



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**An Exploration into the Factors that determine the progression
of Asylum Seekers living in Direct Provision, into Further
Education.**

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Masters of Arts in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development

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of Asylum Seekers Living in Direct Provision, into Further
Education.**

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Declaration

The author of this thesis declares that this her own work. No element of the work in this dissertation has previously been submitted for any degree of in the University of Limerick or submitted to another institution

Signed: _____

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Glossary of Terms

DES	Department of Education and Skills
FET	Further Education and Training
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
IRC	Irish Refugee Council
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NGF	National Guidance Forum
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance and Education
RIA	Reception and Integration Agency
WSA	Whole School Approach

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore the factors that determine the progression of asylum seekers living in direct provision, into further education. This study focused on the effects of living in the direct provision on the educational experiences and the progression options that are currently available to asylum seekers.

The research considers that there is a significant research gap in relation to the educational experiences of asylum seekers in Ireland and there is little know their experiences of guidance counselling. Thus, it is important to understand the issues they face and how it implicates guidance counselling practice. It is important to understand this topic, as asylum seekers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, due to the situations in which they fled and the circumstances they find themselves in Ireland.

An interpretive paradigm was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with six asylum seekers that are currently living in direct provision in Ireland. Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic data analysis was used to analysis the data.

The findings identify that direct provision can have a negative effect on the educational experiences of asylum seekers. It also highlights the need for guidance counsellors to have more awareness of the situations of this group to improve the area of practice. This thesis concluded with recommendations for further research to be carried out in this area.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will introduce the research study, present the context and justification for the study and the positionality of the researcher. The aims and objects and methodology of the study are outlined. And finally the plan for the thesis will be discussed.

1.1 Context and Justification of the research study

This thesis will explore the factors that determine the progression of asylum seekers living in direct provision into further education. Asylum seekers are defined by the Irish Refugee Council (2012) as people seeking protection from the state authorities as ‘refugees,’ while their application for international protection is being processed. The growing global refugee crisis continued in 2016, with 1.5 million people-seeking asylum in EU Member States (Harmon 2018). In Ireland, asylum seekers are accommodated under the direct provision system. Direct provision is the means by which the State meets its obligations to provide for the material needs of people seeking protection in the State (McMahon 2015). There are currently 32 accommodation centres across Ireland (Thornton 2017). As of August 2018, RIA reported that there were 5,609 people living in direct provision centres across Ireland.

Asylum seekers may have left their country of origin for various reasons including, political, economic, cultural, social and personal factors and often have very complex and individual needs. Lengthy asylum procedures can result in children and young adults living in inappropriate and inhospitable environments (Harmon 2018). Due to the poverty that is exacerbated by direct provision, asylum seekers are left with little opportunity to interact and establish relationships within local communities, and are often isolated from other young people and socially excluded from activities (IRC 2012). Furthermore, the IRC (2012) highlight that there is an association between living in Direct Provision centres and increased stress, linking health problems and long stays in communal accommodation. Direct Provision can negatively impact on a resident’s self-esteem and motivation and engender feelings of helplessness (McMahon 2015).

In Ireland, asylum seekers are entitled to free primary and post primary education. Language difficulties can have huge consequences on academic progress for migrants, with it being a

significant barrier to educational achievement (Darmody et al 2014; Ledwith and Reilly 2012). Many studies describe the impact of inadequate study space in direct provision centres, as has having an impact on the educational potential of young people (Arnold 2013). Asylum seekers can access further and higher education, if they can cover the costs of the fees, get fees waivers or access scholarships (RIA 2018). Asylum seekers are required to pay international fees of approximately €3,600 for a post leaving certificate course and €20,000 per year for a higher education course (Mannion 2016). The unstable and insecure nature of their daily lives and future uncertainty ‘leads to considerable anxiety and stress, which is further compounded, by high levels of poverty’ (Harmon 2018, p.7).

As this study aims to explore the progression options and educational experiences of a vulnerable group, guidance counselling and the concept of multicultural guidance will be addressed in this study. With increased numbers of immigration, career practitioners need to be culturally sensitive and mindful more than ever before (Nassar-McMillan 2014). As a multicultural society has emerged guidance counsellors need to integrate multicultural perspectives into their understanding of careers and into their work, as a ‘multicultural mind-set’ is developing. (Kidd 2006; Leong and Hartung 2000). Multicultural counselling is crucial in supporting immigrant adjustment and integration and the role of guidance counsellors is to facilitate integration and social cohesion (Batumubwira 2005). As preparing for an ‘unknowable future’ can affect how asylum seekers view their future careers and ambitions after education, guidance counsellors play a vital role in assisting asylum seekers to ‘re-imagine’ their future career and develop a career plan (Dryden- Peterson 2017; Harmon 2018, p.7).

The justification of undertaking this study, according to the researcher, is the lack of research from the perspectives of asylum seekers in relation to guidance counselling in Ireland and vice versa. Research has emerged in relation to post primary education experiences, however the research in relation to experiences in further education is practically non-existent in the Irish context.

1.2 Researchers Position

The ‘positionality’ of the researcher is important to acknowledge as readers need to be aware of who the researcher is and what their stance is in relation to the research topic (Thomas

2013). The researcher of this study is a trainee guidance counsellor and is a social care worker who works in an educational setting with asylum seeker children. It is of great interest to the researcher to link her current role with her future role as a guidance counsellor. The researcher wants to explore how asylum seekers can be supported by guidance counsellors. I have seen first-hand, the effects that living in direct provision has on the lives of asylum seekers, whilst also witnessing great support from service providers.

Although the researcher was acquainted with the participants she has never worked with them in a professional capacity, however it was important to be aware of familiarity bias (Robson 2007). To be reflexive in research, is to consider issues such as ‘positionality and insider/outsider stances’ (Merriam and Tisdell 2015, p.64). Therefore, reflexivity of the researcher is an extremely important aspect of this study due to her insider positionality. Reflexivity was practiced to ensure the studies validity. The researcher is an insider due to working in the same centre in which they live, however was an outsider due to their personal circumstances, race and experiences. It was important for the researcher to focus on self-knowledge, sensitivity and the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research (Berger 2013).

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this study was to explore the factors that determined the progression of asylum seekers into further education and the implications it has on guidance counselling practice. Whilst there have been numerous reports done on the impact of direct provision, the area of guidance counselling asylum seekers is under researched. The key objectives of this research were:

1. Review the relevant literature in relation to policy, practice and research in relation to asylum seekers, education and guidance counselling.
2. To explore the perceptions that young adult asylum seekers had on their educational experiences and further educational aspirations
3. Carry out semi structured interviews with asylums seekers living in direct provision in the west of Ireland to gain an insight into their lived experiences of education and aspirations whilst living in direct provision.

4. Identify recommendations for future policy, practice and research in light of the findings from this study.

1.4 Research Methods

An interpretivist paradigm was the methodology used by the researcher in this study. This method was used as it considers the reality and experiences of asylum seekers, in regard to progression options and education experiences in Ireland, as they each will have their own perceptions and experiences to share (Thomas 2013). A qualitative approach was employed and six semi-structured interviews were carried out with asylum seekers living in direct provision in the west of Ireland, in order to gather purposeful information (Berg 2009).

1.5 Thesis Plan

Chapter 1: The introduction chapter introduces the research topic and provides the context and the justification for undertaking this research study. The positionality of the researcher is described and aims and objectives are identified. The methodology and outline of the six chapters of the thesis are also outlined.

Chapter 2: The literature chapter develops the research findings through the critical lens of the existing literature relevant to the research area. Guidance counselling in post primary and further education is explored and the concept of multicultural guidance counselling. Direct provision and the impact it has on the educational experiences of asylum seeker examined alongside the progress options available. Finally, the implication for guidance counsellors in relation to the findings is discussed.

Chapter 3: The methodology chapter identifies the research questions and the research paradigm underpinning the research study. Data collection and analysis are discussed alongside participant profiles. Ethical considerations are highlighted and the reflexivity of the researcher is identified. Validity and reliability are also addressed.

Chapter 4: The findings chapter presents the findings and identification of the themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis.

Chapter 5: The discussion chapter provides a critical analysis of the research findings under the critical lens of the literature review.

Chapter 6: The conclusion chapter relates the overall findings to the research questions that were identified in chapter 3. It presents a number of recommendations for future policy, practice and research and finally discuss the personal learning of the researcher.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research topic and presented the context of the study. The justification for undertaking the research was discussed and the positionality of the researcher was established. The aims and objectives were identified along with a detailed plan of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to, narrow the focus for researchers and to generate research questions (Robbins 2008). The main aim of this research is to explore the progression opportunities of asylum seekers living in direct provision into further education, and the implications for guidance counselling. As Ireland is becoming a more diverse country, guidance counsellors alongside others in education have a responsibility in supporting immigrants, including asylum seekers.

The literature review is split into six sections. Section one addresses guidance counselling and multicultural guidance. Section two gives an overview of the direct provision system. Section three examines the current literature on the educational experiences of asylum seekers. Section four will examine current progression options available to asylum seekers. Finally, section five will explore the implications for guidance counselling.

2.1 The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

Guidance counsellors ‘assist people, at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices to manage their careers’ (OECD 2004, p.19). Watts and Kidd (2000, p.489) define guidance counselling as a range of processes ‘designed to enable individuals to make informed choices and transitions related to their educational, vocational and personal development.’ The role of Guidance Counsellors covers personal, educational and vocational guidance across the lifespan (IGC 2016). Guidance counselling can ‘play a key role in promoting social inclusion, equality, and active citizenship by encouraging and supporting individuals’ participation in education/ training and to attain self-fulfilment’ (NGF 2007 p.35). The OECD (2004) defines guidance counselling as a way of assisting individuals to overcome barriers, such as gender, ethnicity, disability and social class, to learning and employment

Information is a key area of professional practice in guidance counselling as guidance counsellors have “a responsibility to ensure that current information is gathered, organised and disseminated to provide clients with the widest range of options and assisting clients in accessing and interpreting information effectively” (IGC 2016, p.5). The Department of

Education and NCGE (1996) guidelines for Guidance, state that ‘guidance classroom activities include skills enhancement, developmental programmes and information giving.’

2.1.1 Guidance Counselling in Post Primary School

Since 1966, guidance counselling in post primary education in Ireland has evolved in response to a number of educational, societal and economic changes (Hearne et al 2016). The Education Act 1998 defines guidance counselling “as a service” with the responsibility on schools to “provide access to appropriate guidance, to assist in education and career choices and to promote the social and personal development of students.” (IGC 2008, p.4). Guidelines from the DES (2005a, p.4) state that ‘guidance counselling covers three separate but interlinked areas of personal development, educational guidance and career guidance. ‘

The whole school approach (WSA) to guidance counselling, takes place with the guidance counsellor, school staff, management playing a key role in the provision of guidance (DES 2009). The DES (2012, p.4) state: ‘it is established policy that guidance is a whole school activity and under existing arrangements each school develops collaboratively a school guidance plan as a means of supporting the needs of its students. The WSA has emerged in Ireland in recent years, especially in relation to literacy and numeracy, wellbeing and guidance counselling (DES 2009, p.9; Hearne et al 2016). A whole school approach can be very effective when a student is not as comfortable in approaching their guidance counsellor, with other staff members providing information to students (DES 2009, Hearne et al 2016). This approach should seek ‘to examine and reflect on how all elements in the school environment support inclusion’ (Harmon 2018, p.9).

2.1.2 Guidance Counselling in Further Education

Further Education and Training (FET) provides education and training to assist individuals to gain qualifications from level 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), to attain valuable skills and secure employment (SOLAS 2014). FET’s plays an important role in fulfilling people’s lives, including vulnerable people and groups, to reach their potential and reduce social exclusion. Guidance counselling and information services take different forms across the FET Sector, with career services providing impartial careers and educational information, one-to-one and group guidance enabling individuals to make informed educational, career and life choices (DES 2016). Guidance is a key aspect of

further education programmes and should be available at all stages including pre-entry and pre-exit basis (NCGE 2012). Learners in FET should be supported to make informed choices that suit their academic, vocational or personal needs (NAPD 2014). The Guidance Counsellor plays a crucial role in reducing the dropout rate of students from college and increasing progression to further education by providing educational and vocational guidance about college options (Dooley 2014).

2.1.3 Multicultural Guidance Counselling

As Ireland has become a more diverse society it is important to understand the concept of multicultural guidance counselling. This subsection will address the multicultural approach in terms of working with immigrant groups, such as asylum seekers.

Reid and Westergaard (2011, p.61) state that ‘a multicultural approach seeks to develop an awareness of the potential impact of any social difference including: age, gender, race, social class, sexuality, and disability. Multicultural counselling counts among the crucial supports in the process of immigrant adjustment in a new society with the broader role of guidance counselling immigrants, is to help them with integration and social cohesion (Batumubwira 2005). Educational and vocational counselling helps individuals plan the next steps in their career development with political and economic factors guiding the opportunities available to people in their locality (Nassar-McMillan 2014, p.106; Gati et al 1996).

Guidance Counsellors need to be careful of stereotyping clients, instead, adopting ‘cultural empathy’ to explore with the client what their cultural background means to them (Kidd 2006) Multicultural competencies are vital in order to embrace the cultural diversity of clients as Launikari and Puukari (2005 P.27) state that guidance counsellors need to have:

- 1)an awareness of their own assumptions, values and biases
- 2) an understanding of the worldview of a culturally different client,
- 3) an ability to develop appropriate intervention strategies

2.3 Asylum seekers in Ireland

Asylum seekers are defined by the Irish Refugee Council (2012, p.1) as people seeking protection from the state authorities as ‘refugees,’ while their application for international protection is being processed. They are legally entitled to stay in the state until their application for protection is decided. Under the 1951 Geneva convention a refugee is defined as:

“Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”

2.3.1 Direct Provision Policy

Direct provision is the means by which the State meets its obligations to provide for the material needs of people seeking protection in the State (McMahon 2015). Direct provision was officially introduced in April 2000, as a temporary minimum support policy for asylum seekers applying for refugee status or other forms of protection. This included free board, with three meals provided per day and a weekly allowance of €21.60 per week and also €21.60 for a child (Citizens Information 2018). An exceptional needs payment of €100 per year can be made for specific items such as school books and uniforms (Thornton 2015).

Thornton (2015) also stressed that the average duration in Direct Provision is almost four years but some residents were reported as waiting over 14 years for a decision due to the appeals process. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) is the state body overseeing the accommodation of Asylum Seekers, set up in 2001 as a response to the inward migration in Ireland. RIA’s principle remit is to house Asylum Seekers in communal centres throughout Ireland and coordinate the provision of services in health and education (Moran et al 2017). As of August 2018, there were 5,609 people living in direct provision centres across Ireland (RIA 2018).

Asylum seekers were not entitled to enter the labour market until recently and have limited access to third level education. In early 2018, the Irish government lifted its ban on employment for asylum seekers. Ireland fully opted in to the EU Directive on the 29th of

June 2018 (NASC 2018). Asylum seekers who have not yet received a first instance recommendation on their application and are awaiting their decision on their refugee status, for nine months or more can apply for a work permit. There are restrictions for those who have received a decision on their applications and for those who are appealing those decisions (NASC 2018). However, it is estimated that 3,000 of more than 5,300 people in the system will benefit (Bardon and Pollak 2018). Eligible participants can apply for work anywhere except for the Defence Forces, An Garda Siochana, the Civil or Public Service. Whilst the Irish Refugee Council (2018) welcomed the measure, the exclusion of people who have received a decision on their applications, is still creating barriers.

2.3.2 Social Inclusion and Poverty

Asylum seekers are an extremely vulnerable group experiencing high rates of poverty and social exclusion. Direct provision has been described as having a negative impact on individuals, due to ‘lack of economic resources, cramped living conditions, lack of privacy and missing out on normal family life’ (Ni Raghallaigh et al 2016, p13). Despite the efforts by staff of the accommodation centres to create a humane environment for asylum seekers, direct provision is a discriminatory system, which socially excludes asylum seekers from the local community, both physically and financially (IRC 2012). Poverty can be described as when an ‘individual’s income and resources are so inadequate as to prevent them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society’ (Government of Ireland 1997, p.3). The cash payment received per week, leaves asylum seekers with little or no opportunity to interact and establish relationships within local communities and as a result, are often isolated from other young people their age and socially excluded from trips and community activities (IRC 2012).

2.3.3 Acculturation and Education

Whilst understanding the personal situations of asylum seekers, it is important to be aware of acculturation theory as it can provide a framework for understanding the issues related to integration. Redfield et al (1936, p.149) defined acculturation as comprehending ‘those phenomena which result when groups of individuals, having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.’ Berry (1997) proposes two dimensions underlying the process of

acculturation are, individuals' links to their cultures of origin and to their societies of settlement, and developed a framework for understanding the strategies of acculturation:

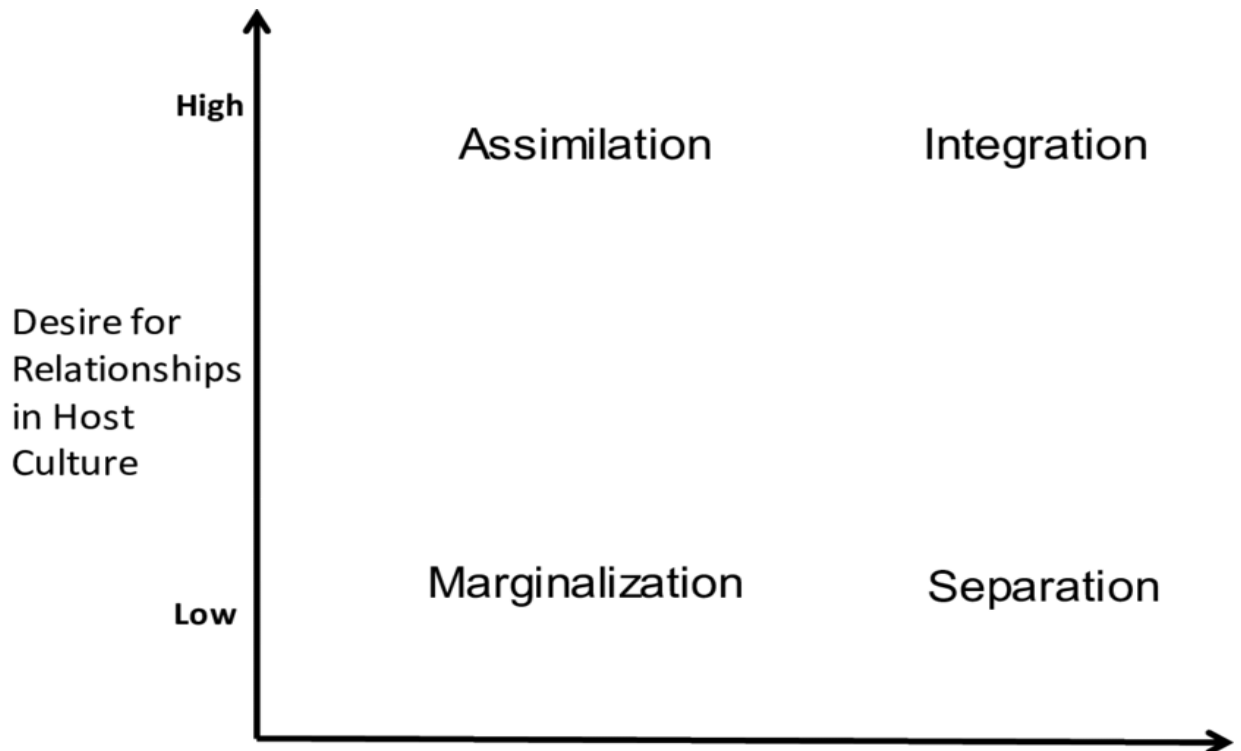


figure 2.3 adopted from Berry (1997; 2001)

To explain figure 2.3, Berry (1997,) outlines the concept of the four strategies of acculturation. Assimilation is when there is little interest in cultural maintenance preferring to interact with the larger society. Separation is the way when cultural maintenance is sought while avoiding involvement with other cultures. Marginalisation exists when neither cultural maintenance nor interaction with others is carried out. Finally, Integration is present when both cultural maintenance and involvement with the larger society is sustained. Asylum seekers have ‘a unique array of issues and tend to present higher levels of acculturative stress because they are more directly engaged with the immigration process’ (Nassar-McMillan 2014, p.106). The ideal way of acculturation, is adapting to a new culture in such a way that

immigrants preserve their own cultural values and characteristics (Launikari & Puukari 2005).

Interest is increasing, on the impact that education has on how people adjust to new cultural environments, with social relationships in schools being associated with acculturation (Sheikh and Anderson 2018). Social and school support refers to the quality of relationships that students have with peers, teaching and other staff, and the education system that students are engaged in acculturation (Sheikh and Anderson 2018). Participation in education is also an opportunity to socially interact with individuals outside of one's cultural group. Bang (2017) found that increases in educational gaps were related to increases in marginalization and decreases integration. A lower level of socioeconomic status can act as a barrier in accessing education, but then having the ripple effect of resulting in less opportunities, that can facilitate acculturation and thus compound the lack of access to education (Sheikh and Anderson 2018).

2.4 Educational Experiences of Asylum Seekers

This section will examine the literature in regards to the education experiences of asylum seekers.

2.4.1 Integration

School or college is reported as the place where asylum seekers socialise and participate the most in society, however, networks are limited due to extreme poverty with asylum seekers unable to afford to participate in extracurricular activities and unstructured activities (Arnold 2013; Mooney 2015). It can take time for a newly arrived asylum seeker to settle into the school. As children become older, however, differences between them and their friends become apparent and they realise that they do not have a 'home' in the same sense as their friends (Ogbu et al 2014). The weekly allowance received by asylum seekers is insufficient to allow them to participate to a minimal degree in social, cultural and religious life or to maintain relationships, with costs relating to birthdays and other special occasions been drawn from their weekly allowance (McMahon 2015). Direct provision has also been described as perpetuating income inequality and exacerbating multiple forms of social exclusion (Moran et al 2017).

2.4.2 English Language Barriers

One key difficulty for immigrants is language support services in schools (Watt and McGaughey 2006). Many children living in asylum systems were found to be in need of extra English language classes which is not provided in all schools (Ogbu et al 2014). Language difficulties can have huge consequences on academic progress for migrants, with it being a significant barrier to educational achievement (Darmody et al 2014; Ledwith and Reilly 2013). Adjusting to a new language, culture, norms and values upon arrival ‘can place a significant strain’ on asylum seekers.’ (Harmon 2018, p.7) Students may be referred to as ‘non-English speaking’ and the accompanying narrative is that when students learn English they will be able to access the curriculum the same as any other student (Harmon 2018, P.8)

2.4.3 Study Space

Young asylum seekers worry about their education when they have no space or support for homework, and also worry about limited third level opportunities (UCC 2016). The ability to study is impacted by inactivity, cramped living conditions and the uncertainty and fear of the decision that is to come on their outstanding applications (Conlan 2014). Cramped living conditions have a significant impact on children’s educational development with the absence of proper study space and furniture preventing young people from studying for their examinations or doing their homework (Moran et al 2017: Arnold, 2013). Ogbu et al (2014) also highlighted this issue in their study with parents describing their children doing their homework on the floor or lying in their bed whilst trying to concentrate in spite of noise and distractions in their confined space. The conditions individuals are exposed to are categorized into various types of conditions that are more or less favourable to the attainment of educational success (Muller 2014).

2.4.4 Wellbeing and Motivation

The World health organisation (2014) defines mental health as ‘a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities and copes with normal stresses of life, can work productively and contribute to his or her community.’ Asylum seekers are more likely to experience mental illness, due to disproportionate exposure to post-migration stressors such as, insecure residency and lack of education (O’Connell et al 2016). Depression has

been identified amongst asylum seekers, through the anxiety of deportation and boredom with not having anything to keep them occupied during the day (NíShé 2007). Arnold (2012) documents how living in overcrowded and confined spaces, such as direct provision, has had a negative impact on the well-being of asylum seekers. There is an association between living in direct provision centres and increased stress, with increasing evidence that there are important links between health problems and long stays in communal accommodation (Ogbu et al 2014; IRC 2011).

The inability to undertake any significant education or vocational training, places already vulnerable people in an insidious position, increasing vulnerability and the potential for a much longer term problem (Conlan 2014 p.20). Thus, people having very limited access to educational or training opportunities results in individuals becoming de-skilled and unmotivated" (FLAC 2010, p.127). Direct Provision can negatively impact on a protection applicant's self-esteem and motivation and engender feelings of helplessness (McMahon 2015).

2.5 Access to Further and Third Level Education

'Education is one of the most important individual and societal resources, hardly anything has such a strong influence on later job, career, and income as the level and nature of one's educational qualifications' (Muller 2014, p.22). Asylum seekers can access higher education and vocational training if they can cover the costs of the fees, fees waivers or access scholarships (RIA 2018).

2.5.1 Accessing Further Education and Training (FET)

Access to further education and training for asylum seekers is difficult due to their weekly income, with fees costing approximately €3,600 per course for non-EU students (NASC 2018). This policy has not changed since the department of education letter re access to other further education for asylum seekers. DES (2000) outline that asylum seekers who entered the country after July 1999, are categorised as non EU students and are ineligible for free tuition, and maintenance support. The Irish refugee council education fund was set up in 2015 to financially assist asylum seekers in accessing further education and the fund has continued to assist people in the asylum process with their educational needs, be it course fees, transportation costs or course materials (IRC 2018). Furthermore, NGO's such as the

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and NASC offer limited grants to asylum seekers wishing to pursue further education (Nasc 2018).

2.5.2 Accessing Higher Education

Higher Education (HE) in Ireland is provided by seven universities, fourteen institutes of technology, seven Colleges of education and 10 other state aided institutions (DES 2018). Access to education has been a key issue for Asylum seekers living in Direct Provision. Under the Student Support Act (2011), asylum seekers are not eligible for financial support for higher education, regardless of, if they have been lawfully resident in Ireland for a number of years and have completed their secondary education in Ireland (Mannion 2016). For a student to qualify for free fees they must be a resident of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland for at least three of the past five years prior to starting higher education course in Ireland, in addition to satisfying certain nationality and immigration requirements (Denny 2015). Asylum seekers are categorised as international students, with fees up to and exceeding €20,000 per year (Mannion 2016). There has however, been recent developments in terms of financial support for asylum seekers wishing to enter higher education which will be explained below.

2.5.3 Government Pilot Scheme

In 2015, the Irish Government introduced a pilot scheme, a financial assistance scheme for Asylum Seekers who are pursuing an approved Post Leaving Certificate or Undergraduate course (DES 2016). Applicants of this scheme must meet the certain criteria, such as, they need to have obtained their leaving certificate, have been accepted on an approved course, have attended a minimum of five academic years in the Irish school system, and have been part of an application for protection for a period of five years (Mannion 2016). Whilst this was positive news for Asylum Seekers, Murray (2017) reported that there were 39 applications for the scheme in its first year but only two students met the strict criteria. The Irish Refugee Council (2018) reported that only one applicant was successful for the 2017/2018 academic year. The IRC (2018) have also called for the scheme to be made more accessible due to the restrictive nature of the eligibility criteria attached to it.

2.5.4 Scholarships and Access Courses

Certain universities in Ireland offer scholarships to asylum seekers living in direct provision under the university of sanctuary programme (Leogue 2018). In 2016, the University of Limerick was awarded ‘*University of Sanctuary*’ and in July 2018 they announced that it will offer 15 new four-year undergraduate scholarships to refugees and asylum seekers beginning in September 2018 (careers portal). Dublin City University (was the first to confirm 15 new scholarships in 2016 under the university of sanctuary scheme and more recently UCC confirmed seven new scholarships under the scheme (IRC 2018).

NUI Galway currently run the *Inclusive Centenaries Scholarship Scheme* for asylum seekers, and other protection applicants. There strict criterion attached to this scholarship. The applicants must have been a pupil in a secondary school in Ireland on a fulltime basis for the three years preceding entry, passed a minimum of six subjects in the Leaving Certificate examinations and earned at least 450 points, and must have applied for a fulltime undergraduate Level 8 degree course at NUI Galway and be ineligible for a SUSI grant (NUIG 2016). Athlone Institute of Technology also received ‘college of sanctuary status,’ the first institute of technology to do so (AIT 2018). This programme comprises of six places on the AIT access programme and 3 scholarships for undergraduate programmes

Alongside scholarships, universities are offering access courses with asylum seekers being able to apply, they are currently available at: NUI Galway, UCD Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, Athlone IT and Dublin IT (Careers Portal 2018). Access Courses are courses specifically designed for students who have a real desire to study at third level but are unable due to financial or social reasons (NUIG 2018).

EU universities have similar admissions policies for international students as Ireland. Tuition fees, language barriers and missing paperwork mean most asylum seekers are unable to continue studying in their host countries (Le Blond 2016). Many universities from the UK, Germany and Sweden providing various solutions to help asylum seeker students to continue or start their higher education studies through scholarships and other programmes (Vioreanu 2017). Although, access to such schemes can be difficult as there are some general requirements every applicant has to meet, especially language proficiency (Schammann et al 2016).

2.5.5 Inequality of Opportunity

Higher education has been seen as one of the main engines of social mobility, however one of the key problems of higher education is equal access to it, regardless of individuals social, economic and culture (Brown 2017) McCoy et al (2007) note that while there has been continued expansion in access to higher education, such expansion has not benefitted all social groups with social inequalities remain in participation and attainment rates. The disadvantage of engaging with the examinations process through a second language impact on points, with many educationalists agreeing that students whose first language is not English may be under-achieving at Leaving Certificate level (Harris and Ni Chonail 2016)

Ireland's white paper on adult education (2000) highlighted the principle of promoting an inclusive society by promoting equality of access and participation in adult education with strategies to counteract barriers such as ethnicity. The HEA (2015 p.6) aimed to 'ensure that the students entering, participating and completing higher education reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population. Furthermore, The HEA (2015, p.11) specified that due to 'increased diversity in terms of ethnicity, it would be vital for the education system to accommodate that diversity.' However, Harris and Ni Chonail (2016) highlight that the HEA do not list any other ethnic minority outside of Travellers as a targeted group with immigrants still under represented in higher education.

2.6 Implications for Guidance Counselling

This section will discuss the implications for guidance counsellors in supporting asylum seekers in the context of the literature above. The DES (2005, pp. 12-13) identify challenges for guidance counsellors when working with minority groups as they state:

Learners from ethnic minority groups may not have access to the same information about education and training opportunities as their national peers, and guidance services in school need to promote an 'awareness and understanding of racial, ethnic and intellectual differences.'

In contrast, Linehan and Hogan (2008) suggest that information provision on access entitlements and financial assistance for higher education has proven difficult for migrants, with incorrect information being provided. Darmody et al (2014, p.146) also discovered that, guidance counsellors feel uncertain about options available for different groups of migrant students, with guidance counsellors in their study not clear on what guidance they should be giving. One guidance counsellor in their study depicted the issue of talking to class groups about higher options but knowing some migrant students don't have these opportunities.

Dryden- Peterson (2017) emphasise that preparing for an 'unknowable future' can affect how asylum seekers view their future careers and ambitions after education. Guidance counsellors should play a vital role in assisting asylum seekers to 're-imagine' their future career and develop a career plan, by setting goals and identifying their strengths, additional needs and life mapping (Harmon 2018, p.7).

The DES (2003 p.11) stress the need for Guidance Counsellors to be aware of the time and supports that are required when working with students whose 'cultural background and language ability' are very different to that of the main school population. This presents a significant challenge for guidance counsellors in helping vulnerable students due to austerity cuts to guidance hours in 2012, as One-to-One Counselling had been Cut by 53.5 per cent (McLaughlin 2016). Nonetheless, an increase in allocation of hours for Guidance Counselling was announced in the Budget 2017 and 2018 (DES 2017).

Van Driel et. al (2016) highlight that immigrant students often find it difficult to identify and participate with the new learning process and curriculum. As a result, guidance counsellors can support asylum seekers to adapt into a new education system as they are likely to benefit from schools that can enable them to settle in their new environment (Harmon 2018; Tyrer and Fazel 2014). Guidance counsellors can provide support to immigrant students, by explaining how the school system works, helping in their subject choices, and advocating for English language support (Carley and Farnan 2013, p.7). Educational and career issues often remain key developmental issues even for later generations of immigrants, such as second-or-third generation individuals who may still identify closely with their families and cultures of origin' (Nassar-McMillan 2014, p.109).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the literature relating to factors that determine the progression of asylum seekers into further education and the implications for guidance counsellors. To understand these factors, it was important to examine the role of guidance counsellor and the concept of multicultural guidance counselling. The system of direct provision was explored alongside integration and acculturation factors, as it determines the educational experiences of asylum seekers. Progression opportunities in relation to further education were analysed in terms of fees, grants and scholarships with a brief comparison to EU admissions policies in higher education. Finally, when all of the above was analysed the implications for guidance counsellors in supporting refugees was considered.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will discuss research paradigms that were considered for this research project and the reason a qualitative approach was chosen. An outline of research questions is displayed and a description of the methodological approach and methods of data collection and analysis is provided. Limitations and challenges in undertaking this study is also discussed, along with many ethical considerations for researching the participants. Validity, reliability and reflexivity is also discussed.

3.1 Identification of Research Questions

As outlined previously, the aim of the research is to explore the factors that determine the further education progression of Asylum Seekers living in Direct Provision and the implications it can have for guidance counselling practice. Choosing the research questions is one of the most challenging aspects of a research project, but it is hugely important in selecting the research methods that will be undertaken (Bryman 2008, p.66). The function of research questions is to ensure that all data collection is answers the initial question as unambiguously as possible (De Vaus 2001, p. 9). The selection of research questions are ‘the driving feature of research and need to be as ‘focused and specific as possible’ (Cohen et al 2007; Flick 2015, p.7).

3.1.1 Primary Research Question

The primary research question underpinning this research project is “*What factors determine the progression of Asylum Seekers living in Direct Provision into Further Education?*’ The phenomena of the direct provision system and the regulations that have to be adhered to, inform the secondary questions that address this.

3.1.2 Secondary Research Questions

1. How does living in direct provision affect the educational experiences of asylum seekers?

2. Do asylum seekers have access to extra support in school?
3. How do young adult asylum seekers feel about their further education aspirations?
4. What experiences of guidance counselling have asylum seekers received in school or further education?
5. How does the above factors implicate guidance counselling practice?

After both primary and secondary research questions were established the researcher gave much consideration to the research paradigm, that would answer the questions.

3.2 Research Methodology

Methodology refers to the approach or paradigm that underpins the research, as opposed to what method is used (Blaxter et al 2010, p.59). Methodology selection was carefully considered, as the ‘implications of methodological issues, their impact on the kinds of knowledge that research produces, and what kinds of knowledge is possible to produce’ (Blaxter et al 2010, p.60).

3.2.1 Research Paradigms

The main paradigms that were considered for this research are Positivist (quantitative) and Interpretivist (Qualitative). A paradigm constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how they interpret that world (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, p.26). Every individual has their own beliefs and assumptions and different perspectives are perceived. A paradigm relates to how research is carried out and the way in which data is collected to explain a phenomenon (Thomas 2013) Therefore, a research approach will depend upon how a researcher thinks about the problem and how it can be studied and ensuring that the findings are credible to the individual and others of the same discipline (Kawulich 2012).

A paradigm “comprises elements such as Epistemology and Ontology. These elements comprise of the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms and values that each paradigm holds

(Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, p.27). Epistemology assumptions are concerned with what is 'acceptable knowledge in a discipline' and the 'nature and forms' of knowledge (Bryman 2008, p.13; Cohen et al 2007, p.7). Ontology, however, is the 'study of being' and is concerned with 'social entities' (Crotty 1998, p.10; Bryman 2008 p.18). There is an effectiveness to both positivist and interpretivist paradigms, as it is not often recognised, that both approaches can be used 'to address almost any kind of research question,' that is, two different ways of answering the same question (Atieno 2009, p.13).

3.2.2 Positivist Outlook

Researchers that adopt a positivist approach to research, believe that 'knowledge can be obtained objectively,' and view this approach as being straight forward and recordable with very little problems. (Thomas 2013, p.107). Positivism is an epistemological position, using the methods of sciences to study the social reality (Bryman 2008). The researcher should be objective and detached from the objects of research. It is possible to capture 'reality' through the use of research instruments from experiments and questionnaires (Blaxter et al 2010).

Punch (2005, p.5) simply defines quantitative research as "traditional, conventional, scientific, positivist, empiricist and hypothetic-deductive theory with real figures. Quantitative research is a view that social science procedures should emulate those of the natural sciences. The researcher should be objective and detached from the objects of research (Blaxter et al 2010, p.61). Furthermore, Blaxter et al (2010 p. 65) believe that 'quantitative research tends to involve relatively large-scale and representative sets of data, and is often presented as being about the collection of facts'.

3.2.3 Interpretivist Outlook

An Interpretivist outlook sees 'interpretations of the social world as culturally derived and historically situated' (Blaxter et al 2010, P.61). The interpretivist outlook comprises of 'an interest in people, the way they interrelate and how their worlds are constructed (Thomas 2013, p.75). Interpretivism makes an effort to 'get into the head of the subjects being studied, to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking, with emphasis placed on understanding the individual' (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, p.33).

Having an interest in everyday concerns of people's lives and more about one's practice, leads to asking researchable questions, some of which are best approached through a qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdell 2015). Qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms and is used in interpretivist approaches. Qualitative research involves fieldwork and involves the researcher physically going to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting (Atieno 2009, p.14). Qualitative research focuses on exploring smaller numbers of instances which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth' (Blaxter et al 2010, p.65). The collection, analysis, and interpretation of data not easily reduced to numbers, suggests that qualitative research is held more valuable than quantitative approaches (Anderson 2010).

Nonetheless, it was important for the researcher to consider possible limitations to this approach. Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research approaches sometimes leave out contextual sensitivities, and focus more on meanings and experiences. Smaller sample size raises the issue of generalisability to the research (Harry and Lipsky, 2014; Thompson, 2011). Furthermore, Cohen et al (2007, p.25) say that 'anti-positivists have gone too far in abandoning scientific procedures of verification and have gave up on discovering useful generalisations about behaviour.' The researcher's presence during data gathering can affect the subjects' responses, with issues of anonymity and confidentiality can presenting problem (Anderson 2010). Another consideration of interpretivism, is that findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same certainty as quantitative research, this is due to the findings of the research not being tested to discover whether they are statistically significant (Atieno 2009 p.15).

Whilst advantages and disadvantages of both paradigms were considered, a qualitative approach was deemed as the most appropriate method to use, as the research questions involved the lived experiences of a vulnerable social group. The ontological position of this research study considers the reality and experiences of asylum seekers, in regard to progression options and education experiences in Ireland, as they each will have their own perceptions and experiences to share (Thomas 2013).

3.3 Data Collection

This section outlines how the researcher accessed the sample participants and will explore the methods of data collection. Finally, an explanation of the data analysis used by the researcher will be explained.

3.3.1 Access to Sample

The researcher was granted ethical approval from the University of Limerick in June 2018 and information letters were issued immediately to the gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are those who control access to participants (Cohen et al 2007) and in the case of this research project, it was the Direct Provision Manager. The first stage in accessing participants, involves the gaining of official permission to undertake one's research in the target community (Cohen et al 2007, p.55). The Gatekeeper distributed information letters and consent forms to the participants (see appendix 1& 2). Dates and time for interviews were negotiated with the gatekeeper and the participants. A reminder of the context of the study and the purpose of the data was given to the participants and they were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any stage of the data collection process.

3.3.2 Sample Population

Sampling can be defined as the process of how participants are chosen in a study (McLeod 2011). Serious difficulties is a possibility in sampling and access in sensitive research (Cohen et al 2007). The research carried out in this study was of a sensitive nature and it was a long process in gaining ethical approval from the University of Limerick due to the situation of this study's participants. Convenience sampling, purposeful sampling or random sampling are the most commonly used procedure to pick participants in research (Bryman 2008). A typical sample would be one that is selected because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, typical sampling was employed, as the specific situation to this group was going to give a general insight to the wider population of asylum seekers experiences. A typical purposeful sample of participants "highlight what is typical, normal, and average" for the group in question (Patton 2015, p. 268).

3.3.3 Participant Profiles

Eight participants were due to take part in this study, however, two participants withdrew before interviews were scheduled to take place. Interviews took place in a direct provision centre in the west of Ireland. See the table below for information on the six participants that took part.

Participant pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Interview length	Years in Ireland	Education attained in Ireland
Jackie	Female	20	Nigeria	60 mins	3	PLC course
Mary	Female	18	Zimbabwe	45 mins	2.5	Leaving Certificate
Sally	Female	21	Zimbabwe	50mins	2.5	Leaving certificate and PLC course
Ivan	Male	22	Malawi	30mins	3.5	PLC course
Alan	Male	20	Pakistan	30 mins	2.5	PLC course
John	Male	18	Palestine	25 mins	2.5	Leaving Certificate

3.3.4 Semi-Structured interviews

Semi-structured Interviews were the method of data collection employed by the researcher. The interview is probably the most widely employed method in the collection of qualitative data (Bryman 2008). Interviewing can be seen as a conversation, with the purpose of gathering information (Berg 2009). The researcher approaches the world from the participant’s perspective ‘enabling them speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings’ (Berg 2007, p.96). Interviews are useful ‘for collecting data which would likely not be accessible using observation or questionnaires’ (Blaxter et al 2010, p.136). Qualitative interviews ‘seeks to explore and describe the ‘quality’ and ‘nature’ of how people experience and understand’ (Alshenqeeti 2014, p.39). Semi-structured interviews involve implementing a number of pre-determined questions or special topics,

however interviewers have the ‘freedom of regress’ and can ‘probe far beyond the answers’ (Berg 2009, p.107). Open ended questions allow for participants to answer from their own frame of reference expressing their thoughts more freely (Bogdan and Bilken 1992).

Nevertheless, Bell (2010) advises that there could be an issue of bias with semi-structured interviews This issue was explored extensively by the researcher, as the researcher currently works with asylum seekers. However, it is in a supportive capacity and the issue of progression and educational experiences is not a part of her role. Therefore, the issues being explored were new to the researcher and she had not previously worked with the interviewees. Berger (2015 p.224) highlighted this warning that ‘bringing the researcher into the researched, carries the danger of researcher’s self-involvement to the degree that it blocks hearing other voices.’ Cohen et al (2007, p.66) emphasise the importance of ‘recognising and controlling’ any biases to ensure adequate data collection. The researcher ensured that the interview questions (see Appendix D) covered the relevant topics as they could be missed because of how the interview is structured Finally, Thomas (2013) highlighted the need for the consideration of time constraints related to interviews and transcription. The researcher found that it was extremely time consuming to carry out one to one interviews and transcribing. The researcher transcribed the interviews herself, as she works closely with people of the same nationalities and was more accustomed to their accents than a professional transcriber would.

3.3.5 Ethical issues in Guidance Counselling Research

Several ethical issues were considered whilst conducting this research project. Researchers are required to ‘strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professionals in pursuit of the truth, and that of their subjects’ rights and values potentially threatened by the research’ (Cohen et al 2011, p.51). Researchers have a ‘duty of care’ to all parties involved in their study, especially to the participants who volunteer to contribute their time, energy and intellectual capacity to the process (Hearne 2013, p.4). The cost/benefit ratio is a huge aspect in carrying out research (Cohen et al 2007). Costs to the participants such as, disclosing private and sensitive issues, embarrassment, loss, anger and upset was considered by the researcher, however the benefits were that their voice was heard and had the potential of raising awareness in an understudied research area. Participants were appreciative to the

researcher when their interviews ended, as they got to share their experiences and it is a very important topic to them.

The researcher conformed to the IGC's (2012) code of ethics and the NCGE's Code of Research Ethics (2008), to protect the integrity of the research that took place. It was important for the researcher to know and be fully aware of these codes of practice, as they inform their work as both a guidance counsellor and researcher. 'The complex nature of the guidance practitioner-researcher role with regard to the choice of suitable paradigms, methodologies and methods, and the prevailing issue of power throughout the research cannot be underestimated' (Hearne 2013, p.4). Equality in power relations between researcher and participant is achieved by having a genuine partnership which values and acknowledges the perceptions and experiences of this collaboration (Karnieli-Miller et al 2009). Power relations between the researcher and participants could have impacted on the research, since participants may have felt under pressure to please the researcher. This was overcome as it was explaining the importance of their views as well as the importance of genuine research.

The main ethical issue that were considered are non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, fidelity and justice (IGC, 2012; NCGE, 2008). Informed Consent and Confidentiality was key in this research project. The principle of informed consent arises from 'the subject's right to freedom and self-determination' (Cohen et al 2007). It was ensured that the participants of this project were fully aware of the researcher's role, why the research was being carried out, and what would happen with the answers. Firstly, consent from the Gatekeeper was sought and then the consent of the participants to carry out the research. The participants are from a different social group and are of a different ethnicity to the researcher. Their social circumstances are highly sensitive and the researcher acted with empathy and was incredibly sensitive to their stressful situation. The researcher was aware that language barriers may be an obstacle and navigated through this by creating questions that were easy to understand. The researcher was ethically conscious of their role as a student researcher and did not confuse it with their current role as an advocate for a similar social group. Practitioner-researchers need to bring an ethically reflexive attitude to their research, by respecting boundaries and responding appropriately to the ethical issues involved (Richardson, 2005 as cited in Hearne 2013).

3.3.6 Reflexivity

Whilst undertaking this research project, it was very important to stay aware of the thoughts and feelings that arose during the interviewing in particular, as Bryman (2004 p.22) states “research cannot be value free.” It was important for the researcher to be reflexive at all times during this project. Reflexivity is an ‘awareness of the influence the researcher has on what is being studied and how it affects the researcher. It is a state of mind and a set of actions’ (Probst and Berenson 2014, p.814). To be reflexive in research, is to consider issues such as ‘positionality and insider/outsider stances’ (Merriam and Tisdell 2015, p.64). I was an insider due to working in the same centre in which they live, however I was an outsider due to their personal circumstances, race and experiences. ‘Researchers need to focus on self-knowledge, sensitivity and monitoring the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research (Berger 2015). By being reflexive, ‘researchers acknowledge the changes brought about inside themselves, as a result of the research and how these changes have affected the research process (Palaganas et al 2017, p.426). The researcher currently works in a project that supports and advocates for asylum seekers and was fully aware of the close connection it had to their work, certain biases and beliefs held by the researcher were explored. It was therefore important for the researcher to critically reflect on their practice and to fulfil the role of a researcher and not an advocate. When that role was established it was easier to be less subjective.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Bryman (2008) advises counting how many times a word or phrase is used and the types of words used to describe or explain something when analysing data. There are many forms of data analysis and it was important to pick one that allowed essential themes to emerge during analysis. Therefore, the researcher decided that the method of analysis most suited to this research project was the *Thematic Data Analysis* Framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data and offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2012). It is a six phase model to help in the analysis of your data. Looking for common themes is central to this method of analysis. Below the phases of the thematic analysis framework:

- 1) *Familiarisation with the data* – ‘immersing oneself in the data to the extent that you are familiar with the depth of the content’. The researcher read the transcripts and listened to the recordings multiple times.
- 2) *Generating Initial codes*. – Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher identified and organised initial codes and recoding occurred when new codes emerged from the transcripts.
- 3) *Searching for themes* – this involves sorting the codes into categories enabling the creation of themes and subthemes.
- 4) *Reviewing themes* – clear and identifiable themes emerge. The researcher re-examined the transcripts and ensured that they had identified all themes.
- 5) *Defining and naming themes* – clear titles were established and definite themes and subthemes were decided on.
- 6) *Produce the findings report* –the themes and subthemes were presented in the findings chapter (see chapter 4).

Braun and Clark (2006, p.16)

3.5 Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam and Tisdell 2015, p..237). Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from research and if your methods, approaches and techniques actually relate to, or measure, the issues you have been exploring (Bryman 2008, p.32: Blaxter et al, 2010). Reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument will give the same result on different occasions and whether the measures that are devised are

consistent (Thomas 2013; Bryman 2008). Blaxter et al 2010 (p.215) define reliability from a qualitative perspective as “how well you have carried out your research and if another researcher were to look into the same questions in the same setting, they would come up with essentially the same results.”

Reliability and Validity can be harder to measure in qualitative research as Bell (2010) believes that ‘the check for reliability will come at the stage of question wording and piloting of the instrument.’ Other criteria need to be considered to ensure the validity and reliability of your study. Bryman (2008 p.) highlights an alternative four-point criterion to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative research, and the researcher applied this throughout their data gathering, they are:

- 1) Credibility relates to research been carried out in good practice and understanding of the social world.
- 2) Transferability Thick descriptions of the social world and culture of participants
- 3) Dependability keeping complete records and documenting everything.
- 4) Confirmability that the researcher has acted in good faith and not allow bias or opinions to seep into their findings.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the methodology that underpinned this study with reference to research paradigms, semi-structured interviews, data collection and data analysis. Validity, reliability, reflexivity and ethical issues were also discussed. Chapter 4 will present the findings from the semi-structured interviews that were carried out

Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to present the most prominent findings from the semi structured interviews. A number of themes and subthemes emerged that highlights the experiences of asylum seekers wishing to progress into third level education. As stated in chapter 3, six participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The thematic analysis of these interviews was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Participants were aged between 18-22 years old and have completed their leaving certificate and/or a post leaving cert course. Below is a table of the themes and subthemes that emerged during data collection. The themes above will be presented with the subthemes that emerged during the research.

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1 Direct Provision and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study space• Motivation• Mental health and wellbeing• English language and subjects
Theme 2 Experiences of guidance counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information Giving• Classroom Guidance• Support
Theme 3 Challenges in accessing post leaving cert courses and third level education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing Post Leaving Cert Courses• Scholarships and access courses• Progression opportunities• At a Standstill
Theme 4 Challenges of integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integration into community• Discrimination• Poverty

4.1 Direct Provision and Education

Direct provision accommodation has resulted in inadequate study space for participants. The restrictions that the system imposes on asylum seekers can affect their motivation and impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

4.1.1 Inadequate Study Space

A unanimous challenge amongst participants was inadequate study space, with participants sharing a room with at least two other people. Sally remembers trying to study for her leaving cert and said ‘*You have no privacy and it is so cramped.*’ Jackie also acknowledged the cramped space in her room as she was also sharing with two other people. Jackie explained that having the consideration for other roommates as well as looking after her own needs was ‘so hard’. She explained:

I remember doing my assignments and my roommate wants to sleep and I am like you know, the light is on because I have to use it. Or I have to switch it off and do it in darkness with my laptop which I couldn't see properly

Alan also described respecting the varying needs of his roommates, ,but felt there was a lack of consideration on their part when he tried to study in his room.

If they are not sleeping, they are on the phone and I'm trying to focus and they are just talking or playing music. If you try to explain that you are trying to do stuff..... they don't care

From what was described above it is hard to estimate, how much these experiences affected their grades, however the all participants agreed that you just have to persevere. Ivan said it was hard but something was pushing him *and* ‘just had to make the most of the time’.

4.1.2 English language Barriers

All participants expressed the challenges of adjusting to the education system in Ireland. English is the second language of participants and they had learn a new language, alongside

learning new subjects. This was described as ‘hard’ by the participants. John and Alan both believed that their level of English resulted in ‘low grades’ that ‘wasn’t good’. John said:

You know English language, low levels of it, affected my grades. I know I could have done better, only for my English

Sally said:

Even physics and chemistry first time I had to do them. I didn’t do them at home so that was... and you know the history is different than Africa. Europe history is different. I think everything is different, everything besides English (laughs).

4.1.3 Motivation

The limitations of the direct provision system in regards to education and employment had an effect on their motivation. The barriers to education, at times affected the general attitude of participants and Jackie explained that direct provision can make you ‘lazy.’ Even whilst in school, some participants described feelings of ‘what’s the point’ or we ‘can’t go further anyways.’ This uncertainty was highlighted by Ivan explaining:

It was very hard, even though I knew I was studying, I was told that you won’t go further from this stage. So when I was studying, when will I get out and get the chance to proceed. So it really, really affect me, I was hopeless and thinking when will I be out

Further backing up this feeling was Alan described that these limitations affected his mood and thought process whilst studying and echoed Ivan’s feelings. He stated:

I was a little down thinking about that there was no way I was getting further. I was just killing time. That was it, just to study and not going anywhere. No much how you try, you are not going anywhere.

All six of the participants believed that the hope of ‘receiving good news soon’ on their immigration status is what pulled them through these moments.

4.1.4 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Four participants highlighted the effect direct provision had on their mental health and wellbeing, effecting their educational performance too. These participants have possibly endured some huge trauma before arriving in Ireland and living in direct provision has affected their overall wellbeing. John said:

We had to leave our home in the middle of the night ... leave everything behind, it's hard to think of it and like staying here in this place ... like I need to escape this too. And now at moment, I can't pursue my dream.

Jackie also said that she had suffered with anxiety before coming to Ireland, noting that living in direct provision has 'made it worse.' She says:

I was thinking of all the stress you go through living in direct provision and from before.. I for one, love sleep but here I find it really hard to sleep and don't sleep well. I know I have anxiety issues but I feel it has being made worse here. I am always thinking of the fact it's so limited here and I was always tired in class

Ivan feels that direct provision has affected him negatively and in particular the feelings of despair about the future having an effect on his attendance in his PLC course:

Psychologically it affected me honestly, I could see there was no future with the barriers there. There is no freedom. It is very stressful because it's kind of like, it's limited in a way. I would get down for days and sometimes miss class

Two participants felt too uncomfortable to talk about this topic and this was fully respected by the researcher. However Mary did add that living in 'direct provision doesn't let you reach your full potential' and sally said she 'wouldn't wish direct provision on anyone.'

4.2. Experiences of Guidance Counselling

The second theme to emerge was the experiences of guidance counselling for the participants. There was mixed experiences and opinions on their experiences with three subthemes emerging; Information Giving, Classroom Guidance and Support.

4.2.1 Information Giving

People seek information and advice on educational choices from guidance counsellors. Some participants felt that there was a 'lack of awareness' about the options available to asylum seekers in regard to education. The information that was received was not satisfactory to participants, however Mary implied that her guidance counsellor tried to help her :

I had to ask him (the guidance counsellor) how, like, about access course and I wanted him to get information for me and he printed a lot of papers for me ,of which didn't help because I still don't know what these papers are saying. And it's his job to guide me and tell me this one is that, but he didn't help.

Jackie gave her account of an appointment she had with her guidance counsellor in further education. She had gone to get information on her options for financial support for college and needed direction:

When I sat down to ask him (the guidance counsellor) and I actually said I was asylum seeker, he started talking and actually changed and said he can't actually help me until my status changed, there was nothing he can do. So maybe I should just go to the school myself and find out things.

Was the guidance counsellor unaware of the policies in place for asylum seekers and didn't understand what progression opportunities were available? Another surprising admission that occurred during interviews from Ivan who had completed a PLC course said he 'wasn't aware of a guidance counsellor available in college' and he didn't know who he could speak

to if he needed career guidance. He stated later in the interview that ‘I wish I had someone to guide me in my course.’

4.2.2 Classroom Guidance

Career guidance activities such as career exploration, creating CVs and CAO applications are provided by guidance counsellors. Four participants spoke of feeling ‘left out’ during these activities due to their status. Sally describes her isolating experience:

He(the guidance counsellor) just addressed Irish people because I was the only one (that was an asylum seeker). He didn't cover me in the class. I feel out of place.

Mary said that she and ‘a boy from another hostel were the only asylum seekers in her class and ‘were not included in class’. She did say that she ‘kind of expected it.’ Alan also describes a similar scenario and spoke of dreading classes in case his status would have become known to other students: He explained:

What I will say, most people didn't know the situation we were in individually. They weren't aware of the situation. I don't know what answer would be if I asked what I can do next. I didn't offer to talk, there was bias in the class. I didn't know who to ask.

4.2.3 Support

Guidance counselling is a caring and supportive role. One participant felt that he received a lot of support from his guidance counsellor and found him to be very helpful and understanding of his own personal situation. John said:

Well, my guidance counsellor, he was really helpful in any way he could, he rang universities and got me information on courses. He understood my situation and would check if I was ok. He would often ask me about me, rather than career things.

Getting support on an emotional level is of critical importance for vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers. Other participants in this study did not feel they could approach their guidance counsellors. Mary felt most comfortable in approaching her class tutor and said:

We were really close and it was easier for me to go to her (class tutor) that it was for me to go to him (the guidance counsellor)... if I put it that way.

Jackie was assigned a mentor when she applied for a scholarship in a university in the south of the country and although her her mentor lives in the south of the country, Jackie felt more supported by her mentor than the guidance counsellor. Jackie said:

After what happened before with the.... Trails off. My mentor helped me so much, I would prefer to talk to her than the guidance counsellor..

4.3 Access to Further Education.

The third overarching theme that emerged was access to further education and training (FET) and higher education (H.E). The subthemes that emerged were fees, progression opportunities and at a standstill.

4.3.1 Fees

Accessing PLC courses and higher education courses was a huge barrier for all six participants. Asylum seekers are classed as international students with John explaining that a 'higher education course could cost €20,000 per year, noting that it is 'insane' and not possible.' Others spoke of this hardship, particularly Alan, stating:

To charge us these fees is unfair and discriminating. How can we pay this? We have €20 to do for a week and need to come up with 20 grand.... They want us to stay stuck....

In relation to PLC courses, asylum seekers are considered as international students, and are required to pay €3,600 per course. The participants that have attended post leaving certificate courses, could not afford the fees and had to rely on the generosity of voluntary organisations to fund fees and transport costs. Jackie, Ivan and Sally all received financial help from voluntary organisations. Jackie had spoken about this and gave her experience of getting funding for her PLC course:

Even to go for PLC course again it was paid for by Saint Vincent de Paul. Even if I paid for the course...They (SVP) felt that it was too expensive because they thought they had to pay for my transport so I ended up getting transport costs from the Irish Refugee Council. College is a 40 minute walk away, and that is why

4.3.2 Progression Options

In terms of financial support, progress has been for asylum seekers wishing to progress into higher education. For two of the participants, they may have the opportunity to get a scholarship and an access course. Jackie has applied for a scholarship under *the university of sanctuary scheme* however she illustrates the uncertainty of it:

I really hope to get. It's kind of like, it's limited in a way. Only giving seven people a place in the whole of...probably every person in Direct Provision who wants to go to university will probably apply for it, so it's very stressful.

Whilst it is a great initiative, it also has limitations and it is still an uncertain whether Jackie will receive the scholarship. Mary has just completed her leaving certificate and has applied for an access course in the local university. It is described as her only chance to further her study at this present time:

Right now, access course is my only option. because I am not allowed to do PLC anymore, so I cannot do that. So access course. They (PLC) don't take asylum seekers anymore. If I get the access course I will apply for a scholarship next year

Four participants described that they have no progression opportunities for this coming year. There was a surprising disclosure by all participants that, asylum seekers living in the locality have no access to PLC courses from September 2018. According to the participants in this study, one further education institute has never accepted applications from asylum seekers and another that has offered further education to asylum seekers, have now stopped accepting asylum seekers. Sally explained

The thing in the other college, they have a problem again with Direct Provision and they don't take. So I was just taking my chances but they don't take you have to have stamp 4. So I done childcare instead in my college.

4.3.3 At a standstill

This subtheme was identified due to extremely limited progression opportunities that has inevitably left some participants in limbo. Sally explained that she had expressed interest in progressing to a level six course in the college she had attended and was informed that they are not taking asylum seekers anymore. She thinks the law might have changed. Unable to avail of scholarships has ultimately led to Sally without any opportunities in education for the coming academic year. When asked what she will do if there are no options to study she said:

Volunteer, that's all you can do. This system... you know I was lucky to study this year but now...there's nothing except volunteer.

Both Ivan and Alan have completed a level 5 course and had an interest in progressing to a level 6 course however they were also informed that the college had stopped accepting asylum seekers. Ivan and Alan do not have other progression opportunities as they are not resident in Ireland long enough. Ivan explained that he does not qualify for a scholarship due to the length of time he is in Ireland and Alan is in the same position. When asked what he will do now Alan stated:

As of now I am honestly... I am in between now. I cannot do level 6. I don't know when I have the chance to to apply in the university or will they need me to go back and do the leaving cert?

John has just completed his leaving certificate but isn't eligible for a scholarship, the government pilot scheme or an access course and was hoping to do a PLC course but was told he cannot apply. When asked how does that feel he said:

I don't know what will I do. I am so young. Like the men here find it hard as they can't earn. I suppose I will do volunteering and apply for course next year.

It is important to note, that both Jackie and Mary are not guaranteed their places in college. Jackie finds it 'stressful that it's so limited' and 'prays' that she gets it. Mary had mentioned that she can't do a PLC course and later in the interview spoke about the possibility of not getting her course. Mary said:

Oh the thoughts of not getting it (Access course). I would be so upset, I can't stay here and do nothing all day. I could volunteer but ... (trails off)... I really hope

4.4 Challenges of integration

The final overarching theme was the challenge of integration for the participants of this study. Three subthemes were identified as poverty, discrimination and overall integration

4.4.1 Poverty

Participants described the hardship of living on €21.60 per week and trying to maintain friendships. The lack of financial resources has restricted participants from partaking in activities, with John describing the allowance as 'restricting you from having friends really.' Alan highlighted feeling uncomfortable when socialising with peers in college:

With college it's hard because you can't really go places with your friends because you can't afford to do that. When your friends are like lets go for coffee, your like ok my weekly money is finished, in my mind. I can't go and I can't buy coffee, I am just going to go home and they are like how can't you buy coffee?

Jackie described having to pay for college resources and using up her weekly allowance, leaving her with no money at all, further adding that if you want to go to the cinema you have to 'save for weeks.' Other unexpected costs can surface too, for example needing new clothes and often clothing allowances are not as Mary explains:

I needed new clothes, I had holes in my tights for school and also had no winter jacket I had to apply for an exceptional payment but kept getting rejected. My

roommate had applied for same and got straight away. I had to get a coat from reception that had been given by someone, donated. So it is hard.

4.4.2 Discrimination

During the interviews it was suggested that participants have been subject to discrimination. They have often felt that they are treated differently because they are an asylum seeker. A worrying admission came from Alan who says:

I do know that some people have issue with asylum seekers, they don't like them around. Some guy said asylum seekers shouldn't be here, they should all go back home. They are thinking of their jobs, well when they do get to work they will take their jobs. so people like, have an opinion on asylum seekers.

However, Alan did note that others are 'good people.' Experiences like this can have a huge impact and makes integration difficult. John stated that whilst some people are 'very nice' he feels that if people hear you are an asylum seeker 'they are not interested.' Jackie said that people act like 'you have a disease when they hear you are an asylum seeker,' when the researcher asked if anyone has said that to her she said 'no' but 'you feel like you have the plague.' Sally says that such feelings 'make you think you should just keep to yourself.'

In contrast Ivan and Mary were the only two participants that felt welcomed and accepted by people in the wider community with Ivan stating that he 'loved Irish people, as they were so nice.

4.4.3 Integration

Mary, Sally and John all felt that it was difficult to integrate into secondary school at first as they all joined their classes during the school year in fifth year, making integration harder. Sally went into more detail about the experience:

I didn't go at the beginning of the year. I went when the (school) year was nearly up. So they had already made their friendships and it becomes.... think that was the worst thing. It's hard to break in (to friendship groups). "

John said that he too joined during the school year and had a similar experience to Sally acknowledging 'how hard it is when they all know each other and say they are wondering who's this guy.' Mary said it was hard at first but that she felt she integrated 'fine' into school.

It was a general theme that participants did not tell their peers about their immigration status. Participants often felt uncomfortable talking about home life with their friends and worrying that 'they just didn't understand.' All participants spoke about the isolation of feeling different and the researcher sensed there was a feeling of shame or embarrassment about their situations. Jackie sums it up below:

I was in PLC course I had people in my class and we would talk and every time we were all sitting down talking about, maybe things that happened and I can't say much. Like when they talk about their house and everything I can't really say anything because I live in the hostel.

Sally however found it easier to integrate into her PLC course than secondary school. She highlighted the difference between the two experiences:

They are more mature and are starting from the beginning. Even if they didn't know your situation they understand you are from another country. You know? And yeah they are mature...

4.5 Summary of findings

In this research study, participants spoke about the many challenges and barriers they face in accessing further and higher education. The direct provision system poses many restrictions and affects the experiences of education for the participants. Lack of adequate study space posed huge challenges and whilst it was hard for them, they had no option but to make the most of it. The system also led some participants to explain, that they often felt unmotivated during their studies as they cannot go much further, essentially affecting their mental health and well-being.

The experiences of guidance counselling were more negative than positive unfortunately. Lack of knowledge in the progression options was frustrating for some participants as it is 'their job to know.' One participant did acknowledge the support they received from their guidance counsellor especially with personal issues, however others sought support elsewhere. The participants that had received classroom guidance relayed experiences of feeling left out and 'not addressed' in class. However, participants did state that they expected it but it was uncomfortable.

The barriers in accessing further and higher education was the biggest issue highlighted. Fees were the main cause of these barriers, with asylum seekers classed as international students. Two participants have applied for a scholarship and an access course, however, there are not guaranteed a place. One participant had finished his leaving cert but cannot apply for a PLC course and is not eligible for a scholarship. Three participants have completed their PLC courses and cannot go further due to the length of time they are in Ireland. Alarmingly the college that they attended will not enrol asylum seekers anymore.

Integration was the final theme to emerge and some participants found it difficult to integrate, with Issues such as poverty and discrimination being the main factors. In terms of school some participants arrived during the school year when friendship groups had already been formed. Some participants experienced discrimination in general but spoke about feeling accepted by some people.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of semi-structured interviews with six interviewees who are currently seeking asylum in Ireland. The findings from the data was discussed under themes and sub themes. The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation the secondary data explored in Chapter two.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The focus of this study is the progression of asylum seekers into further and higher education and how it can inform the practice of guidance counselling. This chapter will discuss the overall findings from the data and relate it to the existing literature outlined in chapter 2.

5.1 Overview of research findings

To summarise the findings of this study, a number of positive and negative experiences were identified in relation to the research area. The direct provision system has posed challenges on the educational experiences of asylum seekers, as confined and cramped spaces had produced inadequate study space for the participants. The lack of options and length of time spent in the direct provision system lead to a lack of motivation and feelings of hopelessness, essentially impacting on their mental health and wellbeing. Experiences of guidance counselling was the second theme to emerge and many participants felt there was a lack of information and knowledge in relation to their status and progression options. Support was often sought from other staff rather than their guidance counsellors. The challenges in accessing both Further and Higher Education was the biggest concern for the participants of this study. Strict criteria, limited places on scholarships and challenges in accessing post leaving cert courses were the main issues highlighted in relation to this. Integration was also an issue for participants, with experiences of discrimination and poverty causing challenges to integration.

5.2 Effects of Direct Provision on Education Experiences

Many studies have described the impact of inadequate study space in direct provision centres, as has having an impact on the educational potential of young people (Arnold 2013). The ability to study is impacted by inactivity, cramped living conditions and the uncertainty of the decision on their outstanding applications (Conlan 2014). Ogbu et al (2014) also highlighted this issue in their study, with parents describing their children doing their homework on the floor or lying in their bed whilst trying to concentrate in spite of noise and distractions. Study space and concentration are hugely important when studying for a huge state exam and indeed further education exams. These exams determine the progression options to college and for the future of these individuals. The absence of proper study space

and furniture prevent young people from studying for their examinations or doing their homework (Arnold, 2013).

All six participants in this study highlighted this issue as being extremely difficult, finding it challenging to study, as they were sharing a room with at least two people. One participant (Jackie) described having to do assignments in the dark as to not disturb her roommate, whilst Alan explained that roommates would often ‘speak on the phone or play music’ whilst he was studying. Some described it as affecting their results. Ivan felt that he just had to ‘make the most of it’ and made the most of time alone in his room. Without the proper time and space needed to study or complete assignments, one would wonder how can asylum seekers in this position reach their full educational potential. These individuals are sharing rooms with strangers who have their own needs and agendas. As Burns (2017) highlights, advantaged students are in a more privileged position as their home environments are conducive to learning, including a quiet place to study and access to the internet.

Two of the major issues that emerged in relation to academics was English language barriers and learning new subjects. One key difficulty for immigrants is language support services in schools (Watt and McGaughey 2006). Many children living in asylum systems were found to be in need of extra English language classes which is not provided in all schools (Ogbu et al 2014). Three participants that completed their leaving cert were not offered or provided with extra language support. In this study, Sally explained that she was ‘just treated like everyone else.’

Language difficulties can have huge consequences on academic progress for migrants, with it being a significant barrier to educational achievement (Darmody et al 2012; Ledwith and Reilly 2012). Two participants in this study, Alan who had completed a PLC course, and John who had completed his Leaving Certificate, believed that ‘low levels of English language’ had affected their grades. Alongside affecting educational outcomes, this can leave people feeling isolated and excluded in classrooms. Individuals in this position are very vulnerable and extra support with language is important. This all concurs with Arnolds (2013) stating that the inability to take full advantage of the education hinders asylum seekers in reaching their potential (Arnold 2013).

The three participants that had completed their Leaving certificate in Ireland, found it hard initially to adjust to the school system due to learning new subjects and learning English at the same time. Sally highlighted the huge challenge of learning new subjects when she first joined in fifth year saying ‘everything is different, except English.’ This has been highlighted in some studies, Carley and Farnan (2013, p13) state that ‘most subjects are new to asylum seekers, as they may never have encountered them in their country of origin.’ The researcher would have assumed that the subjects would be similar to their country of origin and that English was the main challenge. Difference in the curriculum from to their country of origin was a surprising finding. Whilst many studies suggest that asylum seekers socially integrate into the education culture, the curriculum in itself is culturally derived. Teaching and learning are social constructs, that are dependent upon the contexts within they are conceived. Harmon (2018, P.8) states that asylum seekers ‘may be referred to as non-English speaking and the accompanying narrative is that when students learn English they will be able to access the curriculum the same as any other student.’

The inability to undertake any significant education or vocational training, places already vulnerable people in an insidious position, increasing vulnerability and the potential for a much longer term problem (Conlan 2014). The long term effects of direct provision demotivate people as "having very limited access to educational or training opportunities results in individuals becoming de-skilled and unmotivated" (FLAC 2010, p. 20). Direct Provision can negatively impact on a protection applicant’s self-esteem and motivation and engender feelings of helplessness (McMahon 2015). All the participants spoke of the effect of being in the Direct Provision system and the challenges to education and employment as demotivating. Jackie described direct provision as making an individual ‘lazy’ and Mary described a time in her studies where she was working really hard but thought ‘what’s the point.’ Ivan seemed to agree with this as he spoke of telling himself ‘why are you doing this, you can’t go further anyways.’ It is understandable the he felt this way, as they were studying and for many they cannot progress into further education.

Asylum seekers are more likely to experience mental illness because of disproportionate exposure to post-migration stressors such as insecure residency and lack of education (O’Connell et al 2016). The World Health Organisation (2014) defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities and the ability to cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and contribute to his or her

community.” Several studies have identified depression through the anxiety of deportation, and boredom with many respondents stating that they did not have anything to do to keep them occupied during the day (Ní Shé 2007). In this study, three participants expressed how living in Direct Provision leaves them ‘stressed, anxious and sleep deprived,’ impacting on their wellbeing. John spoke about the trauma he endured before coming to Ireland and feelings of being trapped in Direct Provision. Jackie thought that direct provision had caused her anxiety to further heighten, affecting her sleep. stating that she was ‘always tired in class.’ Ivan felt so down at times due to the restrictions of the system, he frequently missed classes. Participants felt that the length of time in direct provision and limited options in education affected them psychologically. Sally stated that she ‘wouldn’t wish direct provision on anybody’ and Mary said ‘it doesn’t let you reach your full potential.’ Concerns were raised about adolescent and young adults who were deeply affected by government policy that does not allow them to further their education or seek employment with the pain of seeing their classmates and friends continuing their education while they could not, affecting their mental health (Ogbu et al 2014). This is a feeling that affected most participants in this study as not being able to keep up with or having the same opportunities as their friends left them feeling down. Participants in this study noted the obvious difference with their Irish peers.

The effects of direct provision on the educational experience of asylum seekers has been presented as challenging for the participants. Alongside inadequate study space, the length of time living in the communal accommodation impacted on the wellbeing and motivation of asylum seekers. the system itself does not present the same opportunities to asylum seekers as their peers.

5.3 Experiences of Guidance Counselling

The following section will look at experiences of asylum seekers in relation to the information provision, classroom guidance activities and personal support of guidance counsellors.

Guidance counsellors assist people, at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers “ (OECD 2004, p.19). The role of Guidance Counsellors covers personal, educational and vocational guidance (IGC

2017). Information is a key area of professional practice in guidance counselling as guidance counsellors have “a responsibility to ensure that current information is gathered, organised and disseminated to provide clients with the widest range of options and assisting clients in accessing and interpreting information effectively” (IGC 2016, p.5). Information provision on access entitlements and financial assistance for third level education has proven difficult for migrants, including asylum seekers, with incorrect information being provided (Linehan and Hogan 2008). Participants in this research study felt that there was a ‘lack of awareness about the options available to asylum seekers’ in regard to progression opportunities. Mary recalled asking her guidance counsellor for information on an access course and the guidance counsellor printed out lots of information but didn’t explain it to her. She felt he should have, as ‘it’s his job.’ Another participant felt that the guidance counsellor’s attitude changed when she told him that she was an asylum seeker, claiming that he told her that he couldn’t help her ‘until her status changed and to find out the information herself.’ As Harmon (2018, p.7) suggested had ‘guidance counsellors should play a vital role in assisting asylum seekers to ‘re-imagine’ their future career and develop a career plan due to their ‘unknown futures.’ However, to state that one cannot help someone until their ‘status’ changed, demonstrates that this assistance is not practiced in this case.

Ivan didn’t realise that there was a guidance service available during his time in further education. It was a disappointing finding in this study, that vulnerable young people felt that the person designated to provide support, wasn’t supportive at all. The promotion of the guidance service did not occur here. The experiences highlighted above, could have an effect on the self-esteem if guidance counsellors either don’t know how to help them or won’t.

The NCGE’s (1996) Guidelines for Guidance state that guidance classroom activities include skills enhancement, developmental programmes and information giving. Guidance counsellors feel uncertain about the progression options for different groups of migrant students, with one guidance counsellor highlighting the issue of ‘talking to class groups about higher options but knowing some migrant students don’t have that opportunity’ (Darmody et al 2012). This must be challenging for guidance counsellors as asylum seekers have to attend class but the information may not be applicable to them. However, this can be very isolating for asylum seekers as some participants in this study felt ‘left out’ in classroom guidance activities, and feel that they ‘weren’t addressed’. Sally felt that ‘he only addressed Irish people and Alan felt that there was ‘bias in the class.’ He was afraid to be

asked anything. The IGC (2016) state that guidance counsellors should ‘guide individuals and groups to develop educational plans.’ Whilst it is a sensitive situation for asylum seekers, it is clear that it is not an inclusive practice.

Interestingly, only one participant found the guidance counsellor as a source of support in a personal capacity. John found his guidance counsellor to be very understanding of his ‘situation’ and would often check up on him. However, other participants didn’t feel as comfortable in going to the guidance counsellor as they did with other staff in the school. Mary found her class tutor to be very approachable and said they were ‘close.’ Mary said whilst she liked her guidance counsellor, she just found her class tutor more helpful. Jackie confided in her scholarship mentor as opposed to her guidance counsellor, preferring to ask her mentor for guidance, as her previous experience with her guidance counsellor ‘put her off going to him’. What is worthy to note here is that Jackie’s scholarship mentor is based in another county and was seen as more of a support than her guidance counsellor or indeed other school staff. In Mary’s case, these experiences may also signify that the whole school approach to guidance counselling is practiced in their school, with tutors and other staff taking on a care role. A whole school approach can be very effective when a student is not as comfortable in approaching the guidance counsellor, with other staff members providing information to students (DES 2009, Hearne et al 2016b). As Ivan wasn’t aware of guidance services in further education he got support from other residents or staff in his accommodation centre. Promotion of the guidance service is a key task of guidance counsellors and it would appear there was a miscommunication along the way.

A multicultural approach to guidance counselling involves crucial support in the process of immigrant adjustment and integration in the new society and the broader role of guidance counselling of immigrants is to help them with integration and social cohesion (Batumubwira 2005). The above narratives from participants suggests that this did not take place in their experiences.

5.4 Challenges in Accessing Further and Higher Education for Asylum Seekers

Accessing both further education and higher education was a particular challenge for each of the participants in this study. The biggest barrier was that of tuition fees. Higher Education (HE) in Ireland is provided by seven universities, fourteen institutes of technology, seven Colleges of education and 10 other state aided institutions (DES 2018). Mannion (2016)

explains that only Irish, EEA and Swiss citizens are eligible for free fees at third level with asylum seekers ineligible for free fees, being classed as international students, with fees up to and exceeding €20,000. Participants felt this was very unfair with John stating ‘they want us to stay stuck’. It could be seen as a systematic failure. Asylum seekers that have completed the leaving certificate and go through the same process, are charged at least three times more than the EU citizen to go to college. The HEA (2015 p.6) aimed to “ensure that the students entering, participating and completing higher education reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population.” Categorising asylum seekers as Non EU students, and charging €20,000 per year is not ensuring equality of access. As highlighted by Harris and Ni Chonail (2016), the HEA (2015) do not list any other ethnic minority outside of Travellers as a targeted group. The HEA (2008 p.11) had previously implied that due to Ireland’s “increased diversity in terms of ethnicity, it would be vital for the education system to accommodate that diversity”. The fees that are still in place for asylum seekers does not reflect this aim. In fact, it is leaving this vulnerable group in a state of limbo; poverty and exclusion.

Whilst fees for a PLC course are lower than Higher Education they are approximately €3,600 per course for non-EU students (NASC 2018). Asylum seekers not entitled to student support and often rely on donations and generosity of NGO’s like saint Vincent de Paul and the Irish refugee council (IRC 2018). Jackie explained that this was the case as her local SVP paid for her fees and the Irish Refugee Council paid for her travel costs as ‘college was 40 minute walk from the hostel.’ The further education college that three of the participants did attended was a local community college. According to the participants they are not accepting applications from asylum seekers as of September 2018. Mary who has just finished her leaving certificate was hoping to go there but an ‘access course is her only hope now.’ Sally and Ivan had expressed interest to pursue a level 6 course but were told ‘they don’t take asylum seekers anymore, the law has changed.’ To date, there is no record of published legislation prohibiting asylum seekers advancing to Level 6 courses.

Another surprising, if not worrying, admission by all participants was that there is a further education institute in their city that have never accepted asylum seekers on their courses. Sally says ‘they just don’t take and they have a problem with direct provision.’ The national policy by the DES (2001) in regards to further education, indicates that asylum seekers are classed as international students and can attend if they can pay the fees. The exclusion of asylum seekers due to their status is a discriminatory practice. This practice further enhances

inequalities in access to education. This practice is in stark contrast to what was set out in Ireland's white paper on adult education (2000) with the principle of promoting an inclusive society by promoting equality of access and participation in adult education with strategies to counteract barriers such as ethnicity. Conlan (2014) highlighted in her study that education was more important to asylum seekers of any age as she described the level of frustration at not being able to study whilst in Direct Provision. One participant in this study stated that 'education was most important over a job.' What was incredibly clear to the researcher was that every participant in this study was very eager to keep studying and put high value on education. Sally said as long as she 'keeps learning, it makes the situation easier.'

As outlined previously, new policies and opportunities for financial support have been introduced for asylum seekers in the form of a government pilot scheme, scholarships and access courses (IRC 2018). It is a step in the right direction, however, there is still strict criteria involved. To get accepted on the government pilot scheme students must have obtained their leaving certificate, have been accepted on an approved course, have attended a minimum of five academic years in the Irish school system, and have been part of an application for protection for a period of five years (Mannion 2016). None of the participants of this study were eligible to apply for this scheme. Only three people in three years have qualified for this scheme (IRC 2018). A scholarship and an access course were possibilities for two participants. Jackie was pinning all her hopes on a scholarship that she had applied for and explained it only had seven places available for asylum seekers and described it as limited. Mary's only option is an access course, that is a pre-entry course, as she is not eligible for a scholarship until next year. Again places are limited and she has the added pressure of awaiting her leaving cert result before she can apply. Mary described this as 'worrying.'

The findings of the above were staggering, the education system alongside direct provision has failed these individuals. They have been allowed to study but for four of the participants they have come to a halt. They can go to higher education for 20,000 per year and a PLC course for 3,600. On top of this, their 'status' has left them without access to PLC courses. Two participants have a chance of progression but it is a small chance.

5.5 Challenges of Integration

Challenges of integration was the final key theme that was identified in this research study. Factors such as discrimination, poverty, fitting in at school and differences amongst their peers created challenges to integration.

Direct Provision policy has been criticised by service providers and researchers as it is believed that the difference in social welfare entitlements between residents of Direct Provision and residents of other forms of state-funded accommodation is a form of discrimination (Arnold 2013). Asylum seekers feel isolated from their neighbours in the local community due to their living conditions and lack of means (McMahon 2015). One participant Sally, described joining her class when the school year was nearly over and friendships in the class had already been established amongst her peers. She found it 'hard to break into friendship groups

Despite the exceptional efforts by some of the staff of the accommodation centres to create a humane environment for asylum seekers, Direct Provision is a discriminatory system, which socially excludes asylum seekers from the local community, both physically and financially (IRC 2012). Participants in this study did echo the sentiments of the above, about that the staff in their centres 'looking after them well', and that if it wasn't for the length of time it would 'be ok'. They feel lucky to have the chance to leave the conflict in their home country but 'can't settle until their decision has been made.'

The Government of Ireland (1997, p.3) stated: 'People are living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to prevent them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society and as a result, they may be excluded and marginalised from activities which are considered the norm for other people in society'

The cash payment received per week, leaves asylum seekers with little or no opportunity to interact and establish relationships within local communities, as a result, are often isolated from other young people their age and socially excluded from field trips and community activities (IRC 2012). Whilst, Bang (2017) also found that increases in educational gaps were related to increases in marginalisation and decreases the changes of integration

Social exclusion and poverty is an underlying feature of the lives of asylum seeking families due to extremely low levels of financial support received, in addition to the accommodation and food provided in direct provision (Ogbu 2012). Participants in this study described the hardship of living on €21.60 per week and trying to maintain friendships in school and college. John described direct provision as ‘restricting you from having friends really.’ Alan had described not being able to buy a cup of coffee to socialise with his classmates. Jackie described having to pay for college resources and using up her weekly allowance leaving her with no money at all, further adding that if you want to go to the cinema you have to ‘save for weeks.’ This concurs with concerns of asylum seekers that the allowance is insufficient to allow them to participate to a minimal degree in social, cultural and religious life or to maintain relationships with costs relating to birthdays and other special occasions been drawn from their weekly allowance (McMahon 2015). Needing new clothes is a struggle and often clothing allowances aren’t granted according to Mary. Clothing is a necessity and often asylum seekers rely on charitable donations adds Mary. McMahon (2015) also highlighted this concerns relating to the uneven application of the Exceptional Needs Payment Scheme (ENPs) across the country, with some designated Persons approving discretionary payments for certain purposes and others refusing payments. It is not allowing these individuals to live a normal lifestyle and automatically excludes them from society.

Participants in this study have voiced how they have been discriminated against since coming to Ireland with racist remarks been made to them. They often felt like they were not accepted into the community in which they live. Alan gave a lengthy narrative on an experience he encountered with an Irish citizen. According to Alan, the Irish citizen said “asylum seekers shouldn’t be here, they should all go back home.” Alan thought this particular individual was worried about Irish people’s jobs. Jackie believed that people act like you have a ‘disease or have the plague’ when they ‘hear you are asylum.

In addition to these statements, it was a huge finding in this research that most of the participants felt ashamed or embarrassed about their current ‘status’ of being an asylum seeker and living in direct provision accommodation. Acculturation theory can help understand why as it is the ‘phenomena which result when groups of individuals, having different cultures come into contact, with changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups’ (Redfield et al 1936, p.149). Most of the participants were afraid to disclose this information to their Irish peers. Jackie described being involved in conversations with

friends about their houses and feeling like she ‘couldn’t really say anything because I live in a hostel.’

Berry’s (1997) four strategies of acculturation are assimilation, separation marginalisation, and integration. Assimilation is when there is little interest in cultural maintenance preferring to interact with the larger society Jackie, in this instance, using the assimilation strategy, as she is not maintaining her own culture by not disclosing it and wants to fit in her Irish peers. Other participants revealed that ‘nobody really knew’ their status because they wouldn’t understand.’ Some participants didn’t reveal their current status to their teachers as they were afraid of being judged. It was evident to the researcher that there was a conflict in themselves between their culture and the dominant culture, i.e. Irish culture. This can lead to marginalisation if individuals reject both their own culture and the host culture (Berry 1997). The ideal way of acculturation, is adapting to a new culture in such a way that immigrants preserve their own cultural values and characteristics, and then integration is successful. (Launikari & Puukari 2005).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the overarching themes that were identified in the interviews with asylum seekers, in regard to progression options in further and higher education. Under examination through the existing literature and narratives of asylum seekers, the researcher was provided with key insights into the educational experiences of the participants on progression options and guidance counselling. What was very clear in this process was that there is a significant gap in knowledge in regards to guidance counselling asylum seekers and the issues that effect this vulnerable group in education. Isolation from living in direct provision and the policies of the system has created many barriers for asylum seekers. Educational inequalities are still prevalent issues in the modern education system, with systematic roadblocks to education, such as extortionate fees, lack of extra support for English language, and the lack of awareness of guidance counsellors in relation to progression option and participant’s status.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter aims to conclude this research study and address the findings in relation to the research questions outlined in chapter three. The strengths and limitations of this study will be highlighted and it will address implications for guidance counselling practice and will briefly make recommendations based on the findings.

6.1 Research Questions

The overall aim of this study was to explore the factors that determined the progression of asylum seekers into further education and the implications it has on guidance counselling practice. The primary research question was '*What factors determine the progression of Asylum Seekers living in Direct Provision into Further Education?*'

The secondary questions were:

1. How does living in direct provision affect the educational experiences of asylum seekers?
2. What are the further education progression options available to asylum seekers
3. What experiences of guidance counselling have asylum seekers received in school or further education?
4. How do the above factors shape guidance counselling practice?

6.2 Direct Provision and Education

The findings of this study suggest direct provision had a negative impact on the educational experiences of the six asylum seekers that participated in this study. The system of direct provision, accommodates asylum seekers in communal accommodation until their refugee applications have been decided. The findings in this study suggest that direct provision generates inequalities for education both whilst in education and trying to progress further.

6.2.1 Study Space

Many studies described the impact of inadequate study space, as has having an impact on the educational potential of young people (Arnold 2013). The issue of inadequate study space was an unanimous challenge for all of the participants of this study, as they described having to study in the dark or whilst their roommates were listening to music or talking in their rooms. Participants described it as affecting their results. This already puts asylum seekers in a disadvantaged position as advantaged students are more likely to come from home environments that are conducive to learning, including a quiet place to study and access to the Internet (Burns 2017).

6.2.2 English Language

Two challenges that emerged in relation to academics was English language barriers and learning new subjects. Language difficulties can have huge consequences on academic progress for migrants, with it being a significant barrier to educational achievement (Darmody et al 2014; Ledwith and Reilly 2013). This finding coincides with participants in this research study, who all described learning English and new subjects as very challenging, with two participants saying it resulted in low grades due to low levels of English. It was highlighted in this study that they received no extra support in regards to language support.

6.2.3 integration

Integration into the educational environment was presented as challenging for many of the participants. Due to poverty that is exacerbated by direct provision, asylum seekers are left no opportunity to interact and establish relationships within local communities, and are often isolated from other young people their age and socially excluded trips and activities (IRC 2012). The participants in this study highlighted this issue, Alan had described not being able to buy a cup of coffee to socialise with his classmates, whilst John noted that 'it prevents you from having friends.' In addition to the above, this study found that most of the participants felt ashamed or embarrassed about their current 'status' of being an asylum seeker and living in direct provision.

6.2 Further Education progression options

Further education is viewed as the main engines of social mobility, however one of the key problems of higher education is equal access to it, regardless of the social, economic and cultural condition of people (Brown 2017). The participants of this study were apprehensive about the future as the criteria for accessing further education was problematic. Asylum seekers are classed as international students, and are required to pay approximately €3,600 for a PLC course and €20,000 per year in higher education (IRC 2018). Recently, new initiatives have been introduced to enable access to further education in the form of, a government pilot scheme, university of sanctuary scholarships and access courses. (IRC 2018). However there is a strict criteria attached, especially in regards to the length of time they have been resident in Ireland. Two asylum seekers in this study Jackie and Mary, had applied for a scholarship and an access course. The places were limited for both courses. Sally and Ivan had completed a PLC course but couldn't progress any further and one participant had completed his leaving cert and had no progression options. Each participant was worried for the future, not knowing when their time will come to an end in direct provision and are worried about having nothing to do. Actually, the participants were left in limbo and isolation, as they await their fate and hope their status changes. Inequalities in access to education are still persistent

6.3 Experiences of guidance counselling.

Guidance counsellors play key roles in supporting students in three interlinked areas of personal, educational and vocational guidance across the lifespan (IGC 2017). As Ireland has become more of a multicultural society a multicultural approach seeks to develop an awareness of social difference with regards to age, race social class and disability (Reid and Westergaard 2011). Guidance counsellors have a crucial role to play in the process of immigrant adjustment and integration.

One participant in this study revealed that his guidance counsellor was a source of support and felt that he understood his situation. Other participants felt that their experiences with their guidance counsellor was not a positive one and felt there was a lack of an awareness in options available to asylum seekers. this concurs with other studies suggesting that guidance counsellors were unaware of the options available to asylum seekers (Darmody et al 2014;

Linehan and Hogan 2008). Jackie was told she could not be helped until her status changed. Unsurprisingly, participants felt it was easier to approach other staff members for help than the guidance counsellor. Classroom guidance activities excluded two participants as the activities taking place didn't apply to them and they felt left out. It had been acknowledged in both the literature and discussion chapter that it is difficult for guidance counsellors to address a whole class knowing that some students can't progress (Darmody et al 2014).

6.4 Acculturation

In relation to the findings above it is important to draw on acculturation theory that has been in relation to this study's participants. Support in education with teachers, guidance counselling and peers, can all aid in successful acculturation and therefore integration. Integration is present when both cultural maintenance and involvement with the larger society are sought. Embarrassment of their status, negative experiences of guidance counselling and finding it hard to build friendships would suggest that assimilation and separation occurred in the acculturation processes of this cohort.

As post-secondary education aids in acculturation through the development of social and cultural capital (Ross 2012). Increases in educational gaps were related to increases in marginalization and decreases in integration, as having a ripple effect of resulting in less opportunities that can facilitate acculturation and thus compound the lack of access to education (Sheikh and Anderson 2018). The likelihood that four of this study's participants will not be furthering their education this year, suggests that they will be further marginalised in terms of acculturation and integration.

6.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Research Study

6.3.1 Strengths of the study

The interpretivist paradigm used by the researcher was a key strength in this study. The interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to get the narratives of six young adult asylum seekers and explore the world through their eyes and achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth' (Blaxter et al 2010, p.65). The semi-structured interviews that were used by the researcher

allowed the Freedom of regress' and allowed her to probe far beyond the answers (Berg 2009, p. 107).

Another key strength is that this study, was that enabled six asylum seekers to voice their opinions and they bravely give their experiences of what it is like to live in the direct provision system. It allowed the researcher to gain a rich descriptions of the experiences they have in education and guidance counselling (Thomas 2013). The way in which the participants were grateful to the researcher for listening suggests that they voice are not often heard.

Further to capturing the narratives, these narratives could provide the area of guidance counselling with more information on supporting asylum seekers, as it is an under-researched area.

6.3.2 Limitations of the study

The sample size of this study was the main weakness of this study as six participants took part. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm is hard to generalise as it assumes that the experiences are different for each individual (Thomas 2013).

The interviews took place in the centre in which the researcher works with other asylum seekers, although she does not work directly with the participants, they are however known to her. This can be a limitation due to the subjectivity of the researcher (Cohen et al 2011). Therefore, a reflexive approach was taken to address researcher bias in this study.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic data analysis was applied in the data analysis, by generating initial codes and themes this can provide a limitation to this study as the interpretation of the data may be subjective by the researcher (Cohen et al 2011).

Time constraints was a limitation of this study as ethical approval was granted in June after three attempts. This left the researcher with four months to contact gatekeeper and participants, create the interview schedule, organise time and dates for interview, transcribe the interviews, thematic analysis and write drafts and submit the thesis.

6.4 Recommendations

From the findings of this research the following recommendations in terms of policy, practice and research in guidance counselling can be made:

1. A multicultural approach needs to be further implemented in terms of working with asylum seekers and other immigrants in school and further education, as Ireland is becoming a more diverse country.
2. More training and education on progression options and the issues of asylum seekers needs to be implemented for guidance counsellors.
3. Although more hours have been allocated in the last two budgets, more hours need to be made available to help more vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers.
4. Guidance counsellors need to promote their guidance service and ensure that students know that the service is available.
5. More research studies must be carried out to gain the perspectives of:
 - Guidance counsellors working with asylum seekers.
 - Asylum seekers experiences of guidance counselling.

6.5 Reflexivity and Personal Learning

A reflexive approach was taken by the researcher. It was important to be aware of my positionality and inside/outsider stance (Merriam and Tisdell 2015), due to the connection I had to the place in which they lived. It was very important to remain aware of the thoughts and feelings that arose during interviews (Bryman 2004).

At the initial stage of this research project, I thought I had all the answers, given that I work in this area, however I had no idea of the lived experiences and affects that the system poses for this group of people. From the literature review to the discussion chapter, I gained ample knowledge on direct provision, guidance counselling and most importantly the overall experiences of the six participants of this study.

This research study gave me an insight into my own qualities as a researcher and a future guidance counselling practitioner. My research skills improved greatly and I felt that I separated my current role and researcher role affectively. It improved the key micro skills required for being a guidance counsellor, especially in relation to active listening and other communication skills.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the research study by concluding the research in relation to the research questions outlined in chapter 3. The strengths and limitations of this study were discussed and recommendations for future policy, practice and research were outlined. Finally, reflexive and personal learning during the process was presented.

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Appendix A: Subject Information Letter (Gatekeeper)

Date: 02/07/2018

EHSREC

no:

2018_03_08_EHS

Research title: *'An Exploration into the Factors that Determine the Progression of Asylum Seeker living in Direct Provision into Further Education'*

Dear Manager,

I am currently a student of the MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development programme in the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr Ciarán Ó Gallchóir

I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling as part of my studies. In my research, I aim to explore the educational experiences of asylum seekers and wish to examine the factors that determine their progression into further education.

In order to recruit volunteers, I would greatly appreciate your support by disseminating the Volunteer Subject Information Letter and Consent Form in order to recruit participants. If they wish to take part in the study they can then contact me directly to make further arrangements.

All the information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure the anonymity of participants. The interviews will be audio tape-recorded and the data will be destroyed after analysis, according to UL guidelines. The direct provision centre will not be named.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis phase. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Lorraine McGinty
Telephone number: 087 9545417
Email address: lorrynemcg@gmail.com

Principal Investigator: Ciarán Ó Gallchóir
Telephone number: 061- 234845
Email address: Ciaran.OGallchoir@ul.ie

Kind Regards,

Lorraine McGinty

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. EHS no: 2018_03_08_EHS

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie



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Appendix B: STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

EHSREC no. 2018_03_08_EHS

An exploration into the factors that determine the progression of Asylum Seekers in post primary school living in direct provision into third level education.

Dear Student

As part of my Dissertation Project at the University of Limerick, I am carrying out a study on your views and aspirations of progressing into third level education. This information sheet will tell you what the study is about.

What is the study about?

The study aims to explore the experiences of asylum seekers in post primary school and explore the factors that determine the progression or non-progression into third level for this group.

What will I have to do?

You will be invited to take part in a 45-minute semi structured interview. It is on a one to one basis and this will be audio-recorded.

What are the benefits?

The findings of the study might help guidance counsellors, teachers and the schools to understand direct provision and the impact it has on students' lives. It is hoped that it will highlight the need for more support with student asylum seekers and the criteria for entering third level education.

What are the risks?

You might decide that you do not want to answer a question or you might feel uncomfortable about a question. If this happens, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to.

What if I do not want to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to take part or to stop your involvement in this study at any time.

What happens to the information?

The information that is collected will be kept private and stored securely and safely on the researchers' computer. The computers are protected with a password. Your name will not appear on any information. You will be assigned a fictitious name when the information is being written in a report by the researcher. The information that is gathered in the study will be kept for seven years. After this time, it will be destroyed.

Who else is taking part?

Young asylum seekers living in the old convent in Ballyhaunis that are in senior cycle (that is fifth and sixth year) are invited to take part in interviews. The interviews will be on a one to one basis with an adult there for your protection. If more than ten people volunteer to take part in the study, I will randomly select ten people from those who are interested, by drawing random names out of a hat. A good level of English is also required to take part.

What if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely event that something goes wrong during interviews, the session will immediately stop until the researcher and student are ready to restart the session or the session would be stopped completely.

What happens at the end of the study?

At the end of the study, the information that is gathered will be used to present results in a thesis. Participants information will be completely anonymous. Students names will not appear in any findings. The researcher will store data securely and safely for 7 years. Any information stored on a computer will be password protected and new data protection laws will be adhered to.

What if I have more questions or do not understand something?

If you have any questions about the study or do not understand something, you may contact either of the researchers and we will be happy to help. It is important that you feel that all your questions have been answered.

What happens if I change my mind during the study?

At any stage should you feel that you want to stop taking part in the study, you are free to stop and take no further part. There are no consequences for changing your mind about being in the study and your wellbeing is of huge importance.

Contact name and number of Project Investigators.

Principal Investigator

Ciaran O’Gallechoir

School of Education, University of Limerick, Tel: 061- 234845

Email: Ciaran.OGallechoir@ul.ie

Other investigator

Lorraine McGinty, Postgraduate Masters Student

School of Education, University of Limerick

16101952@studentmail.ul.ie

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I would be grateful if you would consider participating in this study.

Yours sincerely,

Ciaran O’Gallechoir

Lorraine McGinty

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (quote approval number).

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee EHS Faculty Office University of Limerick, Tel (061) 234101



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Appendix C: Volunteer Participant Consent form

EHSREC no. 2018_03_08_EHS

Title of Research Project: An exploration into the factors that determine the progression of Asylum Seeker students in sixth year and Further Education courses into third level.

Should you agree to participate in this study please read the statements below and if you agree to them, please sign the consent form.

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet.
I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
I understand that what the researchers find out in this study may be shared with others but that my name will not be given to anyone in any written material developed.
I am fully aware of what I will have to do, and of any risks and benefits of the study.
I know that I can volunteer to take part in the focus group study if I wish to do so.
I know that I am choosing to take part in the study and that I can stop taking part in the study at any stage without giving any reason to the researchers.

This study involves audio recording of the interview session. Please tick the appropriate box

I am aware that the interview will be audio recorded and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can ask that the recording equipment be switched off? I know that I can ask for a summary of the interview, which will not include anybody's name.

I do not agree to being interviewed/ audio recorded in this study

I agree to the statements above and I consent to taking part in this research study.

Name: (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date: _____



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Appendix D: Interview Schedule

The interview should take about 45 minutes and I want to remind you that you are free to withdraw at any time. Are you comfortable to go ahead with this interview?

Questions

1. Where are you from and how long have you been in Ireland?
2. Can you tell me about your experience of school whilst living in Ireland?
3. What is your ideal job? Do you know the steps to take to begin it?
4. Can you recall having an appointment with the career guidance counsellor in school?
If so, how was that experience for you?
5. What advice or information did you get from the guidance counsellor re future options?
6. Did you receive classroom guidance with your peers?
 - a. If so, How was it for you?
 - b. If not, do you think it should have been provided?
7. Can you describe for me, how living in direct provision may have affected your school experience?
8. How would you describe the difference between secondary school and Further education? (*For PLC students only*)
9. What supports were available to you in school?
10. Are you hoping to go to university?
11. What are your aspirations for the future in regards to education and/or employment?
12. How do you feel about the new legislation allowing asylum seekers to work?



Appendix E: Sample of Interview Transcript

Interviewer Lorraine

Respondent: Jackie

Further Education Access

Interviewer: Is this scholarship your only hope of getting into third level at the moment?

Respondent: yes, at the moment.

Interviewer: If you are not offered a place, what will you do for the coming year?

Respondent: I don't know and it is really, really stressing me out obviously. All I can think about is if I don't get in then I don't know because even to go for PLC course again it was paid for by saint Vincent de paul. So obviously I have done that and so I am supposed to move forward and if I do decide to do a level 7 course that would be more like, expensive. Even if I paid for the course...

They (SVP) felt that it was too expensive because they thought they had to pay for my transport and at the end of the day I didn't end up taking transport from them because I ended up getting transport costs from the Irish Refugee Council. So they were very, very nice and really tried to help as well. So I could probably... pray I get scholarship.

Interviewer: If they couldn't fund you was there anyone else who could help?

Respondent: No and now even they don't want asylum seekers anymore in the school I done my PLC course in. they said it has changed for people. A lot of people have applied from this hostel and now they don't have anywhere to go. Because a further education

institute nearby don't take asylum seekers not neither does my school. an access course in the university only has place for two people. I am just so glad I applied last year and got it. I felt sorry for people that applied when they said they weren't going to take asylum seekers. And the thing is they are not actually saying why. Just the law has changed. The people from above say they shouldn't take asylum seekers.

Experiences of Guidance

Interviewer: How was your experience of further education? were you offered support?

Respondent: They didn't know I was an asylum seeker. They didn't know until I was at the career guidance teacher. I don't know really, like the moment I went to ask for (trails off)... Because I didn't know what to do, my mentor said I should talk to him and maybe see if he could help. there is a link between my school and the local I.T for students in PLC. If you meet the right criteria you may get a fee waiver or something. So when I sat down to ask him and I actually said I was asylum seeker, he started talking and actually changed and said he can't actually help me.. until my status change there was nothing he can do. So maybe I should just go to the school myself and find out things.

Interviewer: So he said to you until your status changed he can't help you?

Respondent: yeah, I should just go to the school itself so I kind of just end up... I just ok and stood up and left. At that moment I just felt grateful that there was scholarship I could apply for. I actually was going to talk to him about courses I should choose. I was going to tell him about scholarship but since he wasn't interested in talking he just gave me about what website to look at Qualifax or something.

Interviewer: yeah, Qualifax.

Respondent: And said I should type and see various courses and I just I don't know. I felt like because I don't have papers, talking to me was maybe a waste of time and like given me ideas. So I just left. It was weird because... I don't know..