), which Brekke considers as relevant if the situation of asylum-seekers is being discussed. Antonovsky found that the three components *comprehensibility*, *manageability*, and *meaningfulness* are decisive for how well the individual handles stressful situations. *Comprehensibility* is concerned with how the individual understands his/her surroundings. Is life in the respective environment chaotic and unpredictable, or is it somewhat structured, so that one is able to understand how things work? Antonovsky explains that individuals who have an understanding of the way things function in their surroundings are not faced with issues of unpredictability. Instead, their knowledge and experience about their surroundings provide them with tools of knowing what to expect. *Manageability* is concerned with the extent to which an individual feels he/she can handle upcoming challenges. Does one have the resources including the social capital to face difficulties and to solve them? If this is the case, that is to say if tough situations are manageable, the individual is not likely to feel victimized or treated in an unfair way. *Meaningfulness* refers to whether or not the individual sees a meaning in what he/she does. Is everything one does, all the challenges that one tries to overcome, useless or do they have a meaning? If people feel that their situation and their environment make sense, and they feel that challenges which they meet are worthy to put energy into in order to surmount them, then meaningfulness is given (Antonovsky qtd. in Brekke 19). Brekke's study shows a low sense of coherence (SOC) among asylum-seekers (55).

Moving from psychology to sociology, Brekke points out the importance of control for the SOC concept, and says that if focusing on the lack of control one could notice an opposite concept, as control could be seen as power. While the *sense of coherence* indicates the individual's control over his/her situation, the lack of control indicates his/her powerlessness. In view of this, Brekke refers to the concept of empowerment (Brekke 20). More on these aspects will be further outlined below.

Brekke brings up another related idea, the *powerlessness of freedom*. Bringedal and Osland, quoted in Brekke explain that this powerlessness of freedom can be seen, when one is expected to use one's time with meaningful activities, despite the lack of needed means and preconditions. The only possibility for the individual in such a situation is to waste the surplus time that he/she is unable to spend in a meaningful way. This phenomenon may also be related to feelings of boredom (qtd. in Brekke 20).

According to Brekke, there are three elements that are crucial to the phenomenon of waiting. The elements are time, integration, and return, which stay in a complicated relationship to each other (18-22). He aims at giving an understanding of the sociology of

waiting by explaining the interrelation between these three elements. Let us first have a quick look at each element individually.

With regard to time, Brekke talks about the role of uncertainty, about random timing which is connected to the lack of control and to the concept of *relative waiting*, and about subjective experience of time (21-26). How important is certainty about the waiting period's length? Brekke says that this kind of uncertainty is an additional factor that adds to uncertainty of the outcome of the asylum application, “[I]iving with an unclear time horizon had serious consequences for the individual [...]”, he points out (22). As Brekke explains, it would be ideal if authorities could give asylum-seekers a clear time-frame of handling the case which is being followed. In reality this is, however, not possible. Brekke implies, nevertheless, that although waiting in uncertainty as such is difficult, waiting in expectation of getting the decision on a specific date (something that asylum-seekers often experience) which is then repeatedly being delayed, may be even more difficult for the individual. Another aspect that might be of importance for the experience of waiting is how comprehensible or how random individuals see the length of their waiting time. The idea is connected to the feeling of control of the situation, or the lack thereof. It is also connected to feelings of just or unfair treatment. If people who arrived later having similar cases get their results earlier, one might ask how it is possible to “jump the queue”. A lack of transparency of the asylum process may increase the feeling of randomness. The concept of *relative waiting* is also of importance, as Brekke states: The individual's experience of waiting may be dependent on other people in the same situation. Brekke points out, that time has a subjective factor as well. He explains that “[F]rom this perspective the focus is not the chronological sequential time, but rather how the individuals experience and relate to their own past, present, and future.” (25). He also says that individuals may look “for relief from their uncertain situation from sources outside this world”, in the case of one of his respondents from the belief in God (25).

Thoughts about “return” are also a decisive factor in Brekke's understanding of waiting. In his study he found that these thoughts are very present among asylum-seekers but there is at the same time a sense of suppression about this matter. “Maybe there is a *hope for the best* attitude among the native people the asylum-seekers come into contact with. “, he states. That a negative outcome of the asylum application is possible is being avoided.

Integration constitutes the third component of Brekke's triangle of waiting (see figure 1). He explains that there is no consensus of what the concept of integration means exactly (and it is not the aim of this paper to discuss the concept of integration), but he points out that

integration is crucial for the management of the waiting time during the period of asylum. One difficulty that is concerned with the concept is its double implication of being both a process and an outcome. Integration may be different for an individual who is still waiting for a decision, compared to someone who is already a recognized refugee. This raises the following question: In the period of waiting for asylum, is there an increase or a decrease in the level of integration? (Brekke 31).

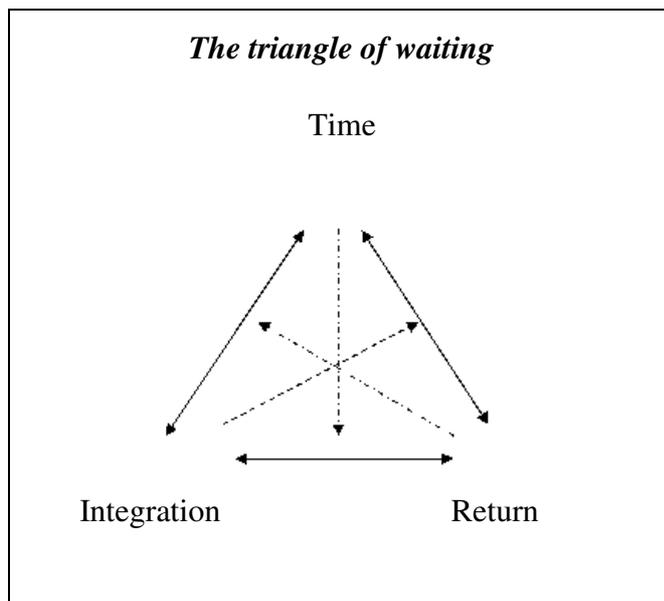


Fig. 1 (Brekke 54)

In order to analyze the effect that waiting has on integration and return, Brekke makes use of the so called *triangle of waiting* (see figure 1). Two factors can be seen in relation to each other or under influence of the respective third element. Having a look at how return and integration influence each other, Brekke refers to his study and states that he could notice that the uncertainty about the outcome of the asylum process and the

feeling of 'temporality' due to being aware of a possible negative decision (which would lead to return), impeded asylum-seekers to "concentrate and direct their energy" (53). Integration also influenced the thoughts of return: Brekke noticed that with increased integration, participants showed "less openness for accepting a negative decision in their case." (54). Time, in this triangle is meant to point out that the waiting period has influence on the asylum-seekers' experience. Increased time, Brekke found, seems to have a negative influence on asylum-seekers ability to make use of their energy (54). He also states that time may decrease the individual's motivation to return, although he/she might be more capable of doing so compared to shortly after arrival (54).

3.3 Applicability for this Study

The contexts in which Brekke discusses the phenomenon of waiting differ from the contexts in which refugees in Egypt find themselves in. Considering this, in what way are the concepts and ideas outlined above relevant for this study? As will become clearer at a later point of this paper, education has the potential to give meaning to people's lives, especially if it – through for instance the validity of documents – gives the individual perspectives for the future. Hence, the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum is very much concerned with aspects

discussed above such as ideas about power, and the *sense of coherence*, especially as regards the concept's elements *meaningfulness* and *manageability*. In the analysis of this paper, some of these aspects are going to be discussed.

4 Research Background

4.1 Introduction

The following sections are meant to, firstly, provide the reader with background information on refugees in urban settings, which is a rather under-researched field of study, and secondly, to outline the role that education plays for refugee children including specific features it can show in the urban context.

The first section is primarily based on the recent issue of the Forced Migration Review (FMR)¹ published by the Refugee Studies Centre of the Oxford Department of International Development (Oxford University) titled “Adapting to urban displacement”, which brings up a number of issues faced by urban IDPs and refugees. With regard to the authors that I refer to, it is to say that Guterres and Tibaijuka have positions within the United Nations, while O Ensor is an assistant professor of anthropology at the American University in Cairo and a legal adviser at AMERA². The authors Montemurro and Pavanello, who wrote an article concerned with implications for humanitarian action for issues of displacement in the urban context work as Research Officer at the Humanitarian Policy Group³, respectively as Country Analyst for West Africa at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre⁴. In addition to this FMR publication, Katarzyna Grabska's publication on Sudanese Refugees in Egypt⁵ is cited. Holding a Master's degree in International Relations, this author has been working as researcher both at the American University in Cairo, and at the University of Sussex (DRC on Migration, Development and Poverty (<http://www.migrationdrc.org/about/people/Researchers.html#Katarzyna>)).

The second section, which is concerned with the role of education for refugee children, is based on two UN publications⁶, a field report from Cairo by Esther Dingemans about South Sudanese refugees' educational needs and priorities, a publication by the Refugee

¹ Forced Migration Review, Issue 34, February 2010, www.fmreview.org (2010-03-03)

² African and Middle East Refugee Assistance, www.amera-uk.org/egypt/ (2010-03-03)

³ Humanitarian Policy Group, www.odli.org/uk/programmes/humanitarian-policy-group/

⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, www.internal-displacement.org (2010-03-03)

⁵ Grabska, Katarzyna. *Living on the Margins. The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt*. Working Paper No.6, Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2005.

⁶ UNHCR. *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care*. Geneva: UNHCR, 1994.

UNHCR. *UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*. Geneva: UNHCR, 2009.

Law Project in Uganda⁷ written by Dryden-Peterson, who has conducted extensive research on education for refugees (http://www.gse.harvard.edu/faculty_research/profiles/cv/sarah_dryden_peterson.pdf), the literature mentioned in the previous paragraph, as well as some additional sources.

4.2 Refugees in Urban Settings

Today, over fifty percent of the world's population lives in urban contexts, and urbanization is expected to grow further. This development can also be seen with regard to refugees. According to the UNHCR, almost half of the world's refugees live in urban settings (UNCHR 2, 2009). Grabska points out that the majority of studies about refugees living in urban contexts have a focus on developed countries. Studies which are concerned with refugees in developing countries typically center on refugees in camp settings. Grabska states that these studies fail to recognize the significant number of refugees in developing countries' urban centers (Grabska 7, 2005). According to this author, cities and towns in developing countries have become the main hosts to refugees, with a particularly high number in urban centers across Africa (Grabska 7, 2005).

In comparison to camp-settings, the growing number of refugees in cities creates several challenges specific for urban settings. One of these challenges is the expectation that urban refugees should become self-sufficient rather quickly. The possibilities to attain self-reliance are, however, often limited: Through legislations that prohibit work, the lack of social support, and barriers to education, refugees often find themselves confronted with obstacles that impede self-reliance (O Ensor 25). Refugees living in cities often do not receive the same protection as those living in camps as they are typically beyond the reach of formal systems of assistance. Moreover, there is the issue that Montemurro and Pavanello call the 'invisibility' of refugees: Among the greater context of the urban poor it may be difficult to reach out to them as available data on refugees living scattered across cities is often limited, in comparison to refugees in camp settings (57). While refugees living in non-camp settings used to be mainly young men, the proportion of women, children, and older refugees is nowadays increasing. Often these groups are faced with protection risks such as discrimination and harassment, poor living conditions in overcrowded areas, exploitation, and the fear of being arrested and deported (UNHCR 2, 2009). Tibaijuka points out that "[u]rban displacement has emerged as a new dimension to the challenges we face in meeting the humanitarian needs of IDPs and refugees" (4). She states that the migration of people to non-camp settings increases social tensions in cities, as there is a competition for livelihoods and resources among the

⁷ Refugee Law Project, www.refugeelawproject.org (2010-03-03)

urban poor of the host population and the urban displaced (Tibaijuka 4). Urban displacement is hence of growing concern for both development organizations, and the respective governments and local city authorities.

When discussing the protection of urban displaced refugees, it is crucial not to overlook the broader context of the urban poor population (Guterres 8). António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, points out, that efforts will only have the desired outcome, if UNHCR's persons of concern are not isolated from the respective local community. He states that "We will only succeed if we adopt a comprehensive approach taking into account the rights of both the displaced and their hosts." (8). In view of the durable solution of local integration, it needs to be mentioned that the majority of African governments see refugees as temporary residents, as they do not promote local integration policies (Grabska 72, 2005). In this regard, Grabska points out that it is necessary to acknowledge "the relations and dynamics between the host and guest populations." (8, 2005). She states that "[o]nly by considering the local conditions of the asylum country can policies towards urban refugees and the dilemmas of local integration in developing urban centers be adequately addressed." (Grabska 8, 2005). Hence, whenever conducting a study on refugees in urban settings, the sociopolitical context of the host country needs to be taken into consideration.

4.3 Refugee Children and Role of Education

Refugee children usually make up half of any refugee population. In comparison to other children, they are more often exposed to harm (Sadako www.unhcr.org/3b84c6c67.html). Many refugee children have experienced war, flight, and life outside a familiar environment and may be faced with a lack of security, boredom, changing family roles, and deprivation. Thus their physical and mental well-being may be at risk (Dingemans 8). For children whose lives are characterized by disruption, education plays an important role. Dingemans points out that education has the potential to bring back a sense of normality to these children's lives and can simultaneously put a stop to feelings of boredom and restlessness (5). As Talbot highlights, "[h]ealthy, cognitive and emotional development of children and adolescents is promoted by a secure environment and opportunities for learning." (Talbot, 2001). Due to education's significance for the development of children, education is a recognized human right. Signatories to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child are thus obliged to provide educational opportunities for refugee children residing in the respective state (UNHCR www.unhcr.org/3b84c6c67.html, 1994). Pigozzi points out that education plays a very specific role for the protection of a child, as it is an 'enabling right', helping minors in accessing other rights (Pigozzi qtd. in Nicolai and Triplehorn 9).

Apart from the fact that education is a basic human right and is of great significance for children's well-being, adequate educational opportunities have the potential to improve urban refugees' capacity to establish a sustainable living (O Ensor 26). In its recent document on refugees in urban settings⁸, the UNHCR points out the significance of education for promoting self-reliance among refugees (UNHCR 16 – 18, 2009). In order to become self-sufficient members of their host societies, access to educational opportunities for refugees should thus be secured (O Ensor 25). The number of refugee children receiving school education in some urban contexts is, however, alarmingly low (Dingemans 8).

O Ensor states that the barriers to education that refugees in urban setting are faced with include "difficulties in regularising their status and obtaining necessary documentation, communication challenges, and lack of awareness of available educational opportunities" (25). O Ensor also points out that not only refugees may face problems regarding education, but that many obstacles are experienced in a similar way by other vulnerable groups in the urban context: Different groups of the 'urban poor' encounter difficulties in accessing education because of school fees and other costs. Due to limited places in public schools refugee children often have to compete with children of the host society for getting the chance to attend formal schooling. Other obstacles are faced especially by the refugee communities: Laws may, for example, prohibit refugee children from attending public schools. Especially refugees without an official refugee status often lack the chance to access public services including education. Discrimination is another obstacle that refugees are commonly faced with, may it be by the staff or by the local students of the respective institution (O Ensor 25).

Due to problems with accessing public education, specific learning centers for refugee children may constitute the only viable option for refugee children to go to school. Often, these 'refugee schools' are run by faith-based organizations. Although these schools have the potential to establish a sense of normality in refugee children's lives, they typically face a number of problems. Some of the difficulties they face are concerned with financial stability. Many learning centers for refugees are dependent on volunteer teachers, as they cannot afford paying salaries. Limited teaching resources and inconsistent curricula constitute other common issues. Refugee schools' most problematic characteristic, as O Ensor points out, is the fact that these schools are not officially recognized. Without official approval, refugee schools are unable to provide students with a documentation of their studies. Consequently, students are – even if they complete upper secondary education – often prevented from joining university (O Ensor 26).

⁸ UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas, September 2009

As education is seen as a way to become self-reliant, it is typically considered as a highly desired goal for refugees. In fact, as Lubbers points out, refugees often show “a tremendous determination to make the best out of a bad situation and to prepare for the day when they can resume a normal way of life” (Lubbers, 2001). Due to certain issues, such as structural conditions including legal restrictions, and cultural factors, the hope of education as a pathway for a better future can, however, fade away among refugee populations. To make education more accessible for refugees and to utilize education as a means to improve people’s chances in becoming self-reliant, O Ensor recommends a number of steps that address the mentioned limitations. She states, for instance, that there is a need to support faith-based or other schools that accept refugee children, and to make certain that such schools do not lack accreditation. She also suggests that it should be avoided to impose local curricula if they are seen as “undermining the cultural values and practices of the displaced population, especially if local integration is not a desired goal” (26). In its guidelines on the protection of refugee children, the UNHCR gives an account of a comparable view regarding the consideration of cultural values: It is to be ensured that “the education provided is relevant to the particular needs and situation of refugee children. It should enhance personal and cultural identity and promote psychosocial stability and development of the children, their families and communities.” (www.unhcr.org/3b84c6c67.html, 1994).

Deikun and Zetter explain that it is challenging for international actors to help finding durable solutions for those living in urban areas. They state that refugees and internally displaced persons “especially in situations of protracted displacement, may be unable or unwilling to return” and hence prefer staying in the contexts of the host society (7). However, a discussion about the durable solutions of local integration, resettlement, and repatriation is out of the scope of this paper. Instead, it can be summarized that no matter what the appropriate durable solution might be in the respective context, education is always of great significance for refugee children. Dryden-Peterson supports this view: “Indeed, for any durable solutions to be successful, education must be seen as a priority.” (3).

As this section tried to point out, education has the potential to promote refugee children’s wellbeing, to improve prospects of attaining financial independency, and moreover constitutes a right that all children should be entitled to. Hence, refugees who are excluded from acquiring education, are more likely to enter a state of reduced well-being, face disadvantages in defending their rights, and may lose hope in a more prosperous future (Lubbers, 2001). Therefore, ensuring access to adequate educational opportunities should be recognized as a major consideration in any refugee context.

5 Refugees in Egypt

5.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs shall give an overview of the local context in which refugees in Egypt live, and outline the educational opportunities for refugee children. The first section is primarily based on two publications, namely Grabska's "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt" from 2006⁹ and a more recent report, a study by the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo published in 2009¹⁰. The second section is based on several studies and articles about educational opportunities for refugees in Egypt. Among them are a field report written by Wesal Afifi¹¹, an AUC publication about separated refugee children in Cairo¹², a Master's thesis by Jane Kani Edward about female Southern Sudanese¹³, and an article from the Cairo Times by Nancy Peterson¹⁴, a child-psychologist. A number of examples from the research I carried out will also be incorporated into both sections.

5.2 General Information

5.2.1 Background

Egypt is considered as one of the few stable countries in the MENA¹⁵ region. With Cairo as capital that has always enjoyed the status of a cosmopolitan city, immigration to Egypt is nothing new. Although relatively few of the total number of Egypt's foreign residents are refugees, liberation movements and civil wars in neighboring countries, such as Sudan and other relatively close regions such as Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia have caused many people to seek refuge in Egypt. Moreover, a large resettlement program run by the UNHCR that helped many people to resettle to the "West", has been another reason for many to come to Egypt (Grabska 13, 2006). In fact, however, only about a quarter of recognized refugees have been resettled (Ahmed 20). According to UNHCR statistics from 2004, the number of officially recognized refugees in Egypt amounts to over 21 000, with people from 32 countries of origin. The great majority of those (75%) are Sudanese, with a significant number from Somalia (16%), and smaller numbers from other African states (qtd. in Grabska 14,

⁹ Grabska, Katarzyna. *Who asked them anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt*. Brighton: Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2006.

¹⁰ Ahmed, Yasmine. *The Prospects of Assisted Voluntary Return Among the Sudanese Population in Greater Cairo*. Cairo: The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo, 2009.

¹¹ Afifi, Wesal. *Preliminary Investigation of Educational Opportunities For Refugee Children in Egypt*. Field Report. Cairo: N/A, 2003.

¹² El-Hilaly, Aya, and Maxwell Laura. *Separated Refugee Children in Cairo. A Rights-Based Analysis*. Working Paper No.5. Cairo: The American University in Cairo: 2004.

¹³ Edward, Jane Kani. *Understanding Socio-Cultural Change: Transformations and Future Imagining Among Southern Sudanese Women Refugees*. PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education. Toronto: N/A, 2004.

¹⁴ Peterson, Nancy. "School's out." *Cairo Times*. Vol. 5. Issue 25. Cairo: Cairo Times, 2001.

¹⁵ MENA, Middle East and North Africa

2006). The number of recognized refugees, asylum seekers, and people whose asylum application has been rejected, including Palestinians living in Egypt, is estimated at being between 120 000 and 150 000 individuals (El Abed 2003 qtd. in Grabska 14, 2006). However, in a report about Iraqi refugees in Egypt, the Iraqi refugee population alone has been estimated at between 15 000 and 150 000 (Nashaat and Minnick 2), numbers that vary to a great extent. Hence, it is difficult to state exact figures about how many refugees actually live on Egyptian territory. However, as Ahmed points out, the Sudanese are the largest migrant population in Egypt (19). Grabska explains that is difficult to estimate how many Sudanese live in Egypt, but she states that estimates usually range between 2.2 and 4 million (Grabska 17, 2005).

In comparison to many other countries, there are no camps for refugees in Egypt. Instead, refugees usually live in urban settings, mainly in the poor districts of Cairo and Alexandria (Grabska, 14, 2006). As Ahmed states, many of the refugees residing in Egypt “live in overcrowded neighbourhoods, are underemployed, have children outside the formal schooling system, suffer from discrimination in the streets and are on the margins of the already-limited Egyptian social service.” (Ahmed 6). Some of these aspects will be discussed further in the following sections which are concerned with refugees’ access to rights, and their perspectives for the future.

5.2.2 Access to Rights

Egypt is a founding signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and hence has agreed to provide protection to and guarantee rights for refugees residing on its territory. The rights of asylum seekers and refugees are, however, given the number of reservations that the country has placed to the Convention¹⁶ and the lack of implementing laws, “significantly constrained” (Grabska 17, 2006). Moreover, refugees’ access to rights as well as their treatment needs to be seen in the overall context of local circumstances. Egypt faces numerous problems that complicate full integration¹⁷ of refugees (Grabska 15, 2006). These problems are for instance concerned with employment, health care, and education.

The Egyptian government has restricted foreign citizens’ right to work due to the country’s high unemployment rate. According to Grabska, the majority of Egyptians are either unemployed or face underemployment, with estimates of up to 700 000 new entrants into the labor market per year (Grabska 15, 2006). Grabska explains that under Egyptian law,

¹⁶ As Grabska explains, the government has made five reservations to the 1951 Convention. These are concerned with personal status, rationing, access to primary education, access to public relief and assistance, and labour legislation and social security (articles 12(1), 20, 22 (1), 22, 24). In practise, these reservations result for example in refugee children’s restricted right to state-funded education, and refugee’s access to the county’s labour market.

¹⁷ A short critical discussion on the issue of integration based on comments of one interviewee can be found in appendix #5.

refugees are treated just as any other foreign citizen residing in the country with regard to employment, which means that in order to work in the formal labor market, a work permit is required. Acquiring such a permit is, however, bound to a bureaucratic procedure including the payment of a high fee. Moreover, foreigners are restricted to work in certain professions such as in customs related jobs and in tourism. Sudanese, as well as foreigners of some other countries do, however, not have to pay this fee (Grabska 21). Sudanese refugees' access to rights, theoretically, differs from other refugees. As Ahmed points out, Egypt signed the so called *Four Freedoms Agreement* with Sudan in 2004, which is a bilateral agreement that supports "reciprocal treatment and rights of each other's nationals regarding the (1) freedom of movement, (2) residence, (3) work and (4) ownership of property." (Ahmed 19). However, the implementation of this agreement remains questionable. Hence, as Ahmed points out with regard to Sudanese living in Egypt, the majority works in the informal economy (21). Buscher and Heller explain that many refugee women work as domestic workers in private Egyptian households and may be faced with risky working conditions such as harassment, physical abuse including sexual exploitation and problems regarding the payment of salaries, due to the lack of work regulations (21). The following quote by the director of a learning center for refugee children illustrates that refugees' access to the labor market cannot be solved easily, even if laws support their employment in the formal economy. Local conditions with regard to work have to be considered: "[...] it doesn't matter if the *four freedoms* allows the Sudanese to work here; so what? There are no jobs!" (File A 6)

Regarding to health care, refugees are generally considered as any other foreigner. Recognized refugees have the possibility to receive subsidized medical treatment through UNHCR's implementing partner Caritas. Often, however, due to long waiting times for Caritas' services because of an increase of people who want to make use of them, and the limited subsidization, refugees' medical needs are not adequately met. Rejected asylum seekers, moreover, are dependent on financial support from their social networks – often from those who have resettled to western countries (Grabska 22). In 2005, the Ministry of Health issued a regulation that would allow access to certain governmental health care services for all foreigners living in Egypt (Grabska 23). How this policy has impacted refugees' possibilities to access state health services is yet to be researched.

Discussions about the access to education for refugee children need to consider the overall difficulties that the Egyptian government has to handle regarding the provision of quality primary education for all children (Khatab qtd. in Grabska 15, 2006). Afifi points out, that "[t]he implementation of the right to education [for refugee children in Egypt] has been

minimal.” (Afifi 5). Without a legal status, refugee children are not able to attend governmental schools, and even those who are recognized refugees face a number of barriers with regard to the access to education (O Ensor 26). These barriers as well as other aspects concerning education for refugee children will be outlined below, in section 5.3.

5.2.3 Refugees’ Future Perspectives

The Egyptian Government’s central policy with regard to refugees is to offer them temporary residence. This means, that while the two durable solutions resettlement and repatriation are encouraged, the government does not see local integration as a future perspective for refugees (Grabska 18, 2006).

Since the 2004 ceasefire and the following peace agreement in Sudan between the central government and the Sudan’s People Liberation Army, the UNHCR, which is administrating the Refugee Status Determination in Egypt, has stopped determining asylum claims from Sudanese citizens (Ahmed 20). Hence, for the Sudanese, the possibility of resettlement does not constitute a realistic option anymore. However, many still wish to be resettled to a third country (Ahmed 6), and as my fieldwork has shown, the hope for resettlement is still persistent, which may partly be due to a misconception of UNHCR policies. The following extract is from an interview report which is based on a meeting with the director of the children’s education program at a learning center for refugees:

She explained: “There is no resettlement policy anymore [but] [t]here are many people still, just waiting for that phone call, that they have been waiting for since 2004 cause nobody has actually said to them ‘you are not going anywhere’. So there is this whole limbo being created because people see Cairo as a waiting room. They see it as a way to somewhere else.” She outlined that people say “‘I didn’t come to Cairo; I came to UNHCR.’” She continued that there is a need to improve communication between UNHCR and refugees: “UNHCR communication with the people is certainly a big problem.”. (File A 6)

According to a study about the Sudanese population in greater Cairo, conducted by the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, people of Southern Sudanese origin showed the highest interest in returning: Over 70% of the respondents expressed this interest. Limited chances of resettlement and limited access to social services in Egypt might be the underlying reasons for this development (Ahmed 7). The comments of my recently quoted respondent mirror this finding:

“More people are going back now, to South Sudan definitely, but also to Darfur. But I don’t think they are going back because it has become better there, but because they feel so hopeless here.” (File A 6)

Hence, it seems as if many refugees residing in Egypt do not have future perspectives for Egypt, as the following extract of an interview report based on an interview with a Southern Sudanese man illustrates:

When I asked him about his thoughts about the far future, he talked about the Sudanese community in general and said "first we try to find the possibility to go to other country", and if there is no possibility like that "we return to Sudan". (File A 8)

A focus group interview conducted with two Congolese and five Sudanese men, gives support to the view that local integration is not something refugees strive for. The extract of the interview report also points up the strong religious belief that influences some refugees' thoughts about what the future will bring:

I asked them about their thoughts about the future, whether they wish to stay here, return, or resettle. One said: "Hinna ma fish mustaqbal" (there is no future here) and the others agreed. One said: "I want to go to another country. This country is not good." Another said: "Mazr azzay mahata lana" (Egypt is like a station for us). One said that there is no chance to save money here; all the money goes to rent and food, meaning that one cannot build up a future here. They mentioned that the problems in Sudan still prevail and when I asked them if they would consider to return if there was no chance to resettle, only one man said he would go back; all the others don't want to go back. It seems as if all are still living in hope. One said "In sha allah (God willing) there will be a chance to go to another country", leaving it to the grace of God. (File A 9)

5.3 Education for Refugee Children in Egypt

5.3.1 Introduction

In the following paragraphs I will give an overview of educational opportunities for refugee children in Egypt. However, considering the importance of recognizing the local context as mentioned above, I will firstly present some information on Egypt's local conditions with regard to education. In view of education for refugee children I will outline aspects regarding the access to schools, summarize the specifics of 'refugee learning centers', and raise the issue of valid education.

5.3.2 Local Conditions

The Egyptian Government is faced with difficulties as regards providing quality education for children residing in the country. Due to overpopulation and high birth rates, the country's educational system is under considerable strain (Grabska 15, 2006). Egypt's literacy rate was estimated at just below 70% with an adult illiteracy of about 44 % in 2002 (UNDP qtd. in Grabska 15, 2006). During my field study, one of my respondents, the director of a learning center for refugee children, who has been quoted earlier, pointed up the local conditions at public schools in Egypt:

“If you are going to an Egyptian school, there are 75 kids in each classroom. Egyptian education is in an appalling state. Even if you could get your child in there, would you want to?” (File A 6)

Apart from criticism about crowded classrooms, the educational system has been criticized due to its inadequate curriculum which centers on mere memorization (Afifi 2). Afifi states that “[...] public education appears to have [...] exceeded its capacity to absorb additional students and provide a good standard of education [...]” (Afifi 3).

5.3.3 Access to Education for Refugee Children

As Afifi points out, Egypt has placed a reservation on Article 22 (1) of the 1951 Convention. This article states that refugees shall receive the same treatment as nationals regarding elementary education. Hence, given this reservation, the educational needs of refugees residing in Egypt are not being met (Afifi 2); the fact the Egypt has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Child in 1991 (El-Hilaly and Maxwell 8) does not seem to change this. According to a Decree of the Egyptian Ministry of Education from 1992, children of political refugees, children of Sudanese, Jordanian, and Libyan origin, and children who receive UNHCR scholarships are allowed to attend Egyptian public schools if they are able to present the necessary documents, which include a birth certificate, documents proving ones nationality, a school certificate from previous school attendance in the country of origin, a residence permit for Egypt, and a letter from the embassy of the child’s country of origin (El-Hilaly and Maxwell 28). As the authors indicate, refugees face, however, difficulties to obtain the required documents (El-Hilaly and Maxwell 28).

Moreover, as O Ensor points out, refugee parents who do not possess a legal status, are not able to register their children at governmental schools (26). This, in theory, is different regarding Sudanese refugee children. As one of my respondents explained, all Sudanese children have, theoretically, the right to attend public schools by Egyptian law due to the four freedoms agreement:

“Theoretically, with the four freedoms pact, all Sudanese children should be able to attend school in Egypt”, regardless of their status. “Although there is still other [obstacles]: they have to have a birth certificate, a passport and probably some kind of proof of schooling from previous schools, so theoretical, if you push for that, your child should be able to attend schools anyway.” (File A 6, director of a learning center for refugee children)

However, in practice, few Sudanese children seem to attend public schools. This may be due to the following two aspects.

As El-Hilaly and Maxwell point out, refugee children would even face difficulties with regard to integration into governmental schools, if the requirement of submitting the

mentioned documents was lifted: “The Egyptian education system is already severely overburdened.”, and due to the limited number of places, school administrators may “[...] decide not to give refugee children places that could otherwise be taken by Egyptian children” (29).

Apart from legal restrictions, bureaucratic barriers, and the overcrowded state schools, another aspect with regard to the access to public schools should be considered, namely the fact that some refugee families may not want to send their children to these schools. This may be due to their fear of discrimination (El-Hilaly and Maxwell 29). The results of Dingeman’s field study about the educational needs and priorities for refugees from southern Sudan in Cairo show that the great majority of the respondents that were reluctant of sending their children to public schools explained that they fear for the child’s safety¹⁸. “They are worried that the children will be treated badly and discriminated against, both by their classmates and by school staff, which might harm them emotionally.” (Dingemans 28). This view is also prevailing among my interviewees. A Sudanese woman who runs a preschool in Cairo’s quarter Arba Wa Nuss told me that even if refugee children got a place at one of the Egyptian schools it is not a good idea to let them go there, because of the discrimination they face. She said that attending an Egyptian public school is bad for the child’s self-confidence as other children and teachers do not treat them equally because of certain issues such as their darker skin colour (File A 3). Another reason for being unwilling to have ones child at a state school may be connected to many parents’ disapproval of the Islamic curricula (O Ensor 26), as a significant number of Sudanese refugees is Christian. Although this unwillingness to make use of public schools may technically not be seen as a barrier from the side of Egyptian regulations, I believe it constitutes an important factor with regard to the access to public education, which is why this issue will be further discussed in the next section as well as in the analysis of this paper.

Despite obstacles regarding the legal situation, education for refugees in Egypt or elsewhere should never be seen as a luxury (Afifi 5), given its importance for the children’s well-being, as outlined in the previous chapter. Due to the number of problems with regard to entering governmental schools, attending unaccredited refugee schools constitutes the only realistic alternative for many refugees living in Egypt (O Ensor 26). The following section will outline the specifics of these “refugee learning centers”. However, it is important to note, that not all refugee children are able to attend refugee learning centers. Edward points out that

¹⁸ Throughout my field studies, the problematic relationship between refugees and Egyptians which, according to my informants, is based on frequent discrimination was a major issue that came up during interviews and observations. “It is very common that the people insult you in the streets and throw stones.”, one parent explained (File B 4). An example of how children see the situation can be seen in appendix # 4.

an increase of both school-aged and pre-school children has put pressure on the refugee schools. Many refugee children are expected to be left without school education (Edward 139). According to church groups who support refugee families, there are around 2000 children who do not receive school education. Instead, they spend their days at home (qtd. in Edward 140), often without parental supervision (Edward 143). If the estimated numbers of up to 4 million Sudanese migrants in Egypt (that is to say not only refugees) is true, it may be argued that much more children are out of school. Afifi points out that these children "suffer from boredom and also the inability to regain a sense of normality in their lives going to school everyday would provide them." (Afifi 6 -7).

5.3.4 Refugee Learning Centers

Several Christian churches have opened schools for refugee children. These refugee schools, or 'learning centers' as they are often referred to, are not officially recognized by the Egyptian Ministry of Education (Edward 138). Some of these church-affiliated schools are the African Hope Learning Center in Maadi, the St. Andrew's Refugee Services' Children's Education Program in central Cairo, and learning centers run by the Sacred Heart Church in Abbasiya. According to El-Hilaly and Maxwell, there are eight church-run schools in Cairo which are attended by approximately 3000 refugee children. The majority of these children is from Southern Sudan. The learning centers offer education in either English or Arabic. El-Hilaly and Maxwell imply that many refugees of other nationalities may feel excluded from attending these schools (29). Apart from church-run schools, other learning centers for refugees are run by individuals, often of Sudanese origin, such as the New Future Learning Center in Maadi, and the Kukukaka school in Arba Wa Nuss (Part A and B, Empirical Material). As said by one of my respondents, the spokesperson of the Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union, there are 17 learning centers for refugees in Cairo (File A 17).

As will be outlined in the next section, these schools are not able to issue valid certificates for their students (Edward 138) but they can be attended by all children regardless of their legal status (Peterson, 2001). Other problems that refugee learning centers often face include the lack of resources and unqualified teachers (Part A and B, Empirical Material). Moreover, it is not unusual that these schools have long waiting lists, and the school fee that they ask to pay makes children's school attendance difficult for many parents (Peterson, 2001).

Despite these problems, many parents object to enroll their children in Egyptian schools, as mentioned earlier. The following statements from respondents during my field studies, illustrates why parents usually prefer refugee learning centers:

“We don’t have another school for our kids. If we can let them study with Egyptian, it’s very really very different, and very difficult for them, because they will not treat them like Sudanese or other refugees. (File B 9, parent and teacher)

“When they see a black man, they don’t see him like a human being. [...] Maybe you can register [at Egyptian public schools], but your child is not going to be happy at school.” (File B 1, senior year three student)

Another reason why parents prefer refugee schools is the fact that many of them use English as language of instruction, in comparison to Egyptian public schools (Part B, Empirical Material). This aspect will be outlined further in chapter 6, which presents the results of this study.

5.3.5 The Issue of Valid Education

As mentioned above, refugee learning centers per se are unable to provide children with valid documentation of their achievements (Edward 138). Until recently, the only possibility for children attending these refugee schools to receive valid certification was to take end-of-the-term examinations that are set by the Egyptian Ministry of Education. As Edward explains with regard to Sudanese children, in order to be eligible to take the exams, which are to be taken at Egyptian public schools, the child needs to present a birth certificate, a passport photocopy, a valid Egyptian residence permit, and a school certificate from Sudan which is approved by the Sudanese Foreign Minister and the Egyptian consulate in Sudan. Given the fact that it is very difficult for parents to obtain all these documents, for example because many children who arrived in the late 1990s came from IDP camps in Khartoum where they were faced with difficulties to obtain such documents, Edward sees these bureaucratic barriers as “a planned and constructed strategy to deny Southern Sudanese refugee children access to education and success” (Edward 139).

As stated in the 2006/2007 report of the Children’s Educational Program of the Sacred Heart Church, “a joint committee made up of representatives from the Sacred Heart Church, the school teachers, the UNHCR, and the Ministry of Education for South Sudan in Cairo, has been advocating for Sudanese children to sit for the official Egyptian national examinations and thus receive official accreditation.” In January 2007 the Egyptian Ministry of Education stated in an official letter that all Sudanese refugee children registered in Cairo would get the possibility to sit for a placement test, before – at the end of the school year – taking regular school exams (Sacred Heart Church’s Educational Centre 5). Although the report points out the success of this initiative, the disadvantages of many children also become apparent: Only twenty percent of the children were eligible to take the placement tests (Sacred Heart Church’s Educational Centre 5). A reason for the low number of eligible children is not

mentioned in the report, but is presumably linked to students' ages, missing documents, and their legal status.

As Ahlen points out, “[c]urricula, [...] and certification procedures in host countries must be recognized in the country of origin.” (Ahlen 11). In the Egyptian context, the majority of refugee children were, until recently, not able to receive valid documents that prove their academic achievements in Cairo. This resulted in a lack of possibilities for continuing education: Without valid certificates, students may lose years of education upon return to their countries of origin, as their academic achievements may not be recognized. After the completion of upper secondary school, the lack of a valid school leaving certificate moreover prevents them from entering university education, regardless of the country where they want to study (Part B, Empirical Material). Being excluded from higher education caused many to feel very frustrated about their situation. This frustration, as Edward points out, has led youngsters “to engage in practices that endanger their wellbeing”, such as violent behavior and drinking. It has also caused increased pressure on families, as parents struggle to survive financially while worrying about their children’s future (Edward 139-143).

As we have seen above, the possibility of taking Egyptian examinations does not seem to constitute a realistic option for many refugee children. In order to overcome this problem and to allow refugee children to sit officially recognized examinations which lead to obtaining valid school documents, the Southern Sudanese Teachers’ Union (SSTU) has facilitated the adoption of the so called Sudanese curriculum at refugee schools in Cairo. This was arranged in cooperation with the Sudanese Ministry of Education and in agreement with the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Since the academic year 2008/2009, depending on when the respective school has introduced this national school curriculum of Sudan, students are able to obtain valid certificates (File B 8). The following extract from the website of St. Andrew’s Refugee Services can be seen as a preliminary sample of what this change implies:

“Thanks to the cooperation of the Southern Sudanese Teachers Union, the Sudanese Embassy and the Egyptian Ministry of Education, refugee schools in Egypt may now offer the Sudanese school curriculum and sit for Sudanese 8th Grade and High School certificates. For the first time ever, our children will be able to achieve real school diplomas. Under the cooperation agreements, all the African refugee children, regardless of nationality, may take these exams. We began the new curriculum in April 2009. It means more work for our teachers, as they adapt to teaching the new curriculum. However, they were eager for this change.” (St. Andrew’s Refugee Services <http://www.standrewsrefugeeservices.org/id19.html>)

More information about this development and about the impact that the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum has will be outlined in the final chapters.

6 Results

6.1 Introduction

In the following sections the results of my empirical research will be presented. In view of my research questions, the results are concerned with the Sudanese curriculum and its adoption in Egypt. I aim to answer the question of how and why this Curriculum came to use in Egypt and how teachers, parents, and students perceive this change. Thus, I will firstly present background information about the introduction of the curriculum in Egypt, and about the possibility of taking the Sudanese school certificate. Secondly, I will outline a number of aspects that came up during the interviews with regard to the role that the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum plays. Different opinions that were expressed will be presented.

The information derived for the first part is based on two interviews. The first one is an interview with representatives of the Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union (File B 8). The interview was conducted at the Sakakini Church in Cairo, where the union operates from. My respondents were the SSTU's chairman, the education coordinator, and the general secretary. The second source that this part is based on is a short interview with the coordinator of an educational program at the Found African Children Learning Center who is in charge of running the "senior year three" classes of the Sudanese curriculum (File B 3). Some outcomes of other interviews, both from my first and second visit in Cairo are also going to be brought up. The results of the second part, which is concerned with opinions about the curriculum and its adoption, are first and foremost based on interviews conducted during my second visit in Cairo, namely the interview with the SSTU that was mentioned above, two focus group interviews with students, three interviews with parents, and two interviews with teachers who teach the Sudanese curriculum. Additionally, some aspects from other interviews that I conducted during my first visit will also be used.

6.2 Background Information about the Sudanese Curriculum

6.2.1 The SSTU and its Motives for Advocating the Introduction of the Curriculum

In 2006, a group of teachers who teach at several learning centers for refugees in Cairo established the so called Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union (SSTU). The aim of this union is to improve the education for refugee children in Cairo. Given the fact that none of the refugee schools was able to provide its students with valid certifications, the union's primary goal was to find a solution to this problem.

The SSTU's chairman and the education coordinator pointed out that the schools used to employ curricula of different countries, but none of them would lead to a valid certificate in the end. For many parents, the fact that their child would not be provided with a recognized certificate did, however, not constitute a problem as the SSTU's chairman explained: "The families thought that they would leave Egypt eventually, so they were not interested in the issue of a school certificate". The union's education coordinator outlined further: "[...] because they put in their minds that they are going abroad, maybe to America or Canada or Australia. [...] they just thinking about their migration, they want to emigrate [...] they cannot care about it [the issue of certification]". However, the teachers' union saw the importance of giving refugee children the opportunity to sit recognized examinations. Therefore, they were trying to help the students by introducing the Sudanese curriculum at refugee learning centers, "because the Sudanese curriculum [is] giving the certificate. [...] This is the point.", as the chairman noted. He pointed out that "it is necessary for them to have a [valid] certificate, of the basic and the final [school years]".

Besides the trying to find a solution with regard to valid certifications, the SSTU also pointed out the need to improve the quality of education at refugee learning centers: "We at the SSTU, our vision is to get a good quality education for the children before they can go to university." The union's chairman continued:

"Most of the students here are refugees and the education was just because people are waiting, there was no quality in education. Everybody, the teachers and the parents, didn't care that this was not a good quality of education." (File B 8)

6.2.2 Arranging a System of Valid Certification

Before the Sudanese curriculum was adopted at refugee schools in Cairo, the SSTU tried to find other ways of providing children with valid certificates. Firstly, they tried to cooperate with the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Although the ministry allowed refugee students to sit for placement test, which was already mentioned in the previous chapter, many children were faced with bureaucratic barriers. These barriers, as the following quote explains, were especially linked to children's ages and the lack of a residence permit. In Egyptian schools, a child is not allowed to exceed a certain age for the respective grade – a regulation which places barriers to refugee children, who have often been without education for years.

"When [...] the Government of Egypt [...] they allow for our students to sit, and a lot of them went to sit for the placement test, but then they find a lot of problems, about ages, the Egyptians will not accept above, but our students they are of different ages, maybe [...] some loose many years of education, there are some of them 16 or 20 [years old] and they are sitting in primary school."
(File B 7, teacher and school administrator)

“The most important problem is that they need a residence permit. The majority of Sudanese here, they haven’t that kind of status.”
(File B 8, SSTU’s education coordinator)

One respondent raised another issue, the experience of discrimination:

“[...] all these problems it became a hinder to join. Even those who join say ‘we are not welcome by environment, as you see the difference of races and colour, so it seems like they don’t want them to join. But they have that opportunity to join, if the child meets all the requirements.” (File B 7, teacher and school administrator)

As this cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Education only brought limited success, their second hope to find a solution was linked to cooperating with the Government of Southern Sudan. This attempt, which once more involved the Egyptian Ministry of Education, was, however, ineffective, as Southern Sudan was not able give the help that the SSTU was hoping for. According to the SSTU, representatives from South Sudan did not support the idea of offering refugee children valid certifications in Egypt. Instead, they suggested that everybody involved should return to the South of Sudan and take the examinations there. This was, according to the SSTU, not an alternative.

Hence, after no or limited success with the Egyptian Ministry of Education and the Government of Southern Sudan, the SSTU turned to the Sudanese Embassy and asked for support with regard to solving the issue of valid education for refugee children residing in Egypt. They presented their idea of introducing the Sudanese curriculum in Egypt. According to the SSTU, the Sudanese curriculum had already been adopted earlier in other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Libya. After several meetings with and visits from representatives of the Sudanese Ministry of Education, the idea was welcomed and the involved parties agreed to adopt the curriculum at learning centers in Cairo. With the approval of the Egyptian Ministry of Education, the introduction of the Sudanese curriculum at refugee learning centers was facilitated in the school year 2008/2009, with the first examinations held in March and April 2009. According to the SSTU, 276 students took the final examination of the curriculum, and 128 passed.

As the SSTU pointed out, some learning centers initially did not approve of the idea to employ the Sudanese curriculum:

“At the beginning of this project, we faced many difficulties, many obstacles. The first obstacle was that the schools themselves were not very serious about this idea. Some of the schools they rejected that kind of program.” (File B 8, SSTU’s chairman)

Later, however, as people became aware of the curriculum’s positive effects, it was adopted at many centers. The SSTU hopes that by next year all learning centers will employ the Sudanese curriculum. According to the SSTU’s education coordinator, the Sudanese

curriculum is a long-term solution for the problem of education for refugees in Egypt. As he states, the possibility to sit recognized examinations is a solution not only for the great many Southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo, but also for those from other regions of Sudan, as well as for refugees from other countries.

6.2.3 The Sudanese Curriculum and how it Works in Practice

The Sudanese curriculum has been adopted at several learning centers for refugees. For some schools, the academic year 2009/2010 is the first year, in which the curriculum is taught. While some schools adopted the curriculum only for grade eight and for senior year three in the previous academic year, schools have started to teach the curriculum for all grades since the current academic year (2009/2010). Examples of schools that have fully employed the Sudanese curriculum are the African Hope Learning Center, the Found African Children Learning Center, the Children's Educational Program of St. Andrew's Refugee Services, and learning centers run by the Sacred Heart Church.

The Sudanese curriculum is offered in two different patterns. In the Arabic pattern the language of instruction is Arabic, and in the English pattern it is English. In each pattern, students attending high school can choose to study the arts or the science section. Regardless of the section they choose there are four compulsory subjects: Math, English, Arabic, and Religion (either Islam or Christianity). All in all, students are required to study seven subjects. Depending on the section they study, these subjects are biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history, family science, and military science.

The Sudanese curriculum is a curriculum developed for eleven years of school. At the end of grade eight, students are required to take a major examination which – after successful completion – leads to acquiring the Sudanese basic certificate. This certificate is the requirement to enter high school. In the end of high school, that is to say in the so called senior year three, students take the school leaving examination which leads to the Sudanese school certificate (final certificate), that allows students to join university. Not only minors are able to attend classes of the Sudanese curriculum. In fact, as will become clear below, also adults benefit from the adoption of the curriculum as they are able to continue their education and receive a certificate. This certificate is valid in Sudan, Egypt, as well as in other African countries. The two major examinations have to be taken at the Sacred Heart Church's school premises, regardless of which school the respective student attends. There, all students get together, and the examinations which last several days are monitored by representatives of the Ministry of Education of Sudan. Examinations of the ongoing academic year are to be taken in the end of March 2010, with an expected 200 students for grade eight examinations and

400 students for senior year three examinations. In order to take the examination, students have to pay a fee.

6.3 Opinions about the Sudanese Curriculum and its Adoption

6.3.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs are concerned with opinions about the Sudanese curriculum and its introduction at Cairo's refugee learning centers. Due to the limited number of interviews that were conducted for this study, it would not be appropriate to structure the results according to the different groups that were interviewed, as it would go against the principle of reliability. Therefore, I have chosen to present the results with regard to certain aspects, rather than with regard to certain "categories" of respondents. In seven sections covering opinions about structure, status, valid certification, adjustment, contents, and translation, and about reasons for the adoption, both positive and negative aspects that are linked to the curriculum's adoption are brought up, in a compilation of the views of the involved parties that are in some way concerned with this development. In order to get an understanding of particular tendencies about what teachers, students, and parents think, further research is inevitable. The aim of this chapter, however, is limited to the presentation of aspects in a more general manner.

6.3.2 Consistent Structure

Through conducting interviews and meeting people that are affiliated with different learning centers for refugees, I was informed that before the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum, different curricula were employed. It was common that one school would have a mixture of different curricula, e.g. the American Curriculum for the majority of subjects, but books from the Egyptian curriculum for other subjects. Moreover, some schools did not follow specific curricula, but rather focused on teaching children basic skills like reading and writing in English. The following statements illustrate the lack of structure that was common:

"During that time, all the refugee schools here in Egypt, they try to take Egyptian curriculum or something like that, maybe British and English, and British and American and whatever and Arabic [...] They have no any bright curriculum. [They used] different kind of curricula. [...] it is not valid, they would not get a certificate or whatever." (File B 8, SSTU's education coordinator)

"At some of those centers they were only teaching their students languages, either to study Arabic and English, but no other real subjects like math, science, geography, history and so on." (File B 8, SSTU's chairman)

Since the introduction of the Sudanese curriculum, these schools follow a complete curriculum that is employed for all subjects. This gives both students and teachers a consistent structure. There is a thread they can follow, and the books that are now used function as coherent tools to hold on to.

6.3.3 The Curriculum's Status

The outcomes of my interviews point out the high status that is attached to the Sudanese curriculum, and accordingly to the pride connected to studying the curriculum and sitting its examinations. As the director of a children's education program states, "The Sudanese ambassador withdrew his daughter from the British School, and put her to Sakakini [one of the refugee schools] so she can sit the Sudanese curriculum, so I mean it's, it's respectable." (File A 6). The two focus group interviews that I conducted with students who are currently attending senior year three of the Sudanese curriculum at the Found African Children Learning Center, and are going to sit for the Curriculum's final examination in March 2010, also explained the importance they attached to the Curriculum and pointed to its good quality. "[I]t's pride to have it [the Sudanese school certificate]", one of them said and the others agreed. Moreover, their families are happy that their sons and daughters attend classes of this curriculum. Among respondents affiliated with the African Hope Learning Center's primary school, which previously used the American school curriculum, the new curriculum was also valued. There was agreement regarding the high quality of the Sudanese curriculum, which raises its status:

"[T]he level of the American curriculum and the Sudanese is different. Because our books are better than [...] the American books. [...] because the American books are very easy, very easy." So you think the quality of the Sudanese curriculum is better?
"Yes, definitely." (File B 9, parent and teacher)

"That is why we brought that one from the Sudan, because our students must have a strong certificate [...]." (File B 5, teacher)

"Scientifically, the Sudanese curriculum is much more demanding than for example the British curriculum at that age level." (File A 6, director of a learning center for refugee children)

6.3.4 Valid Certification and its Impacts

The fact that the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum creates the possibility to acquire valid documentation of primary and secondary education was valued by all respondents who I asked about their opinions on the curriculum. The following quotes and extracts from interview reports illustrate this view:

“Because it is a national certificate. This means that if the child pass from curriculum of grade eight, if it travel to any country, not [only] Sudan, to any country, this certificate will be useful there. If to Eritrean, to American, to where, to any place. Why? Because the Sudan embassy will stamp it. And after that it will be what? Official! And this is the difference between the last certificate we have, and this new one.” (File B 5, teacher)

“Now they can go to university or do anything. The Sudanese curriculum is good for the future”. (File B 4, parent)

“It’s a kind of increasing their knowledge and helping them also to [...] continue their careers, find colleges” (File B 7, parent and school administrator)

“It is good for them, if they return back to Sudan, to easily enter any school in Sudan.” (File B 9, parent and teacher)

These quotes demonstrate the importance of valid education for the future of the individual student. The certificate is valued both because it will make children eligible for higher education and because it enables a smooth reintegration into schools in Sudan, in case of repatriation. A teacher pointed to the necessity of possessing valid certificates in the African context, an aspect that was also outlined in the previous chapter:

“[B]efore we were worried, because our children, they had nothing, and learning without a certificate means nothing, because I cannot see it in my hands. [learning without certificate] means nothing in Africa. They say: show me your certificate!” (File B 9, teacher)

Similar to this aspect, a parent who is also working with the administration of a refugee school explained the difficulties children would face without valid certificate if they returned to Sudan: The previous certificate that the students received from the school was not recognized by the Egyptian Ministry of Education and was therefore not accepted in Sudan. The result of this was fatal:

“so some of them they were already in high school, when they went to Sudan they have to drop to grade eight, to sit for the basic certificate. [...] They lost a lot of years. [...] Now they don’t lose.” (File B 7, parent and school administrator)

He pointed out that even children who fail the examinations of the Sudanese curriculum have an advantage compared to those who attended school previous to the adoption of the new system, as the current system is supported by the Sudanese government:

“Even if they fail, if they go there, they will just show the certificate, to show that they sat before but did not pass. They will be given a chance, since they were taught the curriculum from Sudan, that’s the most important.” (File B 7, parent and school administrator)

Apart from extended possibilities that the Sudanese school certificate offers for students in the long run, the curriculum's impact for students' present also became evident in my interviews. Children and youngsters now have the hope to achieve more in their future, which has positive effects on their current situation:

I asked them if their life has changed since they have been attending school again and all said that it has changed a lot; they said that life has become better. One of them said: "When we were in Sudan and were younger, we had dreams for the future to become presidents or something like that. Once you came here, the dream stopped. Now, the dream is back." (File B 2, student)

The SSTU also suggested that the adoption of the curriculum has the potential to decrease violent gang activities among Sudanese youngsters:

"The positive aspect is that, there is a group of gangs, the "outlaws" and "lost boys". These groups now, some of them they sat for that exam, of 2009. And now, they are going to university. This gives morals to the others! To also to apply." (File B 8, SSTU's chairman)

"They are busy now; they have something to do. The fighting has become less." (File A 17, SSTU's spokesperson)

Due to the possibility of taking officially recognized examinations, also older students are returning to education. At the Found African Children Learning Center, for instance, evening classes for students of senior year three are run. Many of them have not attended school since their arrival in Egypt, but now they are eager to complete the education they started in their country of origin. According to the program coordinator, there are students up to the age of 39 who are attending classes this year. A teacher pointed out the impact of the introduction of the curriculum for older students:

"Now they want to resume [...] yeah, they resume their school and after that they can get the certificate. Even if they are older." (File B 6, teacher)

"There are some fathers and mothers, some of them they now want to get involved with education. They want to sit for the Sudan school certificate." (File B 8, SSTU's education coordinator)

Besides being of importance for the individual's present and future, respondents also expressed the Sudanese school certificate's importance for the future of the South of Sudan, which is where the majority of students or their parents come from. The following quotation gives an account of this view:

"The important thing is that it has a big meaning for Sudan. This will be a generation with a good educational background. [...] And they can help develop Sudan with the education they get. There are many very poor areas in Southern Sudan." (File B 8, SSTU's chairman)

Another aspect that was noticeable with regard to the impact of the system of valid education is linked to those who teach the Sudanese curriculum. A teacher who teaches the Sudanese curriculum at both primary and secondary level of the African Hope Learning Center told me enthusiastically:

“Now I have more than 20 students who are joining university of Cairo. [...] They passed the last year, and now they started university. And one of them is now working in library; this is one of my students last year. He passed the Sudan school certificate and now he is a student at Ain Shams University. You see? This is from African Hope! This is the benefit of the Sudan Curriculum.” (File B 5, teacher)

The chairman and the education coordinator of the SSTU confirmed this development:

“The teachers they see that their students go where? They go to university! [...] The interest of the teachers becomes [bigger], they increase their moralities, they see that this is my student, my student mister x who I taught; now he is going to university. He is proud. He is proud about it!” (File B 8)

To sum up, this section has shown that valid certification in the context of refugee schools in Cairo has a number of positive aspects. According to my respondents, the Sudanese school certificate improves refugees’ possibilities for the future, which results in a more positive attitude towards their time in Egypt as they are able to strive for a goal. A certain hope for the future of the South of Sudan is also attached to the Sudanese school certificate, as it is believed that well-educated students will get involved in the development of the country. Moreover, teachers become proud of their students’ achievements, and thus show increased motivation.

6.3.5 Adjustment to a New Curriculum

Both for students and teachers adjusting to a new curriculum, which greatly differs from many previous systems that refugee schools employed, was often described as a challenge.

“Yeah, at the beginning it was difficult! Because it is the first year for them. For all the classes. [...] It became a burden and a lot of work for the teachers.” (File B 7, parent and school administrator)

“There are differences between the books, and differences between the understanding of the book. I think it was easier for them before. But now, they used to say it’s difficult, and also they used to say this is hard for us and we can’t study [laughing]. Really difficult, but they are trying to do this. (File B 9, parent and teacher)

The following quote illustrates that the change to the new curriculum was especially difficult for the students in higher grades, as the books assumed that certain things are known, and presupposed a certain familiarity with the books:

“[T]he only difficulty was from the upper grades. Because this curriculum is interlinked. Like what was taught in [grade] one, it will expand itself next [year].

This is supposed to have been taught two years back or four years back, so, now this is the role of the teachers to do their best and try to give them the knowledge they should have been given before.” (File B 7, parent and school administrator)

It was also mentioned that the way books are written cause difficulties for children. As some teachers pointed out, texts are written using very difficult language, with many terms that are new to the students.

“In the Sudanese curriculum, there are a lot of terms, very big terms. [...] if the child wants to read the sentence, it doesn’t understand the sentence [laughing]. So we need to explain. Read, and stop, read and stop.” (File B 6, teacher)

What complicated the adjustment to the Sudanese curriculum further were problems regarding the arrival of students’ books and teachers’ guides. The books of the curriculum’s English pattern, which is for example used at the African Hope Learning Center, arrived late – two months after the beginning of the academic year.

“The translation of the Sudanese curriculum was brought late. And it affected all the students. Just a small number passed.” (File B 6, teacher)

Due to these issues many students who took examinations at the end of the first year failed. However, there was a general conviction among the respondents that these problems would disappear eventually:

“It is difficult for them to understand all the curriculum at this small time. That is why they are complaining. But if we do it this year, and the second year, it becomes normal for them.” (File B 9, parent and teacher)

6.3.6 Contents of the Curriculum

The interviews show, that the involved parties see both positive and negative aspects regarding the contents of the Sudanese curriculum. The statements of several interviewees confirm that there is certain dissatisfaction with the subject history. Given the fact that the curriculum was developed by the Sudanese Ministry of Education, the history books appear to have a focus on Islam. As many refugees, specifically those from Southern Sudan, are Christians who object to ideas of Islam, they are not fully satisfied with what children now are being taught since the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum. The following statements of some respondents who work at refugee schools illustrate this:

“The writers of this book, all of them are northerners Sudanese. That is why most of them are concentrate in Islamic backgrounds, like in social studies, that is more Islamic history inside it. [...] Now, like some of the books, they are talking more about Islamic, Islamic, Islamic. So this is the bad way, and we are not Muslim.”
(File B 5/B 6, teacher)

People involved with teaching history, state that they have developed strategies to overcome this bias that they are not happy about:

“But you know, the first thing we talked about is who writes history, why they write history, you know, all that kind of stuff. And we practiced it by saying ‘so you need to learn this book, so you can answer the questions in the exam but – we can learn other things and we can learn to think critically about these books, and we can learn to think what we feel and argue properly about it’ [...]”(A 6, director of a learning center for refugee children)

Apart from the subject history, one of my respondents, a teacher, also mentioned that the subject Arabic can be problematic. He explained that as Arabic is not the official language of Southern Sudan, children may face difficulties, because they have not learned it in a formal way before. He pointed out that passing the examination in Arabic is compulsory in order to pass the overall examination. He considers this regulation as something negative, as it can affect children’s success (File B 4).

My interview with the Southern Sudan Teachers Union also revealed positive aspects that are attached to the contents of the Sudanese curriculum. The SSTU executive members pointed out that the curriculum covers everything that is of importance. In specific, the SSTU’s chairman mentioned the contents of the curriculum that are valuable for those students who have only lived in Egypt:

“We chose the Sudanese curriculum, because in this curriculum all what we need is available. Because some of the children they were born here in Egypt, they are maybe 15 or 17 years, they don't have any idea about Sudan, and so it's a good opportunity for them to know the background, to get an idea about Sudan.” (File B 8)

6.3.7 Translation of Teaching Material and English versus Arabic

As outlined above, the Sudanese curriculum is offered in two different patterns, an Arabic pattern, and an English pattern. The schools that have used English as language of instruction previous to the introduction of the curriculum have adopted the English pattern. According to my interviewees, the books have been translated from Arabic to English by monks of the Comboni Colleges in Khartoum. Many of the people I talked to, expressed dissatisfaction regarding the quality of translation:

“We from English pattern we face some problems. Those who are in Arabic they don't have any problem. [...] But for us, English pattern we face problems. [...] we find some mistakes like spellings, language [...]” (File B 7, parent and school administrator)

“They are not necessarily the most literal monks in the world. [...] And some of the translations are so bad, that they actually make facts wrong”
(File A 6, director of a learning center for refugee children)

I also interviewed a group of students who study the Arabic pattern of the Sudanese curriculum. According to these students, there were no language problems, since Arabic is the

original language of the books. In view of this, one may ask why many parents and students prefer the English pattern. There are several reasons for that: Some of the students who attended school in the South of Sudan previous to their time in Egypt, have been taught in English there, which is why it was natural for them to attend English speaking schools for refugees in Cairo from the first place. Now, that these schools adopted the English pattern of the Sudanese curriculum they do not see reasons for changing to the other pattern. Many parents that I talked to, both during the first and second visit in Cairo, explained that English is important for them because it is an international language that is used both in Southern Sudan and in countries of resettlement. During a time when resettlement was still a possibility, many saw learning English as a tool that would help them to integrate in the USA, Canada, or Australia. Now they value it because it may enhance their possibilities in the South of Sudan. Another reason why English enjoys a higher status as language of instruction for many refugee families in Cairo, is deeply rooted in political considerations. While Arabic for Southern Sudanese is attributed to experiences of oppression from the North, English is seen as a symbol of independence:

“Before we were under the Arabic colonialism. But now, we have a small freedom [...] the Southern Sudan now it didn't get independent but is going maybe, we are not sure. [...] But now the first language in the Southern Sudan is English. [...] That is why now all the Sudanese they focus attention to learn it, they take their children to learn in English.” (File B 6, teacher)

6.3.8 Reasons for the Adoption of the Curriculum

I asked my interviewees what they think about possible reasons of why the Sudanese curriculum has been introduced in Cairo, and more specifically, why the Sudanese government has agreed to this cooperation. Some respondents explained that it was through heavy complaints of the parents, that the Government of Sudan understood the importance of helping the refugee community in Cairo. Others said that it was due to the SSTU's effort. Some students that I talked to even thought that it was the Government of Southern Sudan that made the introduction of the curriculum in Egypt possible. I also heard that introducing the Sudanese curriculum in Egypt is a political strategy of the Sudanese government:

“They were doing this to make us to go to the unity. That's what we understand behind of this. So if they are doing this, maybe the people will change their minds about wanting independence from the north of Sudan. This is what I get behind of this. Because nobody is just going to help anybody just like this without anything behind him. Maybe this will advise our people vote for unity.” (File A 18, anonymous Southern Sudanese 1)

“Why did they come with the Sudanese curriculum now and not earlier? There are the elections next year, so they want to show that they care about us and that the Southern Sudanese government doesn't care, but this is not true. The Southern Sudanese

government didn't like the idea about introducing the Sudanese curriculum here in Egypt." (File A 18, anonymous Southern Sudanese 2)

What quotations like these imply will be analyzed in the next chapter.

7 Analysis

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the empirical research which have been outlined above will be discussed. This discussion will be divided into two parts: Firstly, I will analyze the results from the perspective of the role that the adoption of the curriculum and the curriculum itself plays. Secondly, I will integrate the phenomenon of waiting into the discussion. Here, I will apply a number of aspects of the first part of the analysis to concepts that were outlined in the theoretical framework of this study. This part will not only be limited to education and the role of the Sudanese curriculum, but will have a more general approach, covering different aspects of the refugees' experience of waiting in the Egyptian context.

7.2 The Role of the Adoption of the Sudanese Curriculum

7.2.1 The Curriculum as a Beacon of Hope for the Individual and the Collective

The results of this study have shown that the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum was welcomed by all of my respondents. Although parts of the refugee community, that is to say mainly Christian refugees from Southern Sudan, show discontent with certain aspects that are being taught in the Sudanese curriculum, its adoption constitutes a significant improvement of refugee's chances in acquiring higher education. This aspect relates to the issue of the official validity of education, a problem that was solved with the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum.

By analyzing people's statements on what advantages the curriculum has, it was possible to notice the great hope that is attached to this new development. This feeling of hope that was generated from the Sudanese curriculum was transparent from the perspective of parents, teachers, and students themselves, and not to forget from the SSTU representatives. The following statements express the hope that is attached to the curriculum:

"The generation before that [before the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum] were suffering. A lot they were suffering. Why, because after finishing their high school, where to go? Nobody know." (File B 5, teacher)

“Many of the students, they were on the street, because they had no hopes. They completed their education until senior three, but they couldn’t enter the university. [...] And now, this examination gives them new hope.” (File B 8, SSTU’s chairman)

Thus, before the introduction of the Sudanese curriculum, many felt hopeless, as the efforts they put into education was fruitless in their opinions. They were not able to reach their goals of continuing their education at a higher level. If we remember the student, who I quoted in the previous chapter, saying that the dreams for them had stopped when they came to Egypt, and now, since the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum the dreams are back, it becomes clear that the Sudanese curriculum takes upon the role of the beacon of hope that they thought they had lost. The hope that these people attach to the curriculum was, as we have seen earlier, not limited to the individual’s future, as far as it provides the student with official documents, but was also seen regarding the collective dream of establishing an independent state. It seems as if many Southern Sudanese have strong feelings for the region they come from and although they may have lived far from that place for many years, they still identify with it. They also seem to feel a will and a responsibility to work for a better future of the region. Should their dream of independency come true, the country, as they explained, will need educated people that are capable of developing the country’s infrastructure and social system. Investment in education, in this sense, is not only considered as an investment in the individual’s future, but also in the future of a whole nation. A teacher that I talked to explained this, by telling me that he is thankful for the people who sponsor the refugee learning centers, because this money goes to the future of Southern Sudan:

“All the children here in African Hope, most of them they are Sudanese. And those who pay them, I can appreciate them. Because what they are doing, it is the background of our country; it’s helping of our people. This money goes to the future of my country, because these children now in the coming ten, fifteen years, most of them can help people from South. They will return and build up the country in general.” (File B 6, teacher)

The respondents who expressed this thought that many who are students now, would eventually return to Southern Sudan were, however, only adults. The question remains if the hope that these students will return, is a hope only adults have, given the fact that they spent the majority of their lives in Southern Sudan and feel a strong attachment to the country. As my field studies have shown, children and youngsters have often spent a considerable part of their lives outside Southern Sudan. Many refugee children of Southern Sudanese “origin”, have in fact never seen Southern Sudan, because they were either born in Egypt or were born and grew up in the northern part of Sudan after their families had fled from the South. Hence, it is legitimate to raise the question if children and youngsters feel the same way as the older

generation. As this was not a question I have asked students in my interviews, the answer remains open. Nevertheless, we can see that the Sudanese curriculum is without doubt a beacon of hope for the individual and to some extent also for the collective.

7.2.2 The Curriculum as a Compromise

As the results of my research have shown, several of my interviewees expressed discontent with regard to two aspects of the Sudanese curriculum, namely the English translation of the books, and the contents of the subject history. However, the involved parties realize the advantages of the curriculum and hence seem to tolerate the negative aspects that the adoption of the curriculum entails. The following quotes illustrate this:

“It’s not ideal, but it’s our only option and Sudanese government are the only people who have given us this option. [...] So, it’s not of course it’s not perfect, but it’s something.” (File A 6, director of a learning center for refugee children)

“I can tell them exactly what I mean, and I tell them this is not our religion, it’s because you can get a certificate. (File B 6, teacher)

“The majority of the parents were worried because of the political problems in Sudan, [...]. They were thinking that because the curriculum comes from the north, it has a lot of Islam inside and a lot of Arabic, nothing from the Southern Sudan. And Southern Sudan is English and they were somehow afraid. [...] we made a meeting with them, we from the teachers’ union explained to them everything. And we explained that the certificate is very important to the student. [...]” (File B 8, SSTU’s chairman)

Another person that I talked to, explained that history books only focus on historical figures of the north, while important figures from the south seem to be forgotten:

“There are many champions in our, in the South, they didn’t mention about them, this is the problem. They mention only about some people and forget about others. But we have nothing in our hands; we have to accept it just like this.” (File A 18, anonymous Southern Sudanese 1)

Comments like these ones show, that by accepting the Sudanese curriculum, the different actors involved make a compromise. Although they are not fully satisfied with the curriculum as such, the curriculum’s advantages outweigh its disadvantages. Therefore, that is to say for the sake of a better future – both seen from an individual and a collective perspective – the curriculum is seen as a tool that will enable people to improve their current living situation. People understand that without taking this compromise, their desires for the future may hardly be fulfilled. Although not being an ideal solution, employing the Sudanese curriculum hence functions as a means to attain specific goals. Accepting the curriculum with its shortcomings can thus be seen as a compromise between the present and the future.

7.2.3 The Curriculum as a Medium to Develop a National Identity

Although the results have shown a certain degree of discontent with the contents of the curriculum, the positive aspects of its contents were also pointed out by some respondents. Some adults that I talked to, seemed to be worried about their children's identification with their "place of origin", especially with regard to children who were born in Egypt or who left Sudan at an early age. The following quote illustrates this concern and how the Sudanese curriculum can be used to strengthen children's feeling of belonging to Sudan:

“[T]hey will know about our country. Some of them they were born here, they don't know about the country. Even they get just a little in this book, is better than nothing, you know.” (File A 18, anonymous Southern Sudanese 1)

In view of this, the Sudanese curriculum may be seen as an instrument to build up or strengthen one's national identity. This however, does not really go along with regard to the aspect discussed above: One would think that due to many Southern Sudanese refugees' rejection of ideas from the northern part of the country, they cannot or do not want to identify with what is taught in the Sudanese curriculum, considering the country's historical background. The discussions in the following section give support to this understanding.

7.2.4 The Curriculum as a Reason for Increased Trust or Distrust towards the Sudanese Government

As has been outlined in the final section of the results, some respondents wonder why the Sudanese government has agreed to the adoption of its national curriculum in Cairo. The thoughts they expressed during interviews imply that the curriculum – in their opinion – is a clear manipulation of people's opinions, aiming at reaching political goals: The government of Sudan is well aware of the fact the many refugees in Cairo are Southern Sudanese and they are aware of the problems they face in Egypt, one of them being the issue of valid education. It seems obvious that the government hopes that the considerable number of Southern Sudanese who are residing in Egypt develop a positive attitude towards the Sudanese government (that is to say more trust) and towards the governments' wish for unity. This is, according to my respondents, why they supported the adoption of the curriculum. Introducing the Sudanese curriculum in Cairo is hence an act that can be interpreted as causing increased distrust towards the government. In view of this logic, some of my respondents implied that the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum may only be a short-term thing, which might be recalled after the elections¹⁹.

¹⁹ In 2011 there will be a referendum about independency of Southern Sudan. As stated in an article by BBC, "Although the war between north and south ended officially in 2005, tension and mistrust continue." (BBC NEWS <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8485890.stm> (2010-02-26))

7.3 Refugees' Experience of Waiting and the Role of the Adoption of the Sudanese Curriculum

7.3.1 Waiting for ...?

First and foremost it is to say, that my research questions as such do not focus on refugees' experience of waiting. However, the outcomes of my field study show interesting aspects that are concerned with the phenomenon of waiting. These aspects are not limited to the opinions about the Sudanese curriculum, as I will outline later. Analyzing the results of this study has shown that the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum is one of the things that is of significance to refugees' experience of waiting.

As has been noted in the theoretical framework of this study, the situation of refugees in Cairo differs somewhat from the situation of asylum-seekers in Sweden as far as *waiting* is concerned. While the asylum-seekers Brekke writes about are waiting in the hope to stay, refugees in Egypt are waiting in the hope they can leave. Many refugees, moreover, have been rejected asylum and know that they in fact live in Egypt "illegally". Still, this does not disqualify them from being placed in the category of people who are *waiting* as they have not stopped waiting for opportunities that enable them to start a better life. The opportunities that people wait for in the Egyptian context take on different forms. Some people, as mentioned earlier, are still waiting for resettlement:

"Our problem is that we just wait here. We have to take patience and find opportunities to be resettled." (File B 1, student)

Some people have more or less given up the hope to be resettled, and instead wait for the possibility to return to the South of Sudan:

"Now we are here for waiting. If the peace in Sudan is getting better, we can go back to our country." (File B 6, teacher)

The two focus group interviews that I conducted with students showed that refugees have also been waiting for a chance to pursue their studies. Especially those who were eager to start university, found themselves in a position of waiting. As they lacked the requirements to enter university, and there was no possibility for them to obtain the requirements, they felt like they are losing their time. Now, due to the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum the waiting has been given a meaning, an aspect that will be further outlined below. They can fill the period of waiting with something they find useful. One woman said "This is our chance". She explained that she is 25 years old just like many others who are in her class. She wanted to

pursue her education for a long time, but before the curriculum there was no chance for her to do so, as she was too old to enter an Egyptian public school (File B1).

The one thing that the refugees I talked to were not waiting for was the durable solution of local integration. None of my respondents showed a positive attitude towards Egypt; staying in Egypt was not seen as something to strive for. Instead, as we have seen earlier, Egypt was often described as a ‘station’ (in Arabic ‘mahata’). This metaphor illustrates two important aspects with regard to how people experience waiting: Firstly, it states that Egypt is seen as a place in between arriving and leaving; it is not seen as something where one would like to stay for a long time. Secondly, the term ‘station’ also has the connotation of being something where one is standing without being able to move. It seems as if Egypt is considered as a place where it is not possible to build up a future, because people see no development, may it be with regard to education, work, or general living conditions. There is a feeling of standstill, which people have no influence on; all they can do is to wait and to be patient. One of my respondents who works with Sudanese youngsters expressed it like this: These youngsters, she said, consider their time in Egypt as “a time of being asleep” and as “dead wasted time” (File A 15). This also correlates to another respondent’s comment, which has been quoted earlier, saying that Egypt is considered as a “waiting room” (File A 6, director of a learning center for refugee children).

7.3.2 The Experience of Waiting

This feeling of being in a *standstill-position* shows that many experienced the time of waiting as extremely frustrating. If we try to apply Brekke’s thought about the importance of having a time horizon to the situation of the refugees I talked to, it can be assumed that one of the problems that make waiting so stressful for refugees in Egypt is the fact that refugees do not know how long they have to wait. What it is they wait for, may it be resettlement, return, or something else, is not of specific relevance here, but rather the fact that they do not have a time line, is what I want to discuss. Before arriving in Egypt, many refugees are convinced that they are coming to Egypt to leave to another country, and they believe that the time of waiting is restricted to a couple of months. Many however, are waiting for years without success. In addition to not knowing how long they have to wait “to find opportunities”, it also becomes clear by analyzing the statements of my interviewees, that refugees are often not well informed about the asylum process, and have the feeling that decisions are taken randomly. The following quote illustrates this:

“Even you didn’t believe it, just by accident the UN looks at your file and you can leave Egypt.” (File B 1, student)

This aspect is also outlined by Brekke, when he talks about the importance of how comprehensible or random individuals see the length of their waiting time and how transparent the asylum process is for asylum-seekers. If we apply this train of thought to refugees who are still waiting to be resettled, the above quoted statement demonstrates that refugees experience the handling of cases as random. Hence, they feel like they are not able to control the situation and may feel that authorities do not act in fair way. This relates to Antonovsky's concept of the *sense of coherence*. As regards the first element, *comprehensibility*, it was observable that refugees may well have an understanding of the environment they live in, but as we have seen above, show a low degree of comprehensibility with regard to how realistic and transparent the possibility of resettlement is. As regards the concept's component *manageability*, we can say, that refugees in Egypt show a relatively high degree of manageability; as they often have the social network that can help them to overcome challenges. We have seen that the access to education is one of these challenges. The establishment of specific learning centers can in view of the aspect of manageability be seen as a strategy to handle the situation of waiting: They are not waiting anymore to be able to attend Egyptian schools, but instead ensure that children are being educated through other means. However, there are also aspects, such as the access to work, as I have outlined in chapter five, or the control of the asylum process that suggest a low sense of manageability. With regard to the third element, *meaningfulness*, the importance of the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum becomes clear. The Sudanese curriculum seems to give meaning to refugees' time of waiting. Whereas before the introduction of the new curriculum people knew that education will not lead them anywhere, education has now become something useful, as it provides people with perspectives for the future and increases their hopes. It can be argued that the Sudanese curriculum is both a way of empowerment that makes the time of waiting easier, and at the same time a symbol that the waiting is not over. Although refugees may now feel a higher sense of manageability and meaningfulness, as they are to a greater extent able to influence their situation, the new curriculum may remind them of the fact that waiting is not over because South Sudan is not independent. Hence, they cannot study what they want to study; they have to accept this compromise (as outlined above). Moreover, the Sudanese curriculum may be seen as a symbol that their waiting for resettlement proved to be without success. As the SSTU outlined, many did not care about the quality of education before, as they believed they are anyway going to be resettled soon. Due to the long waiting time, they may have become more realistic with regard to the importance of valid education, which may be seen as one underlying reason to agreeing to the new curriculum.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the Sudanese curriculum has helped people do deal with their time of waiting, as they are, at least to some extent, able to use their time in a productive way. I was also able to notice another aspect that seems to help the individual to deal with the difficult situation they find themselves in: their belief in God, which was also mentioned in Brekke's study about asylum-seekers in Sweden. In the Egyptian case, discrimination, as has already been mentioned at an earlier stage of this paper, is something that refugees experience as very problematic and therefore can be considered as something that makes their time of waiting more difficult. The following quote shows how their belief in God plays a role here: "It is because of God that I still shake the hands of Egyptians." (File A 11, focus group interview with six Sudanese refugees). Their difficult time of waiting is being relieved by the belief that God will help them to leave the country eventually: "As for the future, I do believe that I will not be here in Egypt. This is my faith in God." (File A 8, teacher). Another experience that I had during my first field study is also connected to this idea that one's religious belief is alleviating feelings of frustration and also shows that the belief in God is used as a means to make people be patient during their time of waiting: I attended a children's ministry of one of the churches in Cairo's district El Maadi, where children between the age of about two and twelve listen to religious stories and do exercises that are connected to happenings in Bible. The leader of the children's ministry told the children a story that obviously aimed at making them understand the importance of not taking hasty decisions and being patient: Somebody he knew decided to return to Sudan, where he was shot within only one week. The children were told that it is not good to simply return. It is better to *wait* and see what God has to say about one's ideas. He quoted a section from the Bible that expressed the thought 'Wait until I tell you to go'; one should wait for God's words before deciding to leave Egypt. The following extract from my field notes illustrates this further:

He explained to the children: "If God tells you to go to America, do it. If God tells you to return to your country, do it. Don't take quick decisions on your own, but listen to God's opinion and decisions." He compared the lives of refugees in Egypt with Jesus: Everyone is in Egypt for the same reason: They had to flee from persecution. So people should be patient. (File A 2)

7.3.3 Waiting and the Principle of the Child's Best

Refugees' strong feelings of discrimination have been very vivid throughout my research. As one mother pointed out: "I feel afraid of them in the streets, so how can I let my son enter into their schools?" (File B 9). Others have expressed that children would lose their self-confidence if they attended an Egyptian school. If I recall what some children told me during

a refugee school's summer program, this consideration seems legitimate. John, an eleven year old student, for instance, said "They call us 'monkey' or 'chocolate'. This is very bad for me." (File A 13). Although this study has shown the Sudanese curriculum's potential for refugees, the question still remains if using the curriculum of another country than the country of asylum, and attending specific schools – separate from the majority population – is a long term solution for refugees. One of my respondents implied that if refugee children attended public schools, integration may be possible in the long run (File A 6). However, although, attending public schools might indeed enhance refugee children's possibility for integration, aspects regarding the principle of the child's best²⁰ may be considered in this regard. The following question arises: What does have a higher priority: efforts for integration, or efforts for considering the child's best? With regard to being continuously discriminated against, one of my respondents said:

"We are trying to do the best for our children. We tried with the Egyptian before but our culture and the Egyptian culture they are not coming together, you know. If you ask any child to join the Egyptian school, so he suffers. [...] For the bigger people I will handle like this, but the students, they are not going to wait for the Egyptians." (File A 18, anonymous Southern Sudanese 1).

Although some people suggested that problems of discrimination for Sudanese children would decrease in Egyptian schools as time passes, this still leaves the question open if it is ethical to expose children to this experience for the sake of possible integration. Should children be asked to *wait* and bear discrimination until things become better? This paper does not provide a clear answer on this question but simply tries to point to the ambiguity of discussions about how far integration can or should go in certain contexts.

8 Summary and Conclusion

In this section, the results of my study and the outcomes of the analysis shall be summarized. As outlined in the introduction, the aim of this paper was to analyze what impact the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum has, taken the broader context of educational opportunities for refugees into consideration.

The majority of refugees in Egypt live in a difficult urban environment. Given the limited access to rights, refugees are often on the margins of society. The access to education constitutes a major issue, as many children are unable to attend public schools. Therefore, many refugee children go to so called refugee learning centers, but until recently they were barred from receiving officially recognized school certificates. The adoption of the Sudanese

²⁰ According to Art. 3 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, "the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration [...] [i]n all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies" (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>, 2010-02-11).

curriculum has had a great impact on the situation. Given the fact that refugee learning centers are not authorized to issue valid certificates for their students, the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum which was facilitated through a cooperation between the Government of Sudan and the Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union has opened up new possibilities for refugees.

Based on a series of interviews, it was possible to identify general trends of opinions on the curriculum and its adoption. Although adapting to the changes is causing some difficulties, the curriculum is valued by all parties involved due to its good quality, because it provides both students and teachers with a consistent structure, and – most importantly – because students can finally receive valid school documents. However, as there is dissatisfaction regarding the contents of the books, as well as the English translation, the curriculum takes on *the role of being a compromise* between the present and the future. Nevertheless, as it provides students with perspectives for the future, it becomes a *beacon for hope*, both for the individual and with regard to the future of Southern Sudan. As the curriculum teaches students about Sudan, it may be considered to take on *the role of being a medium to develop a national identity*. Moreover, for some respondents, the Sudanese government's willingness to support refugees raises suspicion that political considerations steer the government's actions. The adoption of the new curriculum hence takes on *the role of being a reason for increased distrust towards the Sudanese government*.

Apart from these findings, this study has also pointed out how refugees experience waiting, and how the Sudanese curriculum is linked to this. The most important aspect, it can be argued, is that studying the Sudanese curriculum is a way of empowerment that makes the time of waiting easier, as individuals see a meaning in what they do and are – at least to a higher extent than before the adoption of the curriculum – able to take matters into their own hands.

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Fig. 2	68	Stefan, Elisabeth. <u>Empirical Material Part A</u> . 34.

10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix # 1 – *Summaries of Empirical Material*

10.1.1 Files A 1 – A 18 (June - August 2009)

A 1 - Summary:

These are field notes taken after visiting at a new learning center for refugee children in Maadi. The center is going to be opened within the next couple of months. I talked to the director of the center about his thoughts on the new curriculum that some schools have started to use. This Sudanese curriculum is problematic in his opinion, because the contents of what the children are supposed to learn in the subject “History”, do not really go along with the school’s principles as they talk a lot about Islam. He also explained that parents are afraid of having their children attend Egyptian schools, due to discrimination.

A 2 - Summary:

These are field notes taken after joining a church’s children ministry. These notes are an example of how important religion can be for some people of the refugee community in Cairo and how religion is being used to make people deal with their situation of being refugees. The children were between about two and 12 years old. The person who is leading this group of children told them how important it is to be patient and wait for God’s decisions about ones life.

A 3 - Summary:

This is a report from a visit at a preschool in Cairo’s district Arba wa Nuss, a slum area on the outskirts of the city. The preschool was in very bad condition and although most of the expenses for the rent are covered by the UNHCR, the financial situation of the place is difficult, as none of the staff receives a salary. Most of the children who attend the preschool are of Sudanese origin but they were born in Egypt. The preschool teacher mentioned that Muslim families face problems with some of the learning centers for refugees, as most of them are Christian schools. With regard to Egyptian public schools she said that it is possible for refugee children who have an official refugee status to attend those schools, but in practice there are many obstacles to get a place. She also mentioned the prevailing discrimination towards Sudanese children at Egyptian schools, which is why parents are afraid of sending their children to study there. Being at Egyptian schools is bad for children’s self-confidence, she explained. Although many refugee schools employ teachers who do not have a teaching degree, parents prefer these schools. She also told me about the working situation of Sudanese families. As woman typically have the possibility to earn more, many men stay at home with the children. However, many families have difficulties to pay the schools fees that learning centers ask for.

A 4 - Summary:

This report outlines a conversation with an Egyptian woman, who I asked for directions in the streets when I was looking for a school for refugee children. She explained that many Sudanese live in this area and that there are problems with them because they are “wild” and the children “beat others”. She also explained that the life of refugees is easy here because Egypt “gives them everything they need.”

A 5 - Summary:

These are field notes taken after teaching an arts class at the summer program of the Found African Children Learning Center in El Maadi. A conversation about life in Egypt developed with the three children (between 11 and 14 years). They had a rather bad opinion about Egyptians and explained that it happens that they beat Sudanese.

A 6 - Summary:

This was an interview with the director of a learning center for refugee children at a church in Cairo, which offers various activities for refugees. In the interview, the woman told me about the importance of a valid school education and that this is the first school year that the school has been using the Sudanese curriculum, which will in the long run give the children the possibility to enter university, either in Egypt or elsewhere. She outlined the difficulties children would face if they attended Egyptian public schools, but sees a chance for better integration if refugee children went to those schools. We also talked about other issues regarding refugees in Egypt, such as the question of durable solutions. She pointed out that refugees consider Egypt as a waiting room and many still hope for resettlement, although this is in fact not an option anymore. She also said that more and more people are returning, because they are losing hope. In several comments she pointed out that the local conditions of Egypt, with regard to educational and work opportunities, should be considered.

A 7 - Summary:

This report describes one afternoon and evening in Cairo’s district Medinet Nasr that I visited together with a pastor and his colleague. We visited four homes of people that belong to the pastor’s religious community. I conducted an interview in each of these flats. The standard of the flats was simple and the area run-down. I was met with great hospitality and openness in the four homes, but the experiences on the street while walking from one house to the next were rather negative.

A 8 - Summary:

This was an interview conducted during a visit in Cairo's district Hay El-Ashir. The man that I interviewed is the headmaster of a school for refugee children, which is why our conversation had a focus on that school and educational issues. I also asked him about the work situation, which he said is difficult here especially for men, and about his thoughts for the future. He doesn't see himself in Egypt in the far future. Some other topics were also raised shortly (experience with Egyptians, the area, UNHCR).

A 9 - Summary:

This was a focus interview with seven refugees (two Congolese and five Sudanese) after they had attended worship. I asked questions regarding their thoughts about Egypt before their arrival, their experiences in Egypt, and their thoughts about the future. All of them told me that they face a lot of problems in Cairo, especially due to discrimination. "Here, it's all about the color", one respondent said. They view Egypt as a station and hope to leave Egypt for resettlement.

A 10 - Summary:

This was an informal interview with a Southern Sudanese man, who is a teacher at the African Hope Learning Center's primary school in El Maadi. The conversation was mainly about the issue of education for Sudanese children living in Cairo. He explained that many children do not attend school at all, because of the lack of schools for refugee children, the fees, problems of transportation, and the unwillingness of parents to have their children on Egyptian schools. The latter aspect is due to their fear of children's bad treatment at Egyptian schools. Having Sudanese and Egyptian children at the same schools, does not seem to constitute a solution in his point of view, except if a school like that was located in an isolated area, far from both Egyptians and Sudanese.

A 11 - Summary:

This was a focus group interview with six Sudanese refugees after they had attended worship. The respondents told me about the discrimination they are faced with, and that they do not see a future in Egypt. They have lost all hope, which is why they cannot be happy. Their belief in God which gives them strength also becomes apparent in the interview.

A 12 - Summary:

This report summarizes an art lesson at a school that took place during a summer program. The children were asked to draw pictures of their biggest dream. They drew different professions, means of transport and a house. The majority wants their biggest dream to come true in the USA.

A 13 - Summary:

These are field notes taken after teaching an arts class at the summer program of the Found African Children Learning Center in El Maadi. The topic of the class was “What makes you angry?” and some children told me what causes them to feel anger. There was a strong focus on things that make them angry when they are in the streets and many aspects were connected to experiences of discrimination. Grace, one of the students explained her experiences with Egyptians: “Because we have dark skin, they call us bad words”. John, another student confirmed: “They call us ‘monkey’ or ‘chocolate’. This is very bad for me.” Grace’s drawing is also about the same issue; it shows conflicts she faces with Egyptians.

A 14 - Summary:

This was an interview with a human rights advocate who works for a human rights organization in Cairo. Some of her opinions are summarized in this report. She explained that Egyptians often don’t know what a refugee is. With regard to schooling the interviewee explained that although Sudanese children have the right to attend public schools, there are many practical obstacles that hinder them to do so. She also added that the Egyptian public education is not good.

A 15 - Summary:

This is an interview conducted with a woman who runs the Youth LEAD project, a project for Sudanese youngsters that aims at eliminating the violent components of gang activities in Cairo. The project runs three activity centers in different parts of the city. They work with vocational training and Hip Hop. She mentioned that the majority of the youngsters have given up on resettlement but they don’t see themselves attaining a decent future in Egypt.

A 16 - Summary:

This was an interview with the school administrator of a high school for refugee children. He told me that the school was founded by foreigners during a time when the opportunities for resettlement of refugees were relatively high. This is why it was important to use English as a language of instruction. Even if the children go back to Sudan, he believes that it will be an advantage for them to be good at English. 80% of the students are from Southern Sudan. He said that the main aim of the school is to provide children with knowledge during their time of waiting.

A 17 - Summary:

This was an interview with the spokesperson of the Sudanese Teacher's Union. He told me that after the Union tried to arrange a valid school examination system for refugee children with the Southern Sudanese government and later with the Egyptian Ministry of Education and these two attempts were unsuccessful, they managed to cooperate with the Government of Sudan and finally were able to introduce the Sudanese curriculum at refugee learning centers in Cairo. He explained that since the adoption of the curriculum, violent gang activities have decreased among young Sudanese men. He thinks that after passing the school leaving examination and obtaining a university degree in Egypt, the Sudanese will return to Sudan, due to the lack of work opportunities in Egypt.

A 18 - Summary:

These are some comments by two Southern Sudanese men who are working at different learning centers for refugees in Cairo. Both of them are critical towards the goodwill of the Sudanese government, regarding the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum. They suggest that the government only wants to change Southern Sudanese people's minds about their opinion on independency from northern Sudan. The first man also points out the presence of discriminatory practices at Egyptian schools, which is why he does not consider it as a good idea to have Sudanese children attend those schools. He says the children will suffer there and lose their self-confidence. About the Sudanese curriculum he says that parents are happy about its existence in Egypt because it opens new ways for their children, but that many are not happy about the contents or the Curriculum. At the same time, he thinks that the curriculum is good, because it gives the children some knowledge about Sudan.

10.1.2 Files B 1 – B 9 (December 2009)

B 1 - Summary:

This was a focus group interview with three young women, who are students in the English pattern of “senior year three” at a school in El Maadi. They are preparing to take the Sudanese school certificate in March 2010. They are happy with their teachers but they see problems with the English translations of the books. They are glad that there is a chance for them to complete their secondary education now. All of them are planning to go to university after passing the final examination. The issue of discrimination came up in the interview; one participant said that people with black skin are not considered as humans by Egyptians. They are hoping to be able to leave Egypt one day – “nobody wants to stay here.”, one of them said.

B 2 - Summary:

This was a focus group interview with three young men, who are students in the Arabic pattern of “senior year three” at a school in El Maadi. They are preparing to take the Sudanese school certificate in March 2010. All of them are happy with the courses they take. Taking the certificate means a lot to them; their life has become better since they are back in school and they have plans and dreams for the future.

B 3 - Summary:

This was a short, rather structured interview with a man who is responsible for the set-up of “senior year three” at Found African Children Learning Center with the aim of getting general information regarding the structure of this grade. 90 students, aged 15 to 39 are registered for this grade in the academic year 2009/2010, all of them from Sudan. They are going to take the Sudanese school certificate examination in March, either in the English or in the Arabic pattern. The examination will be held at the Sakakini Church. 500 students are expected to attend the examination days, which will be supervised by representatives of the Ministry of Education of Sudan.

B 4 - Summary:

This was an interview with a woman, who has two children at the African Hope Learning center’s primary school in El Maadi. The school is using the Sudanese curriculum. She is happy about the adoption of this Curriculum because her children finally can have a valid certificate and have the chance to go to university. English as language of instruction is important to her. She was hoping to be resettled, but because she sees no possibility for this anymore, she now hopes for the chance to return to the South of Sudan. Her children do not have any Egyptian friends. About life in Egypt she said that it is common to be insulted and that people throw stones.

B 5 - Summary:

This was an interview with a teacher at the African Hope Learning Center's primary school. He emphasized the fact that now, with the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate, refugee children finally have the chance to go to university. He is, however, not happy about the strong Islamic influence in some of the subjects and also mentioned that the books have some language mistakes and use complicated and long sentences that cause difficulties for the children. Teachers and students, however, learn to deal with these problems.

B 6 - Summary:

This was an interview with a teacher at the primary school of the African Hope Learning Center. He says that since the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum, everything has changed. Now, the children have the chance to get a valid certificate and hence can go on to higher education. This, he explains, is not only positive for the individual student, but also for the future of the South of Sudan. According to him, many of the children will return to their country of origin and will – through the education they received in Egypt – be able to develop the South of Sudan.

He stated that there are certain disadvantages with the Sudanese curriculum, but is generally happy with its adoption at refugee learning centers in Cairo.

B 7 - Summary:

This was an interview with a man whose daughter attends the African Hope primary school. He is not only a parent, but also works in the administration of the school. He sees mainly advantages with the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate and says that it gives the children a brighter future. He also pointed out that even if a student does not complete the whole curriculum and the final Sudanese school certificate, he/she has the chance join school in Sudan upon return or to redo the examination in case of previous failure. He explained that this new curriculum gives the children a perspective; they have something to plan for. As disadvantage he mentioned some problems regarding the English version of the books.

He explained that attempts to make use of the Egyptian national certificate failed, because of barriers regarding among other things the documents and the children's ages. He also mentions that refugee children do not find themselves welcome in Egyptian public schools due to discrimination.

He says that most of the refugees from Sudan are striving to return to their home country, but are waiting for the right time to do so.

B 8 - Summary:

This was an interview with the three members of the executive committee of the Southern Sudanese Teachers' Union (SSTU) in Cairo. The chairman, the education coordinator, and the general secretary told me about how the SSTU was established, how the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate were adopted at Cairo's learning Centers for refugee children, and what impact this change has for everybody who is involved. They explained that this change has an important meaning for the future of the South of Sudan, because students are expected to return after finishing their education in order to help in the development of the South of Sudan.

B 9 - Summary:

This was an interview with a woman whose son attends the African Hope Learning Center's primary school. She is also teaching at that school. She explained that it would be difficult for Sudanese children to attend Egyptian schools, because of unequal treatment by both teachers and students. She mentioned that a woman she knows had her son on an Egyptian school, but they changed to this refugee school because of discrimination. Even she is afraid of Egyptians when she is walking in the streets, so she would not consider having her children on Egyptian schools. She wonders if it is Egyptian "culture" that makes Egyptians treat people with darker skin bad. The Sudanese curriculum and Certificate are an advantage in her opinion because they allow the children to continue their education upon return to Sudan. As only disadvantage she sees that the adoption took place rather quickly which causes difficulties for the children in the beginning.

Another teacher, who joined the interview, commented on the importance of the certificate. He said that throughout school systems in Africa, it is crucial to have a valid certificate, otherwise one's education does not have any value. He also said that the quality of the Sudanese curriculum is higher compared to the American, which is the one that the school used before.

Source: Stefan, Elisabeth. Empirical Material Part A and Part B. Malmö: Unpublished material, 2010.

10.2 Appendix # 2 - Interview Guides

The following sections outline the questions that my respondents were asked with regard to the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum.

10.2.1 Interview with representatives of the SSTU

Background information about the SSTU

- When has the SSTU been established and why?
- How many people work in the SSTU?
- What is the aim of the SSTU?
- Who is your target audience?

Adoption of the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate

- How did it come to the introduction of the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate in Cairo's learning centres for refugees?
- How many (and which) learning centres have adopted the Sudanese curriculum and how many offer the Sudanese school certificate?
- What experience have those centres had so far with this change?

Opinions about this change

- Have you heard of any reactions of parents about the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate? What do they think? Are they satisfied?
- Have you heard of students' reactions? How do you think they experience the adoption of the Sudanese curriculum and Certificate?
- What do teachers say about this recent development?
- What stand does the Egyptian government (the Egyptian Ministry of Education) take?
- What is your personal opinion?

(Is it a positive change? Why? What does it mean for the present situation and for the future of these children and their families? Are there difficulties with regard to suddenly changing the teaching materials? How does it work with languages of instruction, Arabic and English? Is it difficult for the students to pass the Sudanese school certificate because they are used to different curricula? Will the Sudanese school certificate be valid both in Sudan and Egypt in terms of access to higher education? ...)

Impact in the next years

- What kind of impact do you think will the adoption of the new system have in the coming months and years?
- What do you think about the future cooperation between the SSTU in Cairo and the Sudanese Ministry of Education? Do you think the elections in 2011 are important for the development of the application of the Sudanese curriculum in Egypt?
- What are the SSTU's plans for the future?

10.2.2 Interview with students

General:

- How long have you been attending this school?
- Which school(s) did you attend before (both in Cairo and in Sudan)?
- Which curricula did those schools teach?

Sudanese curriculum and Certificate:

- How long have you been taking classes of the Sudanese curriculum?
- What do you think about this curriculum?
- When are you planning to take the examination?
- What do you think you will gain from taking this examination?
- What does your family think about it?
- What are your plans after you have received the Sudanese school certificate?

10.2.3 Interview with parents of students

Background information

- How long have you been living in Cairo?
- How many children do you have and how old are they?
- Do they attend school? Which school(s)?

Choosing the school

- Why did you choose this school?
- Did you consider any other schools in Cairo?
- Did you consider (Egyptian) public schools? Why (not)?
- Did you experience any difficulties in registering your child at your preferred school?

About the school

- Is it important for you that the language of instruction is English at this school? Why (not)?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of education at this school?
- Do you feel that your child(ren) enjoy(s) attending this school?

The Sudanese curriculum and Certificate

- What is your general opinion about the introduction of the Sudanese curriculum in Cairo?
- Why do you think this Curriculum and the Sudanese school certificate were adopted at refugee schools in Cairo?
- What advantages and disadvantages do you see with the practise of the Sudanese curriculum?
- How do you think your child (your children) experience(s) the change to the Sudanese curriculum?
- Do you want your children to take the Sudanese school certificate when they are in their last year of high school?
- What do you think the Sudanese school certificate means to the future of your child(ren)?

Other questions

- Do you know any Sudanese family, who has children at Egyptian public schools?
- Does your child (your children) have Egyptian friends?

- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about living in Egypt?

10.2.4 Interview with teachers

General

- How long have you been teaching at this school?
- Which grades and which subjects do you teach?

The Sudanese curriculum and Certificate

- When was the Sudanese curriculum introduced at this school?
- What is your general opinion about the introduction of the Sudanese curriculum in Cairo?
- Why do you think this Curriculum and the Sudanese school certificate were adopted at refugee schools in Cairo?
- What advantages and disadvantages do you see with the practise of the Sudanese curriculum?
- How do you think your students experience the change to the Sudanese curriculum?
- What do you think the Sudanese school certificate means to the future of the child?

10.3 Appendix # 3 - Research with Children?

As stated in chapter two, I did not stick to my initial idea to actively do research with children. While working as a volunteer teacher during the summer program at the Found African Children Learning Center, I realized that initiating conversations with children about their experiences would have led to discussions about issues such as discrimination and the feeling of hopelessness, which may cause a risk to children's mental well-being. I felt that actively collecting information about children's opinions for scientific purposes cannot be justified if psychological support is not given and if the participants' well-being is put at stake. Hence I changed my research methods rather quickly: I limited my research to interviewing only adults and in two cases youngsters who were above the age of sixteen. Three files of the empirical material (File A 5, A 12, and A 13, see appendix #1 for summaries) derive, nevertheless, from observations during the school's summer program. I observed children's comments during art classes, without initially aiming at using them as research material. Due to the summer program's theme "African Child Destiny", it was natural to philosophize around issues of children's present experiences and their thoughts about the future. Appendix # 4 gives an example of an art class, when a conversation about discrimination developed.

10.4 Appendix # 4 – Notes on Discrimination

During my time teaching at the summer program of a learning center for refugees, a Southern Sudanese girl expressed her feelings through a drawing. The following picture shows her standing in the street with an Egyptian who says: "You crazy hahaha". The girl becomes angry and says: "You don't tell me this". The theme of this class was "What makes me angry."



Fig. 2
What makes me angry, Grace (name changed), 9 years old
Photo: Elisabeth Stefan, 2009-07-15
(File A 13)

10.5 Appendix # 5 – Notes on Integration

Although ‘integration’ is not the topic of this thesis, I would like to present some comments from an interview, as they are of relevance for the reader in order to get a deeper understanding of the local conditions and refugee issues in the Egyptian context.

In the following extract from an interview report, my interviewee, the director of a learning center for refugees pointed out the harsh local conditions for the local population and expressed the thought that although integration is difficult for refugees, this possibility might even be complicated further through the presence of people from the “West”, who are supportive of refugees, but tend to overlook the host population in their humanitarian actions:

When I asked her about her opinion on local integration as a durable solution for refugees in Egypt she said: *“Life in Egypt for a poor Egyptian is phenomenally hard, and there are no church schools, there are no people who hand out medication, there are no, in a way, privileges. In a way, refugees are privileged over poor Egyptians. And refugees obviously can’t see that, or not necessarily can’t see that but think that it’s an entitlement that they have. It causes enormous resentment amongst the Egyptian community obviously, and there is definitely, without a shadow of doubt, there is a skin color racial prejudice in this country, I know American friends who are black, who have been attacked and then they have found their American passport and been like ‘wuuah, sorry’ you know. So there there is definitely a skin color prejudice in this country and you know all the stigmata. But there is also, I would say, a valid anger, that ‘all these people are getting into our country and they are getting all these things and we’re not getting anything’. So there is big resentments between the Sudanese and the local community. Interestingly, there is not nearly so much resentment between the Eritrean and the Egyptian community and the moment. And that could be for several reasons. One because they look more like each other, the Eritreans are not so dark but also maybe there are not so many here yet, or maybe they see the Eritrean as genuine victims which they don’t see the Sudanese. I don’t know enough about it. I know people who have moved out of refugee areas and gone to live in Egyptian areas, and who find life much more tolerant.”* She also mentioned that she knows Sudanese who have lived here for 20 years who still talk about Egyptians as if they were different species. She said she thinks that there needs to be made more effort from both the refugees and the Egyptians: *“More efforts needs to be made on both sides. It’s a both-sided thing; it’s not a one-sided thing.”* Another thing with regards to integration that she said, was what somebody she knows told her. That woman *“said that ‘the problems with the poor Egyptians and the refugees is that there is a wall of white people around the refugees that will not let them integrate with the poor Egyptians which I thought was quite interesting.”* She explained once more: *“She said that [...] around the refugees there is a wall of white people which stops them interacting and supporting mutually with the Egyptians. There’s white people looking after refugees, and with their back to the Egyptians. So that was a very interesting picture. Again, I don’t know how true it is.”* (File A 6)

10.6 Appendix # 6 – Conversation with Egyptian Woman

This thesis has presented many thoughts of refugees and people working with refugees. As I mentioned in chapter 2 regarding the limitations of this study, I have not interviewed people from the host community. The only exception is an informal conversation with an Egyptian woman who I met when I was on the way to a school for refugee children. What follows is the reconstructed conversation, which I have translated to English. Although I am aware of the fact that this interview alone is in no way representative, I believe it gives an interesting insight into the issue, as it shows a completely different perspective.

W (woman): What do they have in this street? (asking me what it is that I am looking for here)
E (Elisabeth Stefan): A school for refugees
W: Ah, I didn't know that. It is new, right?
E: Yes, I think it is new. Do you live here in Hadayek El Maadi?
W: Yes, I live here, but I work in the center.
E: Do you know if many refugees live here in Hadayek El Maadi?
W: You mean from Sudan?
E: Yes.
W: Yes, a lot! A lot.
E: Hmm, are there problems with them?
W. yes, many problems!
E: Why?
W: They always fight. They are so wild. The children are wild and beat others.
E: Hmm
W: They talk so loudly and we Egyptians don't like this way. And they are so wild, and disturb and beat.
E: Are all of them like that?
W: Yes, all of them.
E: But I think their life in Egypt is not so easy.
W: No, no, it is easy.
E: Easy or not easy?
W: It is easy for them.
E: How?
W: Egypt gives them everything they need. And the government organizes work for all of them.
E: Hmm, I heard that there are often problems when Sudanese children attend Egyptian schools. I mean if there are some students from Sudan, then they have problems with the other children and with the teachers.
W: Yes, that's because the children are so wild and are beating, you see?
E: Has it been for a longer time that so many people from Sudan live here?
W: Not so many before, but now they are a lot! Many! Over there they even have their own café for Sudanese. (pointing at a street café)
E: (while passing the café) Ah, isn't that good? That's nice!
W: No, I don't think that's good.
E: Why?
W: They just want to be amongst themselves, without Egyptians. (File A 4)