

**BLENDED LEARNING AND REFUGEES'
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH A CAPABILITY
APPROACH LENS**



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DEDICATION

*To my parents (May God bless their souls),
to my family and friends, past and present, here and there*

With endless love and gratitude

Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated. Many of the ideas in this thesis were the product of discussion with my supervisor.

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Abstract

This study analyses the learning experiences of three Syrian refugee youth who enrolled in and completed blended learning (BL) programmes in Jordan, in order to explicate how BL has/or has not empowered those refugees. To achieve this objective, the following research questions framed this study:

Does blended learning empower Syrian refugee youth living in Jordan?

1. Is blended learning, in the case of Syrian refugee youth, an empowering capability?
2. Does blended learning help Syrian refugee youth to overcome their restrictive ‘rules of the game’?
3. Does blended learning improve Syrian refugee youth’s resource portfolio?

This study followed a case study approach. Three Syrian youth, each of whom attended a different BL programme, were interviewed between December 2018 and March 2019. While all three cases expressed aspirations that are education-bound, this study shows some difference in the aspirations of males and females and of urban refugees versus those residing in the camps. BL has been for all three cases a feasible learning opportunity. Programme providers designed the courses in a manner that accommodated to refugees’ locations, time, and economic status. Social media disseminated information about educational opportunities and possessing smartphones made following up with lectures and assignments possible and easy. The investigated BL programmes proved also to be enjoyable due to their constructive, learner-centred and collaborative approach, and competent facilitators. However, this finding does not indicate that those programmes were “empowering”. Restrictive legislations that constrain refugees’ work, movement, and lives, as well as patriarchal traditions that hampered females’ choices of education, were “rules of the game” that hindered students’ ability to fully benefit from the provided programmes. Despite the development of oral and public speaking, employability, and English language skills and despite the enhancement of self-esteem, confidence, and respect towards others, those programmes did not lead to refugees’ full empowerment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	Antenatal Care
BL	Blended Learning
CA	Capability Approach
CARFMS	Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
CF	Choice Framework
CLCC	Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRS	York University's Center for Refugee Studies
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DFID	Department of Foreign International Development
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EU	European Union
F2f	Face-to-Face
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
HEAR	Higher Education Alliance for Refugees
HOPES	Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians
ICDL	International Computer Driving Licence
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
ICT4D	Information Communication Technology for Development
ICT4E	Information Communication Technology for Education
ICT4EiE	Information Communication Technology for Education in Emergencies
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
ITS	Informal Tented Settlements
JOHUD	The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisations

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
PIS	Participants' Information Sheet
RBSs	Refugee-Background Students
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
SRY	Syrian Refugee Youth
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UoPeople	University of the People
US	The United States of America
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
WANA	West Asia-North Africa Institute
Institute	

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, numbers of displaced refugees have risen dramatically, especially in the three adjacent countries: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. As per September 2016, around 6 in 10 Syrians were displaced from their homes, a number unprecedented in recent history for a single country (PewResearch Center, 2016). The Syrian crisis has impacted all aspects of refugees' lives. Access to quality education, especially higher education (HE) has been deeply impacted by the ongoing conflict. The enrolment rate into HE of Syrian refugee youth (SRY) dropped from 26% prior to the crisis (Watenpaugh, Fricke, & King, 2014) to 6% in 2016, leaving most of the 450,000 university-aged Syrian students living outside of their home country with little chance to access HE (Luo & Craddock, 2016). Syrian students who were of university-age when the crisis started are now older than 25 and will, most probably, never access HE. SRY residing now in Jordan have to overcome a long list of usually insurmountable hurdles in order to access HE; these include having no accessibility to work permits, high tuition fees, living costs, and a lack of travel and academic documents (Watenpaugh & Fricke, 2013).

1.2 Empowerment of Refugees through Education

When the World Bank conducted a brief literature review on challenges and opportunities faced by youth in conflict and postconflict settings, they counted “the slow progress in re-establishing secondary and tertiary educational opportunities, and the marginal status of most adult education programs and accelerated learning opportunities” (World Bank, 2005, p. 70) as the number one challenge that might leave youth with a sense of disempowerment. In its broadest sense, empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It means “increasing one’s authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect one’s life. As people exercise real choice, they gain increased control over their lives” (World Bank, 2002, p. 11). Education can play a significant role in the regaining, building, and developing the capabilities of marginalised, poor, powerless, and disadvantaged populations, because education enables them to make “informed decisions that impact their families’ wellbeing, and equips them with the skills to live secure and healthy lives” (Center for Universal Education at

Brookings, 2016, p. 2). This research is interested in understanding how a specific mode of ICT-based education, i.e., blended learning, would or would not lead to refugees' empowerment.

1.3 ICT4E in the Refugee Context

When talking about solutions to narrow the gap between demand and supply in HE in emergency contexts¹, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) comes to the forefront, because using information communications technology for education (ICT4E) not only helps to build and/or regain refugees' sense of empowerment, but additionally, might lead to higher quality education and socioeconomic growth (Conill, 2013). Multiple players in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, governmental as well as nongovernmental organisations (NGO), are already implementing diverse ICT4E initiatives. Those players, as well as a long list of researchers (Barry & Newby, 2012; Coyle & Meier, 2009; Dahya, 2016), believe that “the use of ICTs has the potential to improve the performance and response of governments and related organisations in delivering rapid and sustainable solutions for the problems of education caused by these exceptional situations” (Alfarah & Bosco, 2015, p. 3).

A 2016 report by the Global Business Coalition for Education looked into the potentials of ICT to deliver education and skills to SRY. The report concluded that innovative technologies “would more effectively address some of the challenges related to access to education for Syrian youth and for the region” (p. 7). When it comes to ICT for HE in global emergency contexts, blended learning (BL) is the main educational mode that comes to the fore. BL is a learning mode in which a portion of the traditional face-to-face (f2f) instruction is replaced by web-based online learning (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, n.d.). During the last two decades, this innovative solution has burgeoned in both camp and urban settings (Gladwell et al., 2016). In a recent landscape report (Dahya, 2016) over 84 ICT4E initiatives in global refugee contexts were listed. BL topped that list when it came to HE. This study explicates how BL programmes can or cannot empower refugee youth.

One of the other reasons why BL was able to set a firm foot among other ICT solutions is the ability to deliver content via the mobile phones. Mobiles have proved in many cases to have the potential to overcome the challenges of providing education for refugees, e.g., lack of

¹ “Emergency contexts affecting education are defined as all situations in which man-made or natural disasters destroy, within a short period of time, the usual conditions of life, care and education facilities for children and therefore disrupt, deny, hinder progress or delay the realisation of the right to education. Such situations can be caused by, inter alia, armed conflicts - both international, including military occupation, and non-international, post-conflict situations, and all types of natural disasters” (Right to Education, n.d., para. 1)

language-appropriate materials and availability of instructors. Examples of promising mobile technology-based projects include the UNHCR's Connected Learning project in Lebanon; this programme focuses on connecting adult refugees with accredited centres of learning and mentors "by working with the private sector to generate cost-effective business models for establishing learning centers that are used by students as revenue-generating Internet cafe during the evenings" (GSMA, 2017, p. 25). In 2014, CARE Jordan began delivering BL developed by Edraak, a large-scale Arabic online platform, to refugees in Azraq camp. However, scaling up the project was not challenge-free, due to lack of financial sustainability (Kanani, 2014). Another well-cited project is the Jesuit Refugee Services' (JRS) work bringing tertiary education to refugees in Kenya and Malawi, where students enrol in online learning programs to study for a Diploma in Liberal Studies with Regis University /Colorado. Internal evaluations found students benefited from increased self-esteem in addition to the actual learning (GSMA, 2017).

Mobiles have been critical in disseminating information about those educational opportunities through social networks, e.g., Facebook and Twitter. Among the displaced population, the quick uptake of social networking has been very decisive. Coyle and Meier's (2009) study about the role of information and social networking in the context of emergencies, has found that social media is specifically of importance during middle emergency phase, i.e., response phase². Dahya and Dryden-Peterson (2016) found out that there is an "important interplay of local and global communication that creates educational support mediated and shaped by mobile technology and virtual communication networks" (p. 4). Their findings addressed the usage of ICT in expanding opportunities for HE for women in refugee camps. The proliferation of mobile phones has led to an expanded scope of information that moves across borders, including for and about educational aspirations and pursuits.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

My interest in and passion for studying this area emerged from my personal observations of the burgeoning initiatives using ICT4E in the Syrian crisis context, especially in the MENA region, despite the fact that there was a clear knowledge gap related to the impact of ICT4E in a crisis context. It is that passion that has guided the road to this investigation. Numerous researchers have noted the lack of sufficient, rigorous, research-based evidence with regard to ICT4E in crisis and conflict situations (Trucano, 2005; Carlson, 2013; Faustini, Kleine,

² The first phase is warning, alerts and preparedness, the second is response and the third is rebuilding (Coyle & Meier, 2009).

Poveda, & Hollow, 2013; Jenson, 2012; Raftree, 2013; Valk, Rashid, & Elder, 2010; Wagner, 2014). “Research on education in crisis and post-crisis settings is very limited ...although there is an increasing number of [Education in Emergencies] EiE programmes, these remain largely unevaluated” (Burde, Guven, Kelcey, Lahman, & Al-Abbadi, 2015, p. 53). It is particularly true that there is a lack of studies that take the emergency context into account during the research design phase when it comes to investigating education for Syrian refugees in the MENA region. Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji (2014) described this as an “under-examined” (p. 11) and “underexplored” (p. 15) area. With continuously increasing numbers of Syrian refugees, on the one hand, and the burgeoning initiatives in the realm of ICT4E, on the other hand, this research is timely, as it attempts to inform policy makers, practitioners, and programme managers about the link/or lack of link between blended education and refugees’ abilities to make purposeful and effective choices in the interests of pursuing a better life for themselves.

1.5 Context of the Study

This investigation studies the experience of three cases, two males and one female, who belong to the age range 19-24 and who have attended a BL programme since settling in Jordan. The three investigated cases were all Syrians, were officially UNHCR registered refugees, lived in an urban setting, i.e., in one of Jordan’s major cities (and not in a refugee camp), and have all enrolled in and successfully completed a nonformal BL programme offered by one of the multiple NGOs working in Jordan. Two of the cases enrolled in and attended the SKY School BL course on peacebuilding, and the third case attended four courses offered by Kiron in Irbid: English language, computer science, social work, and business administration. In addition to the peacebuilding course, one of the male cases had enrolled in and completed a course on business English that was provided by the British Council. All those programmes entailed weekly f2f meetings and mobile or computer accessible assignments. The section below provides a brief glimpse into the profile of the investigated cases. More elaboration on those cases follows in the methodology chapter, and a description of each BL programme can be found in chapters 5 to 7.

Amani, a 19-year-old Syrian female, attended four BL courses provided by Kiron, a German NGO. The courses consisted of f2f meetings that took place at a learning centre three times per week and of online assignments.

Mahmoud, a 23-year-old Syrian enrolled during Fall 2018 in the HOPES³ programme for business English provided by the British Council. The programme entailed 100 hours of f2f meetings facilitated by a British Council teacher, blended with 40 hours of online coursework. The meetings took place at Al-Quds College during 4 weekdays and each meeting lasted 3 hours. Mahmoud also attended the SKY School's peacebuilding course which is open to all refugees residing in Amman.

Samed was also 23 years old. Samed attended the SKY School's peacebuilding course during Fall 2018; the course lasted for 10 weeks. The f2f meetings took place during weekend days at a learning centre in downtown Amman. Course participants used a mobile application (AULA) for the submission of online assignments.

1.6 Research Questions

Does blended learning empower Syrian refugee youth living in Jordan?

4. Is blended learning, in the case of Syrian refugee youth, an empowering capability?
5. Does blended learning help Syrian refugee youth to overcome their restrictive 'rules of the game'?
6. Does blended learning improve Syrian refugee youth's resource portfolio?

1.7 Analytic Framework and Methodology of the Study

This study is based on the theoretical concepts of the capability approach (CA), as developed by Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen. The CA is a people-centred approach that focuses on individuals' *capabilities* and freedom of choice, and is concerned with what people are effectively able to do and to be, called *functionings*, taking into account the resources to which they have (or do not have) access (Sen, 1985, 1992, 1999). This approach allows attention to be paid to the pluralistic and multidimensional nature of human perceptions of what 'empowerment' is and how it can be achieved; the approach emphasises 'freedom of choice'. According to Sen, education is an important capability that has a direct impact on people's abilities and freedom (United Nations, 2003). The choice framework (CF) will be used as a CA operationalising framework to unpack the individual elements of the BL programmes offered while analysing the impact of each of those factors on the cases' empowerment.

³ HOPES stands for: Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians. Although it is the name to a set of direct projects, programmes, and reactions to the Syrian crisis with the objective of empowering young people from Syria to build their own career paths by directly addressing their education needs, this acronym will be used throughout this research to describe the business English BL programme provided by the British Council to Syrians and underprivileged Jordanians in Amman as part of this large initiative (more information can be found in chapter 6).

For this study, a collective, multiple-case study technique was selected, as this method allows in-depth understandings of the specific and unique cases at hand. Collecting data from the three cases through qualitative data collection tools provided a wealth of rich and in-depth descriptions of the issue in question. Moreover, this form of case study emphasises contextual uniqueness, which is crucial when studying marginalised⁴ and disadvantaged populations.

1.8 Significance of the Study

On a practical level, this research aims to draw a roadmap for practitioners in the field when planning and designing HE initiatives that are based on ICT. This is a field that is currently witnessing unprecedented political and financial support from the international community, especially when it comes to the education of Syrian refugee children and youth. Up to this point, there has not been any scientific research about the impact of implemented ICT4E programmes directed to SRY either in terms of learning outcomes, or their impact on the empowerment of those refugees.

On the ground, practitioners working in the field of education in emergencies (EiE)⁵ are faced with difficulties in fully realising the potentials of ICT4E in crisis settings due to a long list of impeding socioeconomic, cultural, geographical, and political factors. There is a clear knowledge gap about 1) how to circumvent those factors, while at the same time maintaining an acceptable level of education quality and 2) the perceptions and perspectives of refugees about offered ICT4E programmes, especially in terms of what is empowering and what is not. By analysing the learning experiences of refugees who enrolled in and completed three BL programmes, this investigation aims to provide practitioners and programme providers in crisis settings with a set of recommendations that are crucial for the implementation of effective BL programmes and that take the perspectives and perceptions of refugees into account.

⁴ “Marginalization is the process through which members of some segments of society find themselves out of the mainstream based on their membership in socially meaningful groups. Groups may become marginalized based on a variety of characteristics such as religion, social class, ethnicity, visible racial characteristics, gender, age and sexual orientation” (Given, 2008, p. 491).

⁵ The term “education in emergencies” refers to “education in situations where children lack access to their national education systems, due to man-made crises or natural disasters. Its precise interpretation varies, from a concern with emergency education during the first few months after a crisis, to the years taken to restore normal education systems after a “complex humanitarian emergency” (Sinclair, 2001, p. 4).

1.9 Overview of the Study

This study is organised into nine chapters (including this introductory chapter). The first chapter provides the broader landscape of BL in crisis contexts and presents an overview of this investigation's methodology, rationale, and significance. Chapter 2 consists of three main sections. First, the concept of empowerment is discussed in some detail, highlighting its relationship to education and its importance in the context of marginalised populations. Next, the theoretical framework of this investigation and how it relates to empowerment research are presented. Lastly, an overview of the situation of SRY living in Jordan is presented. Chapter 3 expands on the methodology employed in this investigation. It presents a rationale for the choice of research design, followed by a discussion of the process of selecting the three cases, the different data collection strategies, and the analytical procedures used. Chapter 4 moves on to present the main ethical challenges that researchers encounter when conducting research within conflict and crisis contexts. Chapters 5 to 7 provide a case-by-case analysis; these chapters set out the key emerging themes that resulted from an in-depth analysis of each of the three cases. Emerging themes are presented and structured in alignment with the research questions. Chapter 8 discusses the key findings that emanate from the three case profiles in light of the research questions. Chapter 9 summarises the outcomes, discusses the research's contributions, and lists recommendations for further research and for on-the-ground practitioners.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presents a summary of the literature that influenced the direction and development of this research. This literature review reflects the various stages of thought along this investigative process, a process that started with the very general concept of empowerment. This examination revealed that education is core and significant to the achievement of empowerment. I, therefore, decided to follow this thread and delve into the discussions around the impact of ICT4E, on people's empowerment. This spiral thinking process guided me to readings that discussed the applicability of the capability approach as a way to understand and analyse people's empowerment. Delving deeper, I investigated a set of CA operationalising frameworks until satisfied that the choice framework (CF) was a useful and manageable framework for this investigation. The previous thinking process helped me to view, 'read', and ultimately present the complexities of Syrian refugees' realities through a CA lens.

This chapter affirms our understanding of the interrelationship between empowerment and education, especially that of marginalised and underserved populations. Additionally, this chapter helps to place this research study within the realm of the newly emerging, highly interdisciplinary academic field of refugee education. All those topics: empowerment, empowerment and education, and refugee education, have been investigated through this literature review, because they are core to the 'What' question, i.e., What is going to be investigated?

Furthermore, this chapter goes on to answer the 'How' question by addressing how the research questions are intended to be answered, i.e., through which approach and which theoretical framework. This process gave rise to the discussion around the use of the CA and its operationalising frameworks as a means to investigate the empowerment of marginalised populations and specifically the implementation of the CF by dissecting its components and conducting a backwards analysis. While this chapter provides evidence on the suitability of the CF for refugee-focused research, chapter 9 provides insights into how this framework was altered to fit the nature and purpose of this study, something which could not have been possible, had the framework not been flexible enough. Moreover, this chapter provided an example of how to explore a topic using a CA lens. While Syrian refugee youth were

scrutinised here (using the CA lens), this approach can also be applied when investigating other populations or contexts.

2.2 Empowerment

2.2.1 Overview.

Rappapon (1984) noted that it is easy to define empowerment by its absence, but difficult to define it in action, as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) counted 32 different definitions of empowerment. A synthesis of those definitions, as well as sources that outlined the perspectives of poor people on their own status, all point to the centrality of a lack of agency as a description of ill-being (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). The concept of empowerment is closely related to terms such as liberation, agency, freedom, choice, self-determination, participation, mobilisation, autonomy, and self-confidence (Narayan-Parker, 2005). Freire, the leading advocate of critical pedagogy, contributed a lot to the notion of liberating and empowering education. For him “Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (Freire, 2009, p. 79). This process happens through creating critical awareness of one’s social reality through reflection and action, activities which should be essential components of people’s education.

Numerous scholars approached the issue of empowerment by analysing the dynamics and complexities of ‘power’. The traditional attitude that views power as equivalent to domination, authority, and control (Weber, 1946) was heavily challenged from the 1970s onwards, predominantly by feminist scholars. Miller (1976) promoted the concepts of *power with* and *co-agency*, which she defined as “enhance[ing] the power of other people while simultaneously increasing our own power” (Miller, 1982, p. 2, as cited in Kreisberg, 1992, p. 63). Empowerment is a complex term with endless interpretations due to its multicontextual (political, sociocultural, economic, etc.) and multidimensional (individual, community, national, etc.) nature. The term has diverse connotations in different sociocultural and political contexts and is “shaped by beliefs and value systems” (Jupp, Ibn Ali, & Barahona, 2010, p. 28). For this investigation, the focus on empowerment will be devoted to definitions and concepts related to empowerment as social transformation of marginalised populations. According to the World Bank (2002):

In its broadest sense, empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It means increasing one’s authority and control over the

resources and decisions that affect one's life. As people exercise real choice, they gain increased control over their lives. (p. 11)

Walton (2003) defined empowerment as the “capacity of individuals or groups to make purposeful and effective choices in the interest of pursuing a better life for themselves” (p. 3). These definitions indicate that there is a close link between empowerment and the expansion of choice. This investigation analyses the BL experiences of three SRY in order to show if those experiences have expanded their choices and if they have, in which direction have their choices expanded, i.e., does the expansion enable them to live the lives they value.

2.2.2 Empowerment and education.

When world leaders gathered and decided on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it was clear that education plays a core role in the achievement of a higher standard of living, the reduction of poverty, and economic growth (United Nations, n.d.). However, as time passed and a lot of development programmes did not achieve their aspirations, questions were raised about the “unambiguous relationship between economic growth and poverty alleviation” (Conill, 2013, p. 1), while the role of education as the main motor for societal development remained undebatable. There was, a general consensus that education “empowers communities and enables them to engage in wealth-generating activities, which lead to the creation of employment, the establishment of social stability, sustainability, and prosperity” (Conill, 2013, p. 1).

On an academic level, those strong mutual ties between empowerment and education were also developed. Nobel Prize winner, Amartya Sen highlighted the direct impact of education on people's ability to find employment, to understand their legal rights, and to overcome deprivation (United Nations, 2003). Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland (2006) considered education a human asset that can give a person greater access to other assets such as information and thereby improve their capacity to envision alternative options, which is a psychological asset. However, soon researchers, as well as on-the-ground practitioners specifically those focusing on developing countries, realised that “education is restricted by economic, geographical, and social factors that feedback the current inegalitarian system” (Tondeur, Van Braak, & Valcke, 2007, as cited in Conill, 2013, p. 1) especially in a context that illustrates abundance within resource-rich countries versus a lack in access, quality, and outcome in developing countries. On-the-ground practitioners working with marginalised and excluded populations are too often held back from witnessing the fruits of their efforts, as a result of such impeding socioeconomic, cultural, geographical, and political factors. Trying to

circumvent those impediments, practitioners, especially those implementing educational programmes for refugees, turned to ICT4E in the hope of achieving better results, especially in terms of access of quality education. As mentioned before, there is still a considerable knowledge gap in terms of our understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of ICT4E programmes in achieving the empowerment of refugees and of marginalised and excluded populations.

2.3 Refugee Education

This section of the literature review aims to guide the reader through some of the existing debates in academia that concern refugees and their engagement in HE. Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological environment of human development, as used by Dryden-Peterson, Dahya, and Adelman (2017) to analyse education regarding refugees, has been adopted to organise this literature review section. The ecological model views individuals as being circumscribed by major influential systems: 1) the microsystem (family, peer group, school); 2) the mesosystem (interrelationships between microsystems, such as between parents and school); 3) the exosystem (institutions and practices that affect the individual but over which individual has no control); 4) the macro-system (social and cultural norms); and, 5) the chronosystem (historical and environmental transitions over time) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). Boothby (2008) described armed conflicts that disrupt an individual's eco-system as "an ecological shock of destabilization" (p. 502).

2.3.3 Chronosystem: A global education movement for primary education.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1989), the chronosystem is a description of the "evolution, development or stream of development of the external systems in time" (pp. 201-202). This section articulates the evolution of the global movement for primary education and its implications on refugees' HE. During the 1990s, the world witnessed a series of interstate, as well as, intrastate conflicts which led to the displacement of millions of children and young people. As a result, their education was mostly abruptly terminated. The educational needs of those children in emergency contexts were discussed at the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000 (UNESCO, 2000) and then again in September 2000 when world leaders adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Education was at the heart of those time-bound and quantifiable targets. These goals set an ambitious target of ensuring that, by the year 2015 children everywhere, —boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (UN, n.d.). While there was some emphasis on secondary

education and life-skills, HE went unmentioned in these seminal documents (Dryden-Peterson, 2010).

Reasons for the MDG's focus on primary education are rooted in the geography, economy, and philosophy of the movement. The movement focused on the least developed countries (LDCs); geographically, these were the sub-Saharan countries, which due to their long history of conflicts and crisis, had exponentially increasing numbers of out-of-school children (OOSC). According to the UNHCR, LDCs are both the major source and destination of refugees, with 86% of refugees originating from those areas and 72% of the world's refugees being provided with asylum in these regions (UNHCR, 2002).

Economically, HE proved to be an expensive investment. Moreover, donors were reluctant to fund HE initiatives because it did not with the MDGs (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). On a more philosophical level, however, HE was often "perceived as a "luxury" for an elite few" (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010, p. 4). According to Su (2004), investing in HE in underdeveloped countries, where the expansion of knowledge economies is rare as well as slow, would lead to "exclusive participation" (p. 5), a situation where the wealthy would benefit disproportionately from public investment in HE, at the expense of the less fortunate population segments. This outcome would likely be due to the dominant elite's influence over budget allocation in favour of subsidising HE for their own children. Dodds and Inquai (1983) also pointed to that "exclusion" by stating that "without [HE] [refugees] will inevitably remain outsiders and a permanent drain on the resources of the host community"(p. 12), a situation that will definitely perpetuate inequalities in already highly divided societies (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). "The choice between investment in primary and higher education is, in many ways, a zero-sum game" (Dryden-Peterson, 2010, p. 15).

2.3.2 Macrosystem: Radical uncertainty.

The macrosystem refers to the macro external system conditions (Medeiros, 2018). In the context of refugees these would reflect global consensus norms such as the universal right to education expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). Numerous authors have highlighted the rather complex and convoluted relationship between refugees and nation-states (Bauman, 2002; Haddad, 2010; Agamben 1995; Arendt, 1973), because refugees are placed in a void of statelessness (Bauman, 2002) and are caught in between nation-states. In this respect, "the role of an international community advocating for refugees is critical" (Medeiros, 2018, p. 23). The Convention on the Rights of the Child, for instance, states that recognising the right to education includes "mak[ing] higher education

accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means" (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

However, despite the announcement of multiple conventions that affirmed refugees' educational rights, their ability to enjoy those rights did not improve for a number of reasons. First, conflict-induced displacements are currently exponentially protracted (Dryden-Peterson, 2015) and the average length of exile has reached 25 years (Dryden-Peterson, 2017a). Second, refugees are confined by "interactions among global and national structures governed by the politics of migration, funding sources, local economies, and the state of national education systems, among other factors" (Dryden-Peterson, 2017a, p. 3), and face a future that is described as "radical uncertainty" (Dryden-Peterson, 2017a, p. 4) where their vision of the future is unimagined, unknown, and unpredictable (Horst & Grabska, 2015). Despite the radical uncertainty of their future, refugees' universal aspiration to continue their education and to enter university has been cited in numerous studies (Mkwanzani 2018; Phan, 2018; Mangan, 2017; Cin & Doğan, 2020; Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; 2017; Shakya et al., 2010; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). There is a clear tension between those aspirations and refugees' 'habitus', i.e., the culturally and situationally embedded structures that shape the way they are able to interact with their context cognitively, physically, and emotionally (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Even if a refugee is able to make it to secondary level, there are insurmountable barriers to accessing HE. These include, for example, academic prerequisites, documentation, birth certificates, exam results, associated costs, recognition of learning certifications, nationality requirements either for enrolment or the availability of low fees etc. (Sinclair, 2001; Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Cin & Doğan, 2020; Watenpaugh, Fricke, & King, 2014; Watenpaugh & Frick, 2013; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2010, 2015, 2017a). This radical uncertainty about their future, this tension between aspiration and habitus and that between aspirations and limited options gave rise to concepts of 'mobility'. Refugees envision their education as facilitating mobility – physical and cognitive – in a way that helps building a more certain future. For refugees, education is 'light' in terms of both its meanings, i.e., enlightening their trajectories, and 'light' in the sense of being not heavy and mobile (portable) wherever they go (Dryden-Peterson, 2017a).

On the academic side, there is now an emerging debate about how to provide refugees with 'mobile' solutions, solutions that are not "packaged into boxes labeled 'nation-state'"... "[because] we know that young people growing up today sitting in cardboard boxes in Kabul or Kingston, Bujumbura or Beirut – imagine and plan for lives that transcend nation-states" (Dryden-Peterson, 2017a). Facing a radical, uncertain, unimaginable, and unknown future, refugees embed their thoughts, plans, and future visions in more than one nation-state strategy

to open multiple possible futures (Dryden-Peterson, 2017b). Therefore, it is believed that this study is timely, as it looks into and studies the experiences of SRY enrolling and participating in a somewhat mobile learning mode, i.e., mobile in the sense of being partially delivered via the mobile and ‘mobile’ in the sense that the knowledge and skills acquired are transferrable (portable) and will move with them wherever they go.

2.3.3 Exosystem: Connected learning in crisis.

According to Dryden-Peterson et al. (2017) the “Exosystem is part of a global system of international humanitarian aid, for example, education governed by UNHCR standards” (p. 1017). The UNHCR Education Policy Commitments, first published in 2003, state that the UNHCR will advocate for tertiary education and will support the effective use of resources donated for this purpose (UNHCR, 2010). However, a much stronger, and now quantifiable and time-bound commitment, was announced in the UNHCR’s Education 2030 Strategy:

The tertiary education target for 2030 is to enrol 15% of college-eligible refugees in tertiary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) or connected education programmes in host and third countries, and to achieve equitable gender representation across tertiary enrolments. (UNHCR, 2019, p. 7)

While during the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium, the UNHCR provided HE options through DAFI (the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) which could accommodate only 2% of demand (Morlang & Watson, as cited in Dryden-Peterson, 2010), it now adds “Connected Education” to its solutions. Through the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium (CLCC) which is co-led by the UNHCR, students have access “to accredited, cutting-edge blended-learning. The CLCC brings relevant, flexible higher education programmes to refugee and host community students in both camp and urban settings” (UNHCR, 2018, p. 58). Up to the end of 2018, the UNHCR provided HE options to 7,500 refugee students who were engaged in connected education programmes (e.g., diploma courses, associate and bachelor’s degrees, bridging programmes) offered by 23 CLCC partners across 21 countries. This fact proves that this study aligns with international directions and commitments to expand the adoption of ICT-based programmes for refugee youth.

2.3.4 Mesosystem: Unsupportive educators and complex needs.

According to Dryden-Peterson et al. (2017), the mesosystem represents interrelationships between microsystems, for example, school-family relationships or relationships with the educational system in the new host country. This section presents a snapshot of the educators’ role within HE and their relationships with refugee students. As a result of the great difference

between the role of educators in their home country and in their new host communities, refugee students reported difficulties getting “used to expectations of a more self-directed style of learning and to cultural differences in the role of the educator” (Mangan & Winter, 2017, p. 10). The different learning cultures and how much that impacts refugee students’ learning was also discussed by McBrien (2005), Pastoor (2013, 2015), and Rutter (2006). According to Harris, Ngum Chi, and Spark (2013), refugee HE students suffer from educators who speak too fast and who refuse requests for clarifications. Other studies identified complaints related to educators not giving refugee students space to speak (Hannah, 1999) and marking assignments too harshly, focusing on grammar and spelling rather than students’ understanding of the subject area. Sidhu and Taylor (2009, as cited in Keddie, 2012) discussed the reasons behind such a situation by highlighting that “current resources in relation to teachers, support staff and professional development are inadequate in providing the holistic support necessary for addressing the complex needs of the growing numbers of refugee students” (p. 5). Additionally, there is a tendency for educators to homogenise students’ identities’ (Ferfolja, 2009; Matthews, 2008; Rose, 2000; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

2.3.5 Microsystem: Racism and being different.

The microsystem involves interpersonal relationships in which the individual has agency, for example, with teachers, peers, family members, and other community member. Mangan and Winter (2017) noted a great many of these interrelationships in their synthesis 10 studies that discussed HE experiences of students from refugee backgrounds (RBSs) using Fraser’s interconnected spheres of social justice: recognition and redistribution.

2.3.5.1 Peer Relationships: Racism and discrimination.

RBSs reported that they felt that they were treated by fellow students in their HE institutions as inferior, less valued and/or less validated, “suggesting an underlying racism” (Mangan & Winter, 2012, p. 10). Some RBSs reported feelings of isolation, when their ideas and assignments were pushed aside by both educators and students. Some RBSs in Harris and Marlowe’s study (2011) reported that they were assumed to be stupid, with educators being surprised when they contributed in class. One reason for that assumption, according to a Sudanese female refugee student, is that the university is “not equipped to deal with people with so much mess that is created by two conflicting cultures” (Harri, Ngum Chi, & Spark, 2013, p. 192). These are examples of what Mangan and Winter (2012) identified as the “misrecognition” that occurs when “individuals from particular groups of society are accorded less social status and not treated as full partners in social interactions” (p. 9). They are presentations of what Anderson (1999) and Fraser (2001) called ‘relational inequality’, which

occurs when some individuals within a social hierarchy are not treated as moral equals but rather as inferior.

2.3.5.2 Peer Relationships: Distance or difference from other HE students.

RBSs reported difficulty befriending students from the host culture, due to differences in prior life experience, in responsibilities, specifically financial as well as language and cultural barriers (Earnest, Joyce, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2010). Many supported family abroad with remittances (Mangan & Winter, 2012). The words of Savalan, an RBS in Morrice's study (2013), were very indicative of the differences between RBS and host country students: "classmates would ring their parents for money to go out socializing, whereas my parents in Iran would ring me for money" (p. 662). It was reported that RBSs often abstained from socialising with peers for financial or religious reasons, while hiding these reasons (Earnest et al., 2010; Morrice, 2013). As the literature review illustrated, international students in general often report finding themselves separated socially from noninternational students (Fotovatian & Miller, 2014; Pham & Saltmarsh, 2013). Along the same line, the narratives in Mangan's study (2017), evoked a sense of being "othered" (p. 115) through questioning over issues of belonging to a specific ethnic group, where the students come from and when they will go back. At times the reason behind that attitude was due to the RBS' being the only one of his nationality, ethnicity or religion in class (Mangan & Winter, 2012). Pastoor (2017), who interviewed refugee students living in Norway, provided two other possible explanations: 1) not being able to speak the language well enough and 2) living in a host community that is asocial and skeptical by nature.

Watters (2008, as cited in Pastoor, 2017) pointed to a very interesting observation. Homogeneous societies (like those Scandinavia, where his and Pastoor's study took place) promote cohesion among 'similar people', which appears to be related negatively to a tendency towards the "othering" of those who are from the outside. Pastoor (2017, p. 13) notes that the dialectics between in-group solidarity and othering of out-group members may result in higher levels of unemployment and low school achievement among minority ethnic groups

2.3.5.3 Mixed-gender relationships.

When it comes to female RBSs, studies have pinpointed samples of marginalisation and invalidation. Invalidation takes place when someone finds aspects of him/herself being invalidated and misrecognised by individuals who come from a different system or by the system itself. When female RBSs do not align with gender norms and/or with the expectations of their own cultural background, they are either put down, or the community puts strains on

their relationships and they are not given full respect. One recurrent theme in reviewed studies is that some men do not want women to be highly educated (Mangan & Winter, 2012).

Females reported that their HE had opened their minds, and allowed them to question men, who do not want to be questioned. Consequently, HE led to a shift in gender dynamics, which, according to a female RBS, made her less attractive to men from her community (Harris et al., 2013). Hebbani, Obijiofor, and Bristed (2010) referred to that gendered problem as “living between two cultures” (p. 47), and Harris et al. (2013, 2015) found that some female refugee students were marginalised because they stepped outside of gender norms.

2.4 The Capability Approach

2.4.1 Overview.

The CA was developed by Amartya Sen. It is a people-centred approach that focuses on individuals’ capabilities and freedom of choice. It is concerned with what people are effectively able to do and to be, yet taking into account the resources to which they have (or do not have) access. Unlike other development theorists, Sen was not in favour of set variables such as household income or gross national income, because he wanted to see a shift in people’s attention towards the reasons for introducing different functions (Sen, 1971, 1988, 1990). If, for instance, the focus is on ICT4E, then the question should be about the reasons for wanting more education or a specific ICT-based education, and what people want to achieve through that education, and, consequently, how can access to more education or a different type of education expand people’s freedoms and enable them to live the lives they value. “The CA focuses on enabling freedom of choice where commodities, like ICT, play an instrumental role” (Hatakka, Thapa, & Saebo, 2016, p. 2).

2.4.2 The capability approach’s main components.

This investigation analyses the BL experiences of SRY by using a CA lens and investigating the diverse factors of those experiences according to the CA main components: 1) functionings, 2) capabilities, 3) opportunity structure (also called “rules of the game”), and 4) the resource portfolio of the investigated cases.

2.4.2.1 Functionings.

The term *functionings* refers to “the various things a person may value doing or being” (Sen, 1999, p. 75). Functionings differ in nature; some are elementary, e.g., being safe and well-nourished, and others are more complex, e.g., being able to express oneself in public without shame (Sen, 1985, 1992). According to Alkire (2015), because people in different places and times have different values and experiences, the list of their relevant functionings is dependent on their circumstances. Functionings are, therefore, all that a person is able to ‘be and to do’; that is, a person’s functionings “constitute what makes a life valuable” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 95).

This investigation looks at two types of functionings: 1) aspired functionings and 2) realised or achieved functionings. The *aspired functionings* are unmet functionings for which there is a strong desire, aspiration, hope, and ambition to achieve them. According to Tiwari (2011), it is those strong aspirations that become “the driver for achieving the valued functionings” (p. 5). Achievement of the functionings is through capabilities, i.e., “the opportunity or the freedom the person has that allow him/her to achieve what he/she values in life” (Tiwari, 2011, p. 5). Realised or the *achieved functionings* refer to what a person is actually able to do and these functionings refer to those doings and beings that people enjoy at a given point in time (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2003).

2.4.2.2 Capabilities.

Capabilities are:

a kind of opportunity freedom. Just like a person with much money in her pocket can buy many different things, a person with many capabilities could enjoy many different activities, pursue different life paths. For this reason the capability set has been compared to a budget set. So capabilities describe the real actual possibilities open to a person. (Human Development & Capability Approach, 2013, p. 2)

Capabilities represent what is effectively possible, represent freedoms or valuable opportunities to lead the kind of lives individuals want to lead, to do what they want to do, and be the person they want to be. “Once they effectively have these substantive opportunities, they can choose those options that they value most” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 95). In other words, it is the capabilities that represent a person’s real opportunities and real freedoms to achieve what he/she aspires to (the person’s aspired functionings). “Sen holds that it is not so much the achieved functionings that are important as the real opportunities that one has to achieve those functionings, i.e., a person’s capabilities” (Robeyns, 2003, p. 10). This investigation will look at the whole set of ‘capabilities’, opportunities, options and choices that are there within the educational context of the SRY. There will be an explanation to what they prefer, find

appropriate, like or dislike. It is only through the analysis of case's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and contexts that the "effectively possible" and empowering, can be identified.

2.4.2.3 Agency and resource portfolio.

Agency, which is defined as "the capacity to make meaningful choices" (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005, p. 8) is influenced by a set of agency-based inputs that can be assessed through a list of indicators called *resources* and all resources together form, what Kleine (2009a) called, a *resource portfolio*. Alsop and Heinsohn counted seven resources, which they termed *asset endowments*: psychological, organisational, informational, material, social, financial, and human endowments. Kleine's (2009a) list included 10 endowments: educational, psychological, geographical, cultural, health, information, social, financial, material, and natural endowments. Below are two examples of agency-based resources.

Psychological resources include not only "the capacity to envision" (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005, p. 8), self-esteem, confidence, resilience, but also issues related to spiritual and religious beliefs, which, as Kleine (2009a) suggested, "stand in complex interrelation with psychological resources ... [and] can strengthen or weaken an individual's psychological resources"(p. 4).

Human resources include issues like good health, a prerequisite for a person's ability to choose the life she/he values. According to the sustainable livelihood framework (SLF), which inspired the work of Kleine (2009a), "Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives" (DFID, 2000, as cited in Kollmair & St. Gamper, 2002, p. 6) and, therefore, human capital is considered of vast importance in achieving livelihood outcomes. For this research, language, as a human resource, is a particularly important aspect. Language competencies play a considerable role in enabling, if accessed, and disabling, if lacking, endeavours to continue HE in the context of SRY living in Jordan.

2.4.2.4 Opportunity structure/rules of the game.

Opportunity structure, on the other hand, reflects formal and informal contexts within which actors operate. Capabilities and functionings do not exist in a vacuum, nor are they free-floating; rather, they are structured and shaped by a set of relations, by constraints and opportunities of societal structures, and by institutions surrounding individuals (Robeyns, 2003). According to Sen (1999), there is a need to analyse the "contingent circumstances, both personal and social" (p. 70) on which individual capabilities depend. In other words, the CA

pays attention to the interrelational links between the “material, mental and social well-being, or to the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of life” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 96).

Within this research, the term *opportunity structure* will be used interchangeably with the other indicative concept of the *rules of the game*. Both terms identify and define the surrounding formal and nonformal environment which contains structures, relations, and institutions. According to Ostrom and Ostrom (2014), rules of the game refer to:

prescriptions commonly known and used by a set of participants to order repetitive, interdependent relationships. Prescriptions refer to which actions (or states of the world) are required, prohibited, or permitted. Rules are the result of implicit or explicit efforts by a set of individuals to achieve order and predictability within defined situations. (p. 99)

2.4.3 Rationale for adopting a capability approach.

2.4.3.1 A strong mutual relationship between CA and education.

According to Saito (2003), there is a strong and mutual relationship between the CA and education to an extent that renders the CA “clearly apt for exploration from an educational point of view” (Saito, 2003, as cited in Otto & Ziegler, 2006, p. 269). Otto and Ziegler (2006) emphasised that both education and literacy could be considered key factors in the CA, as they represent essential resources “enabling people and structuring the effective opportunities of people to live a life they have reason to choose and value” (p. 269). Additionally, the CA presents an easily adaptable conceptual framework that allows for the analysis and study of educational issues from a social justice perspective.

2.4.3.2 A focus on empowering the marginalised.

The CA is a people-centred approach that aims at strengthening and enabling the surrounding environment and conditions for the realisation of people’s aspirations (Clark, 2008) by focusing “on disadvantaged individuals while recognising their own agency” (Kleine, 2009b, p. 172). This approach provides people with dignity by not treating them as mere tools to achieve economic growth. “If the GDP growth model disempowers them, the capabilities approach makes empowerment a central issue” (Goodpal, 2013, para. 6). The CA paves the way to view, accept, and incorporate in any evaluation work the external factors by which people’s abilities are hindered or impacted, e.g., external social arrangements, lack of access to infrastructure, and discriminatory policies or practices.

2.4.3.3 A recognition of human diversity.

The CA emphasises the importance of freedom of choice, individual diversities, and the multidimensional nature of human well-being. The CA looks into the extent of the freedom people actually enjoy or have (Sen, 1992) by actively incorporating the role of human agency and emphasising the broad range of real-life constraints that impact people, e.g., class, gender, race, etc. (Lister, 2002). Additionally, the CA as an analytic framework does not take human “preference formation, socialisation, subtle forms of discrimination and the impact of social and moral norms for granted, but rather analyzes those up-front” (Robeyns, 2003, p. 15).

2.4.3.4 An adequate and flexible application for ICT-based initiative evaluation.

According to Kleine (2009a) and Zheng and Walsham (2008), the CA “highlights the importance and variations of local conditions and understand the process of development” (as cited in Hatakka & De’, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, there are procedural considerations behind selecting the CA for this study. It is a flexible multipurpose framework, exhibiting a considerable degree of “internal pluralism, which allows researchers to develop and apply it in many ways” (Alkire, 2002, as cited in Clark, 2008, p. 5).

2.4.4 The choice framework (CF).

While welcoming Sen’s approach as offering a more holistic view of development that puts empowerment at its centre, researchers had difficulties dealing both with the idea that “theories that are not user-friendly do not spread” (Alkire, 2005, p. 116), and that there was a need to identify broad ideas using theorems, indicators, and other formal or “operational” tools. According to Comim (2001), operationalisation is “the diverse sequence of transforming a theory into an object of practical value” (p. 1). Alkire (2001, as cited in Chiappero-Martinetti & Roche, n.d.) argues that to operationalise a hypothesis is to add enough particularities so that it “can be tried out, put to work in time and space and in an informative if not entirely conclusive manner” (p. 2).

The choice framework (CF) follows Sen’s reasoning and puts choices, people’s freedoms, and functionings at the core (Hatakka, Thapa, & Saebo, 2016). Dorothea Kleine, Director of the interdisciplinary ICT4D Centre at Royal Holloway (University of London) developed the choice framework in 2009. Her choice framework:

- was based on Sen’s CA
- was inspired by Alsop and Heinsohn’s work on operationalising Sen’s work,

- made use of elements from the sustainable livelihood framework
- was informed by an in-depth research project into microentrepreneurs' use of ICTs in Chile (Kleine, 2009a).

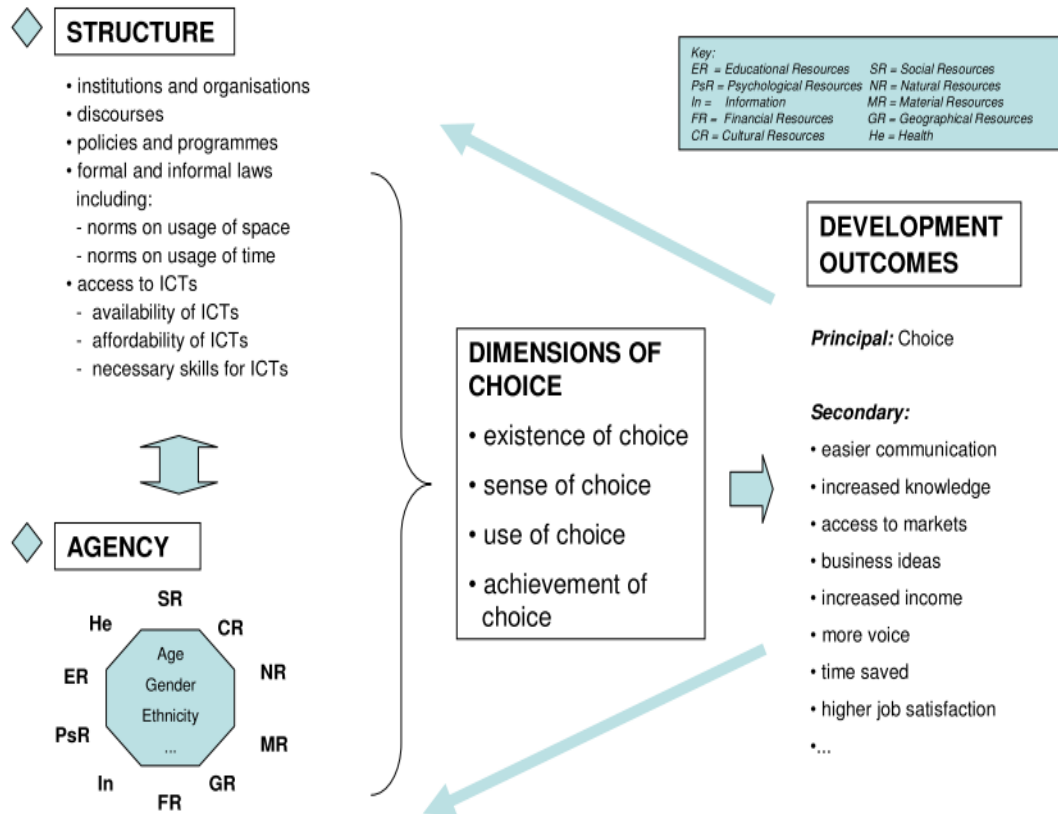


Figure 2.1 The choice framework. (Kleine, 2009a).

When applying the approach, Kleine suggested starting from the end of the development process (in accordance with e.g., Robeyns, 2003) and using the functionings as a proxy for finding the capabilities and then looking at the context (e.g., agency and structure). This research followed the same analysis sequence, starting with SRY's desired outcomes, their aspired functionings and life-goals and then gradually moving from there to analyse the agency, with all surrounding agency-based resources and the opportunity structure, in order to investigate whether the BL programmes offered to SRY in Jordan have been empowering or not.

2.4.5 Rationale for adopting the choice framework.

The choice framework stood out for the following reasons:

- It has applicability and suitability for empirical evaluation of ICT interventions, especially when targeting marginalised and disadvantaged populations.
- It provides ample detailed guidance on how to use it (Kleine, 2009a, 2009b, 2013).
- It includes ICT in the social structures of studied communities and thereby increases our understanding of the role of ICT.
- It helps to reduce concepts related to empowerment to measurable components by unpacking the two main factors (agency and opportunity structure) that influence the transformation of an individual's choice in terms of a desired action or outcome.
- It is highly flexible, which makes it fit the nature, context, and goals of studies in intricate contexts.

2.4.6 Choice framework challenges and limitations.

Informal and formal norms usually regulate marginalised people's behaviour; these norms are based on gender, age, ethnicity, income, class, and other axes of exclusion. According to Kleine (2009a), those axes are "conceptualised as personal characteristics of an individual which may in a given social context become related to socially constructed axes of exclusion and influence the scope and scale of the resource portfolio" (p. 4). However, more guidance was not given on how to incorporate or analyse those "axes of exclusion".

A second challenge is the duality between individual interests versus those of a specific group or community. Individual interests, preferences, and aspirations might differ from those of the group, to the extent that there is always a possibility of relationship tension during the empowerment process (Kleine, 2009b). This is an expected dilemma, as this study deals with the 'turbulent' phase of 15-24-old Syrians who are undergoing exceptionally unstable changes in their lives due to their refugee journey on the one hand, while they are at the same time developing desires and aspirations that might not be in accordance with the prevailing societal or communal norm. It is for this reason that this research adheres to the individual's perspective, experiences, aspirations, and life vision.

A third challenge lies in the complex interaction between and among different resources. One single resource (e.g., owning a laptop) might affect the actor's ability to continue his/her studies and make meaningful choices. In other words, this economic resource, if accessed, might be influential in increasing the individual's IT skills (a human resource) and acquiring

updated information about educational opportunities (information). Consequently, it is important to gather data about all those resources and to analyse the impact of each resource on other resources as well as their impact on empowerment outcomes.

The next challenge relates to the difference between the *presence* and *operation* of structural opportunities. One example is the *de jure* versus the *de facto* structures SRY encounter when they seek HE in the MENA region. There is a difference between the legislative regulations and the de facto operational implementation of those regulations. In the case of SRY, there are multiple de facto limitations. For example, in the majority of Lebanese universities Syrian youth are not allowed to study pharmacy and medicine, not because they are not eligible, but due to the widespread perception that “they are not able to compete with Lebanese students” (Watenpugh, Fricke, & King, 2014, p. 25), which means that a sole reliance on secondary sources related to regulations and administrative requirements will be a mistake. Therefore, a significant amount of time and effort has been devoted to scrutinising informal (de facto) structures surrounding and impacting SRY.

2.5. Syrian Refugees in Jordan through a Capability Approach Lens

2.5.1 Overview of Syrian refugee youth in Jordan.

The term Syrian Refugee Youth (SRY) used throughout this research confines itself to the age-group 15-24, i.e., to the category of ‘youth’ as defined by the United Nations⁶ (United Nations, n.d.), and to those who have been displaced by the Syrian crisis and forced to live in Jordan. Broadly speaking, youth can be defined as those undergoing a transition from childhood to adulthood. It is very important to emphasise here that this group is not of a heterogeneous nature. The analysis below, therefore, presents the profiles of three very diverse, heterogeneous, and particular cases.

2.5.1.1 Syrian refugees’ legal status.

In Jordan, the UNHCR registers incoming refugees and grants them an asylum seeker certificate. In addition, those who live in a refugee camp are provided with a proof of registration document,⁷. The first refugees who came in the 2012 and 2013 waves were welcomed with open arms and generosity. However, the Jordanian government and citizens

⁶ According to the United Nations: ‘youth’, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States

⁷ There are three main refugee camps in Jordan: Al Zataari, Azraq, and the Jordanian Emirati camp. However, the majority of refugees in Jordan (above 80%) live in host communities, i.e., in urban and rural settings outside the camps.

soon realised that the Syrian refugee situation was transforming into a protracted crisis. Consequently, the initial generosity lessened and a negative public perception highlighted sociopolitical frustration (Francis, 2015). At the same time, the Jordanian government took some harsh decisions that had a tremendous impact on the legal status of Syrian refugees. In July 2014, the government instructed the UNHCR not to register Syrians in host communities anymore; henceforth, only those who would reside in one of the refugee camps were to be registered. Syrians who left the camps after that date were not in a position to ask for humanitarian assistance. Four years later, the government revoked the eligibility of people living outside refugee camps to receive subsidised health care. As a result, Syrian refugees in urban areas now have to pay high, mostly unaffordable, charges at public hospitals, with 80% of these charges having to be paid up front (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

2.5.1.2 Syrian refugees' economic status in Jordan.

Currently, 86% of Syrian refugees live below Jordan's poverty line (\$US96/month) and one in six live on less than \$US1.3/day, which the UNHCR considers to be the absolute poverty line (UNHCR, 2015). This economic deprivation is due to the difficulties that the refugees have in meeting the requirements that allow them to lawfully be granted a work permit. These include paying the equivalent of \$US100 and finding a Jordanian sponsor (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Around 160,000 Syrians are employed in the informal job sector (Stave & Hillesund, 2015). Meeting their daily living costs is difficult for many Syrian refugees. For instance, the majority of Syrians in Jordan, especially those living in the northern provinces of Jordan, expend an average of 55% of their monthly income on rent. As rents have soared 600% since 2011 (Mercy Corps, 2013), one third of refugees in Jordan are in debt to their landlords (CARE International, 2014). A further financial burden is imposed by the cost of healthcare, because, as noted above, Syrian refugees now have to pay for healthcare that was provided for free up to January 2018.

2.5.2 Syrian refugee youth and higher education.

As per the UNHCR statistics of June 29th, 2018, over 5,600,000 Syrians had crossed the border to seek refuge in another country (UNHCR, n.d.). Almost 600,000 of those refugees are between the ages of 18 and 24. However, only 1 to 5% of those young people enrol in higher education (HE) (Dakkak, Yacoub, & Qarout, 2017) and the HE enrolment rate for SRY is constantly dropping. In fact, the enrolment rate of SRY into HE dropped from the 26% it had reached prior to the crisis (Watenpaugh, Fricke, & King, 2014) to 6% in 2016, leaving most of the 450,000 university-aged Syrian students who are now outside of their home country with little chance of accessing HE (Luo & Craddock, 2016). SRY who were of

university age when the crisis started are now 25 or older. They will most probably never access HE; in addition, there are more and more secondary students graduating and waiting for an opportunity to study at the next level.

In February 2016, the UK, Germany, Kuwait, Norway, and the United Nations cohosted a conference to discuss the Syrian crisis in London. US\$12 billion was raised at the conference to help host countries to plan ahead (Supporting Syria & the Region: London 2016, n.d.). On that occasion, the Jordanian government signed the 'Jordan Compact'. This new approach is designed to deal with the protracted displacement. The compact combines humanitarian and development funding through multiyear grants and concessional loans, which are linked to the payment of grants and loans to specific targets. While educational targets related to school children were very precisely set (every Syrian refugee child would be in school by 2016–17 and were linked to a promised investment of US\$97.6 million to open and run an additional 102 double shift schools), commitments related to the provision of any kind of postsecondary educational opportunities were not included, except for a promise for some additional (limited) access to vocational training (Barbelet, Hagen-Zanker, & Mansour-ille, 2018).

2.5.3 Syrian refugee youth and key rules of the game.

2.5.3.1 Traditions related to early marriage.

Recent studies observed the ever-increasing phenomena of early marriages amongst Syrian refugee girls in Jordan, i.e., in girls below the age of 18. Early marriage is a deeply rooted custom and tradition among Syrian refugees, especially those of rural origin, according to participants of a focus group in Jordan (Younes, 2017). Early marriage usually entails a long list of threats. At the top, are domestic violence and an abrupt end of the young women's education (New York Times, 2014). Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014) outlined the 'perceived advantage of early marriage' for girls as one of the factors impeding girls' endeavours to continue their education. It is reported that up to 17% of eligible females aged 12-17 in Jordanian refugee camps are dropping out of education because of early marriage. However, there is a very clear discrepancy between urban settings and camp settings in that regard. Percentages for females marrying early (below the age of 18) in Jordanian cities are reported to be much lower (Edraak, 2017).

2.5.3.2 Educational policies.

In Jordan, those who have been out of school for over 3 years are considered to be ineligible for reintegration in the formal schooling system (MoE, 2016). This practice of excluding some children from education presents a major challenge in Jordan, where informal education is

scarce and of low-quality. In Jordan, this regulation is strictly implemented. According to a 2014 UNHCR estimate, the “three-year rule” barred some 77,000 Syrian children from formal education (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

However, as already mentioned, the reality for SRY and their educational choices is fraught with complex dimensions. Syrian students, who lived and completed their secondary education in another country prior to reaching Jordan find that enrolment into Jordanian HE is very daunting and mostly unaffordable. The whole process of sitting high school exams and issuing the certificate amounts to JOD 225, i.e., an amount equivalent to around US\$300 (Dakkak, et al., 2017). Additionally, learning about the attainment certificates that are required presents a major challenge. In most cases, the refuge decision was taken hastily and without thinking about the academic papers that would be needed in the new host country for university enrolment. Once in Jordan, some young men decided to go to the Syrian embassy to obtain documents. However, this is a dangerous decision, as it might result in harassment or arrest. A lack of proof of educational attainment prior to arriving in Jordan has prevented many Syrians from either enrolling in HE or joining the semi- to high-skilled labour force (Edraak, 2017).

2.5.3.3 Educational initiatives.

In response to the continuous and clear decline in the HE enrolment rates of Syrian students, Jordanian policy-makers have attempted to include the HE sector in their policies and reactions to the crisis (El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017). The efforts undertaken can be summarised as follows: 1) increased number of scholarships, 2) strengthened operational partnerships, and 3) innovative e-learning solutions that aim to mitigate obstacles faced by refugees, including lack of resources, geographic isolation, and restricted mobility. However, despite witnessing some progress in widening HE options, an analysis of programmes offered to SRY in Jordan during 2016 and 2017 observed that “none of the offered programmes provided certificates that are accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research” (Edraak, 2017, p. 4).

The problem of unaccredited programmes is aggravated by a very clear mismatch between those programmes and labour market needs. As Dakkak et al. (2017) noted, most of the available education programmes directed at SRY in Jordan do not provide the students with the skills they need to move closer to attaining their aspirations. According to Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014), those aspirations are not just to gain an academic certificate, but to acquire the skills that would enable them to achieve their primary goal, i.e., getting a paying job. Alongside those realities, a survey of employers within the private sector stated that they

prefer to hire Syrians with “skills and experience over academic credentials” (Edraak, 2017, p. 3). However, in most cases, while these employers were open to hiring Syrians, legal obstacles and cost burdens discouraged them from doing so. Currently, most offered programmes directed towards Syrian young males and females, therefore, focus on IT and life skills (Edraak, 2017).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was devoted to articulating how this research developed, outlining the selected theoretical approach, and presenting how it was to be applied during the investigation process. This chapter provides insight into the methodological approach and research design underpinning this investigation. The chapter starts by restating the research questions and moves on to explaining the rationale behind choosing a qualitative research design. For this research, a case study approach has been selected. As for the data collection tools, this investigation employed online semistructured interviews, vignettes, and questionnaires.

This chapter tackles important methodological concerns and implications when conducting research that involves marginalised or underserved populations, e.g., refugees. Some of those concerns relate not only to the selection of a research design that fits with the research population, but also to the need to choose an approach that would allow a rigorous representation of that population's voice, unique context, and peculiar realities. Additionally, this chapter contributes to our understanding on how useful vignettes are as a means to investigate personal and sensitive issues. This research provides proof that, while still rarely used in the context of refugees, this particular data collection technique is of great value. Another important aspect that this chapter covers is the importance of using data collection techniques in a complimentary way. While acknowledging the great value of each technique (interviews, vignettes, and questionnaires), this chapter provides insight into how to employ all three methods in an interwoven and interconnected fashion so as to collect sufficient data to answer the research questions.

As mentioned above, this chapter starts by restating the research questions. The research questions that informed this investigation comprise an overarching question and three subquestions.

Does blended learning empower Syrian refugee youth living in Jordan?

1. Is blended learning, in the case of Syrian refugee youth, an empowering capability?
2. Does blended learning help Syrian refugee youth to overcome their restrictive rules of the game?

3. Does blended learning improve Syrian refugee youth's resource portfolio?

3.2 A Qualitative Research Design

According to Mason (2002), researchers use qualitative research because of its strength in exploring:

a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. (p.1)

It is difficult to find a unified definition not only because qualitative research is not limited to a unified set of techniques or philosophies, but also because this research method has been applied in a wide array of sciences and fields, including sociology, education, healthcare, gender, culture, and media studies. However, any definition or illustration of qualitative research methods would highlight that it is a research method that:

- is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted.
- sees and appreciates the complex, multilayered and textured elements of social world.
- is based “on methods of data generation which are both flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced (rather than rigidly standardized or structured, or entirely abstracted from ‘real-life’ contexts)” (Mason, 2002, pp. 3-4).
- makes use of detailed and nuanced data to produce contextual understandings of the complexities of the context.
- uses holistic forms of analysis in order to understand, explain or illustrate the social world rather than finding patterns, trends or correlations (Mason, 2002).

3.3 Rationale for Adopting a Qualitative Research Design

3.3.1 Representing people's perspectives.

According to a long list of researchers, (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Robson, 2002; Manson, 2002), qualitative design is an inquiry attempt to investigate and consequently understand situations from the perspective of the participants themselves and is one which perceives the world through their lens. Creswell (2007) added that qualitative research provides an opportunity to “hear the silenced voices” (p. 40), to tell their stories, which is, according to Creswell (2007) “empowering,” as it “minimize[s] the

power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study”(p. 40). As this research deals with a population sector that is mostly marginalised and excluded, there is a real need to be able to draw a clear picture of their own reality from the perspective of their own lens. Throughout this investigation, I tried to take a step back by listening more than asking, giving opportunities for ideas and thought to unfold spontaneously without much interference, and always remembering that giving refugees a voice is a right and moral obligation, if the end product is intended to be a sincere and honest reflection of their realities.

3.3.2 Illustrating people’s multidimensional realities.

The qualitative research design is grounded on multiple realities and is opposed to viewing the existence of one single definite reality (Robson, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Because qualitative research is based on multiple realities, rather than a single definite one, it is considered to be more appropriate for the study of the realities and lives of SRY that are complex, multidimensional, and multifaceted (i.e., social, cultural, economic, psychological, etc.). Creswell (2007) provided an interesting analogy. “I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material” (p. 35). By integrating the multidimensional realities of the research participants, researchers, according to Creswell (2007), are able to build a rich holistic account, i.e., to portray the complex, larger picture of the phenomenon under study. Creswell’s metaphor was remembered with each new interview and during the analysis phase. Each new interview shed light on new colours, new angles, and new perspectives of refugees’ lives. It is only when the data analysis is conducted that the “fabric” (e.g., the full image) comes to light and life.

3.3.3 Incorporating the contextual rules of the game.

One of the strengths of qualitative research is its coverage of research participants’ contextual conditions, i.e., the social, economic, political, institutional, and environmental conditions within which people’s lives take place. Qualitative research provides context through the production of “thick descriptions” (Yin, 2011, p. 11; Denzin, 1989, p. 83). Clifford Geertz, the cultural anthropologist who influenced the practice of symbolic anthropology, describes thick descriptions as:

a way of providing cultural context and meaning that people place on actions, words, things, etc. Thick descriptions provide enough context so that a person outside the culture can make meaning of the behavior... by sorting the

stories by what they mean and seeing groups, patterns and even holes in groups. (Geertz, 1973, as cited in Ray, 2011, para. 2)

According to Denzin (1989), research contains thick descriptions if it presents details of context, emotions, and the webs of social relationships. One of the techniques that was implemented during the interviews to ensure they provided thick descriptions is the use of open-ended follow-up questions, e.g., “What do you feel about that? Why is that so? Do you think there are underlying reasons for this situation?” Additionally, attention was given to interviewees’ intonations and the use of specific words or terms, because these are a clear reflector of emotions and feelings or psychological status. Intonation was noted down on the transcription document, as were repeated terms, and carefully revisited during the analysis phase.

3.3.4 Investigating phenomenon with little information.

Qualitative research is usually conducted in situations where there is a lack of knowledge and where there is little information or theory regarding a particular phenomenon (Attia, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This research explores new educational terrain, namely the relationship between BL and refugees’ empowerment.

3.4 A Case Study Approach

3.4.1 Overview.

With the start of the new millennium, the case study approach evolved to be “one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry” (Stake, 2000, p. 435). According to Merriam (1998), “the most defining characteristic of a case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (p. 26) in this sense, a case study is also a *bounded system* (Smith, 1978). Creswell (2007) provided a more comprehensive description of the bounded system.

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

This study investigated a very specific and peculiar context that can be easily bounded and described. The investigation's bounded system is the context of SRY in Jordan, within the age range of 15-24, who live in an urban setting and who have enrolled in and completed at least one BL programme. The selection of that specific bounded context and of those cases has been very much a purposeful process for the following reasons:

- The selected cases are exempla of thousands of other SRY who are suffering from very “dire” educational opportunities, while carrying a deep passion and enthusiasm for continuing their education. This investigation tried to draw a picture of how real access to quality education could have been a route towards empowerment, towards achieving people's aspirations and life goals. Additionally, it tried to shed light on those factors and on the restrictive prescriptions that hindered the empowerment of refugees through the educational opportunities offered.
- The investigated cases (exempla of thousands for other SRY in Jordan) have very limited options and opportunities to speak up and get their voices heard. Despite suffering from complex challenges that hinder their access to quality education, their needs are neither seen nor heard.
- There is a clear knowledge gap in covering the educational needs, expectations, and challenges of postsecondary refugee youth. Most of the research that has been conducted and most of the educational programmes offered in the MENA region have been directed at school children, and thus place only a very little attention on this population sector. A clear indication of that situation is the explicit mention within the Jordan Compact of numbers and goals related to the increase of school enrolment versus the very vague goals related to postsecondary youth (Barbelet et al., 2018).
- The three BL programmes used for this investigation are, in addition, examples of tens of other similar programmes. As already mentioned, BL programmes come to the forefront when offering nonformal educational options for SRY in the MENA region. Those programmes deserve attention, and one way to provide that is to research them and investigate their impact.
- The voice, perspective, and perceptions of refugees have too often been neglected when designing and implementing policies that impact their lives (Barbelet et al., 2018). This neglect has led to a set of misconceptions, mistrust, and a slowing down of processes (more elaboration on that point follows).

This investigation analyses three cases, which means that it is a collective (also known as a multiple) case study. A multiple case study or a collective case study is a case study that is extended to a number of cases that may allow for the generalisation of findings to a bigger

population. When conducting a collective case study, the researcher coordinates data from several different sources such as schools or individuals (Zainal, 2007). Yin (1999, as cited in Harling, 2002) has described these generalisations “as analytical generalizations as opposed to statistical generalizations” (p. 2).

3.4.2 Rationale for adopting a case study approach.

3.4.2.1. Investigating the particularity of people’s experience/s.

According to several researchers (Pring, 2004; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2005), case studies are inquiry techniques that focus on investigating particularity and uniqueness. BL, as such, has been well researched. However, when it comes to the particularity of implementing BL in a refugee context, there is a large knowledge gap. While not intending to provide any comparative analysis between engaging in BL in refugee settings and in other more peaceful or stable settings, the provided case reports do serve to shed light on diverse contextual and inevitable demotivators that play a role in refugees’ learning experiences. It is because of those factors that the context is unique and peculiar.

3.4.2.2. Focusing on the complexity of the cases.

Another characteristic of the case study approach is its focus on the complexity of the case(s) under investigation (Stake, 1995, 2005). As per this study, the whole context of the SRY is highly complex, due to the interrelating factors that combine to form the resource portfolio of each research subject (e.g., psychological, human, financial factors). The analysis will, therefore, focus on the interrelationship between those resources and their social structure, which consists of a plethora of norms, regulations, rules, laws, and traditions.

3.4.2.3. Illustrating people’s multifaceted context.

According to Cronin (2014), “the researcher [conducting a case study] considers not just the voice and perspective of the participants, or the relevant groups of participants and the interaction between them, but also the context in which this happens.” (p. 21) For this study, it was tremendously important to find an approach that appreciates the context, especially the socioeconomic and cultural context of the SRY, as the context they find themselves in differs from that of other non-Syrians living around them in the same community. All of those contextual peculiarities are anticipated to have an impact on the SRY journey towards empowerment through their education.

3.5 The Selection of Research Cases

3.5.1 Overview.

Creswell (2007) warned qualitative researchers that case selection is challenging. Because case study research is not based on statistical sampling, it needs to be undertaken thoughtfully (Stake, 1995). However, Silverman (2010) emphasised that the selection of cases “in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is, or should be, theoretically grounded” (p. 143). Curtis, Gesler, Smith, and Washburn (2000) added that the selection of cases has to be addressed rigorously because it is “fundamental to our understanding of the validity of qualitative research” (p. 1002). A study’s conceptual framework and research questions play a central role in the selection of cases. Hence, a case selection technique was implemented to find and select a specific population sample with particular characteristics that are of interest and that would best enable me to find an answer to the research question(s). As stated by Miles and Huberman (1994), when it comes to multiple-case sampling, “the choice of cases usually is made on conceptual grounds, not on representative grounds” (p.29), i.e., generalisations are theoretical.

3.5.2 Selection criteria.

A major challenge when conducting multiple case-studies is to decide how many cases should be employed during the investigation, because, as Harling (2002) puts it, “Too few and generalization is impossible; too many and depth of understanding [is] difficult to achieve” (p. 2). One way to face this challenge is to set clear and rigorous criteria for selection. Therefore, only those who satisfied the specific criteria noted below were considered for this investigation.

3.5.2.1. Status.

To be selected as a case for this investigation, the “case” had to be a refugee, i.e., should be a UNHCR registered refugee. Migrants⁸ and asylum seekers⁹ were not considered to be appropriate for this research project. This research confines itself to the definition provided by

⁸ A *migrant* is someone who enters another country, not because of a direct threat directed to his/her own life or the lives of their families. A migrant moves to improve his/her life by finding work, better education, family reunion, or for other reasons. Unlike refugees, migrants do not face impediments to return home and can continue to receive the protection of their government (UNHCR, 2016).

⁹ The term ‘*asylum seeker*’ refers to those who are still awaiting the determination of their status. Refugees are people who have already been granted protection, while asylum seekers can become refugees if the local immigration authorities deem them as fitting the international definition of a refugee (UNESCO, n.d.).

the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, (1967). Accordingly, a *refugee* is someone who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR, 1967, art. 1, para. 2)

3.5.2.2. Age range.

In terms of age range, this research focuses on *youth*. The UN defines “persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as 'youth' without prejudice to other definitions by the Member States” (The United Nations, n.d.). The current research does not focus on *adolescents* (10-19 years), as they are considered to be within the range of school children (WHO, n.d.; UNICEF, 2011).

3.5.2.3. Residency.

This investigation confines itself to Syrian refugees who are residing in urban settings, i.e., in one of Jordan’s cities and not in a refugee camp. “According to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), over half of the world’s refugees now live in the slums of some of the world’s biggest cities such as Bangkok in Thailand, Amman in Jordan, and Nairobi in Kenya” (IRC, 2012, p. 1).

3.5.2.4. Nationality.

Only Syrians who were residing in Syria prior to the crisis and moved to Jordan were considered for this investigation. While there are refugees of other diverse Arab nationalities (e.g., Somalis, Sudanese, Iraqis, Yeminis, etc.) in Jordan who also came to the country because of war or persecution, this investigation confined itself to the Syrian refugee youth.

Table 3.1 *Research Cases Mapped to Selection Criteria*

	Samed	Mahmoud	Amani
Age	23	23	19
Status	UNHCR registered	UNHCR registered	UNHCR registered
Originating from	Aleppo, Syria	Idlib, Syria	Dera’a, Syria
Residing in	Amman	Amman	Irbid, northern Jordan

3.5.3 The three cases and data saturation.

One of the challenges faced during this study was to decide how many cases should be included and the point at which I could be confident that the selected cases would provide an understandable image of the context and provide sufficient data to answer the research questions. When trying to decide how many cases should be included, I came across Dyer and Wilkins' (1991) discussion on how to rigorously and effectively conduct case studies. They highlighted that the answer to how many cases to include lies in the researcher's ability to understand, describe, and present the context in such a way that his/her readers can understand that context. I was further guided by the words of Eisenhardt (1991) who indicated that the number of cases in a case study depends upon how much new information and data the cases bring and how much is known. No new cases are needed when 'saturation' or, as Sandelowski (2008) calls it, "informational redundancy" (p. 875) takes place. According to Grady's (1998) definition, saturation is reached when

New data tend to be redundant of data already collected. In interviews, when the researcher begins to hear the same comments again and again, data saturation is being reached ... It is then time to stop collecting information and to start analysing what has been collected. (p. 26)

Understanding that "failure to reach saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p.1408), I opted for the implementation of two saturation 'checks'. The first check, known as the saturation model, identifies saturation as the achieving of data redundancy, "with no necessary reference to the theory linked to these data" (Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1897). This model scrutinises data during the data collection phase and is distinct from formal data analysis. I implemented this model by asking each case the same question using different question phrasing techniques and by tackling the same topic from different angles. When no new data could be extracted, and I started to hear the same statements again and again, I felt confident that I had reached data saturation.

The second model is called inductive thematic saturation because it focuses on the identification of new themes or codes during the data analysis phase. If no new codes or themes emerge then the data is considered, according to this model, to be saturated (Saunders et al., 2018). Therefore, my decision to confine myself to just three cases was taken only after conducting the data analysis, after making sure that no new themes or codes emerged, and when I had satisfied all the different aspects of the research questions. Although being open to adding more cases, after conducting the data analysis and thoroughly checking if different

aspects and perspectives of contextual capabilities, functionings (aspired, achieved, and unachieved), and rules of the game had been covered, I came to the conclusion that the collected data, emerging codes, and themes from three cases were sufficient to answer the research questions.

3.5.4 The three selected cases.

Three cases that fall under the selection criteria were selected for this investigation. The names of the refugees have been altered to preserve the promised anonymity. To facilitate the report readers' comprehension of the refugees' details, alternative first names and surnames were used. All their other details were preserved, e.g., their origin, city of birth, age, gender, etc. The selected cases comprise two males and one female.

Amani Nabil is a 19-year-old female, who was born in and resided in Dera'a, a city in southwestern Syria prior to her move to Jordan. In mid-2012, she moved with her family to Irbid, a city in northern Jordan. Irbid is famous for its conservative lifestyle. At the time of the interviews in December 2018, Amani was a freshman student at Luminos Community College in Amman studying business administration. Amani had enrolled in and completed four BL courses provided by Kiron, i.e., business administration, English, social work, and computer science. She engaged three times per week in f2f meetings that took place at the Basma Learning Center.

Mahmoud Al-Dawla was 23 years old and originated from Idlib, the major agricultural centre of Syria. Together with his family, he entered Jordan in 2014. He finished high school in Jordan and then spent one year in Philadelphia University in Amman before being offered a scholarship to study at Al Zarqa University. He is currently a junior student specialising in electronic engineering. Mahmoud enrolled in two BL programmes provided by two different organisations. He completed the SKY School peacebuilding course that lasted for 10 weeks. The second course focused on business English. The British Council provided the content and platform for the second course, while AL-Quds College provided the premises for the f2f meetings.

Samed El Khabiri was at the time of the interviews 23 years old. He had left Aleppo for Jordan with his family in 2012, just weeks after having sat for the high school exam in Aleppo. However, he had no proof that he had completed high school and was, therefore, unable to resume his education. Due to his family's pressing economic situation, he started to

work at the age of 16. He is currently the main breadwinner for his family. He spent most of his teenage phase working in restaurants, but he is now working as a product manager in a company that develops electronic games. Samed enrolled in and completed the SKY School peacebuilding course. He submitted his assignments on a mobile application (AULA), while the f2f meetings were provided at Ahlan World Centre, a learning centre in downtown Amman.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Overview.

A lot of studies and research conducted on forced migration lack a clear description of research methods and techniques, e.g., how many people were interviewed, who did the interviews, where the interviews took place, etc. (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). Although Jacobsen and Landau (2003) admitted that researchers usually face logistical challenges in the convoluted contexts they work with, this issue is, according to them, not an acceptable excuse for “ad hoc research design, obfuscation, or exaggerated claims” (p. 2). Guided by those words, the following section outlines clearly the data collection tools employed, their strengths, weaknesses, along with challenges faced during implementation, and how those were addressed.

3.6.2 Synchronous online data collection.

When starting this study, confining its investigation to online tools was neither intended nor was it an easy decision to take. Employing online data collection tools was a solution to a situation that had not been predicted. While it was my intention to travel to Jordan for the data collection at the start of this investigation, when the time approached to do the field visit, I was not able to leave the USA, as I was in the middle of a visa adjustment process, a process which has recently stretched from just 3 to 12 months. However, reading about previous experiences of researchers who collected and analysed internet-based data encouraged me to go forward with this decision. Rhodes, Bowie, and Hagenrather (2003), for instance, noted that “the preliminary experimentation with behavioural data collection using the world wide web seems promising as nearly all data collection that once relied on paper and pencil can be completed electronically” (p. 68). Merlter (2002, as cited in Lefever, Dal, & Matthíasdóttir, 2007) was concerned about the insufficient use of online data collection within the realm of educational research, a situation that should, in her opinion, be altered to make the best of

these efficient and convenient alternatives to the more traditional methods. Dillman et al. (2009) and Dillman and Bowker (2001) realised that there is an increased acceptance of online data collection, particularly among men, and among educated college graduates (Cartwright, Thompson, Poole, & Kester, 1999; Franceschini, 2000).

Online interviews are perceived to be less stressful for respondents “as they can be interviewed at home or at work in a familiar and non-threatening environment” (Gruber, Szmigin, Reppel, & Voss, 2008, p. 5). Literature has revealed that respondents provide more personal information (Joinson, 2001), express deeper feelings (Hanna, Weinberg, B., Dant, & Berger, 2005), and are more willing to express their opinions more directly when interviewed online than they would do if interviewed face-to-face (Tse, 1999; Pincott & Branthwaite, 2000; Sweet, 2001). This research provides a good reflection of those advantages. One of the Syrian cases reached such a point of openness that he started to make sarcastic jokes about the educational system in the Arab World, an attitude I do not anticipate would have been revealed had the interview been conducted face-to-face. In another instance, one of the male participants narrated how he had seen the school (where all his high school certificates are kept) being bombed in front of his eyes, leaving no evidence of his 3 years in high school. He was almost crying; I could sense that from the tone of his voice. I do not think, knowing the mentality of Arab males, that he would have allowed himself to reach this emotional state in front of a strange female, i.e., me, if the interview had been face-to-face.

In addition to practical reasons for limiting data collection to online tools, there are other methodological reasons for doing so. Researchers in the field of forced migration (e.g., Birman & Chan, 2008; Ellis, Lhewa, & Cabral, 2006) noted the need for methodological innovation because standardised research instruments may be invalid when applied to different cultural groups and may even be attempting to measure social constructs that do not exist in different cultures (Block, Warr, Gibbs, & Riggs, 2012).

When attempting to identify suitable research instruments the use of synchronous tools proved to be effective, while the use of asynchronous ones, e.g., sending out emails with the Consent Form in English and Arabic (see Appendix I) and questionnaires proved to be a total failure. At first, I sent out emails with the Participants’ Information Sheet (PIS) (see Appendix II) and the Consent Form to students who had enrolled in BL courses and to whom I was referred by programme managers. The response rate was zero. Therefore, I asked programme managers to send out the PIS to the cohort of alumni of their courses through an email and to introduce me to them that way. This introduction was crucial due to the prevalent spirit of suspicion that I was informed about by practitioners and researchers in the field. Immediately after this

introduction, I received confirmations of the willingness of a couple of cases to take part in this research. Cases that did not fall under the set selection criteria were excluded and I politely apologised to them. Each of the selected cases was a competent user of Skype, through which I conducted a series of interviews. These voice-chatting conversations established crucial and needed trust and rapport and provided well-appreciated immediacy between the question and the response. Moreover, one of the advantages of synchronous communication is the provision of ample opportunities for follow-up questions and explanations. The conversations were not video recorded, for two reasons. First, the selected cases (mainly the female) did not feel comfortable recording the conversations on video and secondly, video recording slowed the communication and there were immediate connectivity issues. In the end, video-recording would not have added much to the content. As for intonations and expressions, those were very carefully recorded and noted down in the transcription document.

3.6.3 Depth semistructured interviews.

Interviewing has been described by multiple researchers as “conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p. 149; Dexter, 1970, p. 136; Burgess, 1984, p. 102) which has made it over time the most common and most powerful method used by qualitative researchers who aim to understand other people (Fontana & Frey, 2003) and as a way to gather information about a specific issue or topic. According to Leonard (2003, as cited in Gruber et al., 2008), interviews do not occur unintentionally, but are consciously arranged. “They allow the researcher who wish to move beyond the observable to visit inner worlds and develop deeper understandings of reality as perceived by the respondents” (Attia, 2012, p. 68), as they aim to “find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Researchers using interviews can create rapport (Gruber et al., 2008; Webb, 1995) and a high degree of trust, thus improving the quality of the data (Webb, 1995).

This research applied what Webb (1995) called *depth interviews*, i.e., “[a] personal interview which uses extensive probing to get a single respondent to talk freely and to express detailed beliefs and feelings on a topic” (p. 121). Depth interviews enable the construction of circumstances of unique applicability, especially those involving sensitive or personal topics (Robson & Foster, 1989), something which is of great importance when dealing with marginalised or disadvantaged populations. Cassell and Symon (2004) added that depth interviewing has the advantage of providing the whole data collection process with more “depth, context and flexibility” (as cited in Stokes & Bregin, 2006, p. 6). All three, i.e., depth, context, and flexibility were crucial for the success of this investigation. While depth is extremely valuable for the subsequent analysis phase and to draw the larger image, context is

needed for understanding the holistic rules of the game that apply to SRY, and flexibility (especially of time and location) is required to facilitate a continuous commitment of participants. According to Hedges (1985), interviews yield depth and comprehensiveness of information, because they provide respondents with an unusual “opportunity of being listened to, which, together with the anonymity afforded, gives the respondent a feeling of empowerment” (Berent, 1966, as cited in Stoke & Bergin, 2006, p. 6).

While semistructured interviews are guided by certain themes, the conversation does not have to follow a specific order (Attia, 2012). In semistructured interviews the researcher has control over the order of the questions, which he/she can modify according to the context and the flow of interactions with the interviewee. The researcher can also modify, edit, omit or replace the wording of questions as deemed appropriate. This format allows for the “discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the research team” (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291).

3.6.4 Vignettes.

Finch (1987) described vignettes as “short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond” (p. 105). According to Hill (1997), those short stories might come in the form of written passages or in a pictorial form “intended to elicit responses to typical scenario” (p. 177). Hazel (1995) stated that vignettes are stories that provide “concrete examples of people and their behaviours on which participants can offer comment or opinion. The researcher can then facilitate a discussion around the opinions expressed, or particular terms used in the participants’ comments” (p. 2).

When researchers use this technique in qualitative research they ask their research participants “to respond to a particular situation by stating what they would do, or how they imagine a third person, generally a character in the story, would react to certain situations or occurrences, which often entail some form of moral dilemma” (Barter & Renold, 1999). In this investigation, the research participants were asked to comment on both 1) providing advice to the third person in the scenario and then 2) imagining themselves being in the situation and providing their standpoint on it. In this investigation, each of the eight vignettes (Appendix III) crystalised around a scenario of a refugee who would be from the same nationality, living in the same host community and be enrolled in the same or a similar BL course as the participant was.

The use of vignettes in this study proved to be highly useful because of their nature, i.e., they can make reference to important points in the study, especially aspects related to perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Hughes, 1998). The chosen vignettes resonated closely with the intention to “leave space for respondents to define the situation in their own terms” (Finch, 1987, p. 112). The table below maps examples taken from this investigation’s vignettes and matches them to the three main purposes of vignettes, as outlined by Barter and Renold (1999, 2016).

Table 3.2 *Examples from the Investigation Mapped to Purposes of Vignettes as Outlined by Barter and Renold (1999, 2016)*

Vignettes’ purpose as outlined by Barter and Renold (1999, 2016)	Throughout this investigation vignettes helped to discuss:
Interpretation of actions and occurrences that allows situational context to be explored and influential variables to be elucidated (1999) capturing “how meanings, beliefs, judgements and actions are situationally positioned” (2016, p. 308)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situations of being provided with further free and open BL opportunities • situations of being provided with further courses with different circumstances (e.g., fee-based, another topic, another location, ...) • situation of being provided with ‘online only’ courses (i.e., without the face-to-face component)
Clarification of individual judgements, often in relation to moral dilemmas (1999)	Moral dilemmas that might arise when their future prospects conflict with traditions, with family needs, with legal regulations, etc.
Discussion of sensitive experiences (1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issues related to gender • issues related to their illegal work (the male cases were illegally working)

3.6.5 A baseline questionnaire.

A baseline questionnaire was developed to gain closer knowledge about the cases’ general background. It was initially planned to send out the questionnaire to the research participants via email. However, due to the limited time that was available to them they preferred to do

anything related to their participation synchronously. The baseline questionnaire was, therefore, completed at the start of the first conversation. Its questions included demographic information (e.g., age, latest attained educational degree, social status, employment, date of entering Jordan, etc.). These questions were followed by a second set that aimed to build a picture about each individual's previous life and education. The third group of questions aimed to shed some light on their BL experience. Although, these questions were developed in a questionnaire format and asked questions such as "On a scale 1-5, rate your BL experience," they were, like the previous group of questions, meant mainly to be triggers and motivators to allow additional, deeper questions about that experience.

The most difficult and impractical part of questionnaire questions were questions designed to discover the weight of different factors and aspects related to BL and their experiences. For example:

In your opinion, what has been the most important characteristic of the course that you engaged in (please put the following in order, starting with the most important factor):

- 1) Affordability
- 2) Flexibility
- 3) Alignment with your passion
- 4) Being ICT-based

While those questions might have been easy to answer in an email or on a simple online questionnaire format, asking this type of question during the interview was troublesome, as I had to repeat the order of the options a couple of times. To overcome this difficulty, I later changed those questions to an open-ended format so that I could use them to delve more deeply into each response. I was aware that, for the participants whom I did not ask to order the factors or aspects as shown in the example above, it was not possible to discover the weight and importance of individual factors. I, therefore, had to be flexible and manage within the time provided by the participants. This baseline questionnaire should not be viewed to be a stand-alone tool, but rather as the introduction to the other two main data collection tools. Nevertheless, the questionnaire on its own did play a limited, yet important, role as an icebreaker and scene-setter (for full questionnaire, see Appendix IV).

3.6.6 Interaction between data collection methods.

The data collection tools discussed in the previous section, i.e., questionnaire, interview questions, and vignettes, were applied in a complementary fashion. Each method was deployed when another method fell short of yielding the desired breadth and depth. Each

method was meant to add a new dimension or a new perspective that was needed to provide the larger portrait of the context. For example, the questionnaire questions were intended to provide initial ideas and thoughts for subsequently conducted interviews, while the vignettes delved deeper into discovering participants' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs. Open-ended interview questions, on the other hand, constituted "a main gateway toward understanding the unobservable aspects of the participants" (Attia, 2012, p. 78). All the data collection methods were designed to work together, with the aim of providing a broader grasp of the interactions that take place between the BL programme, on the one hand, and participants' resource portfolios, their opportunity structure, and their other capabilities, on the other. All the various data collection methods were implemented in a recursive spiral manner, where the use of one would lead to the use of the other. This spiral process enabled me to delve first deep and then deeper and deeper until the larger picture emerged through the different sources of data.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Overview.

According to Stake (1995), "there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions, as well as, to final compilations" (p. 71). In other words, the process is not linear. The division between data collection and data analysis is for organisational purposes only and does not reflect what happens in reality. In this research, data analysis started immediately after each interview session and after transcribing the recordings. Data collection itself continued until the categories underlying the research questions were saturated, i.e., the point at which collecting new data no longer generated further understanding (Charmaz, 2006, as cited in Attia, 2012). According to Yin (1994, as cited in Tellis, 1997) "Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study" (p. 15).

3.7.2 Data analysis processes.

This investigation followed the guiding steps outlined by Lennie and her colleagues (2011). Some of the steps were, however, modified to suit the exact needs and nature of this investigation. The final procedural data analysis steps followed throughout this investigation are detailed next.

1- Recording data and preparing memos

While interviews and vignettes were recorded, notes were taken to document important thoughts. The process of transcribing recordings was conducted immediately after each session. During the same sitting, memos were written in a designated folder. *Memos* are short notes (about two lines long) that capture the essence of what the researcher learned from an activity (Lennie, Tacchi, Koirala, Wilmore, & Skuse, 2011).

2- Labelling and archiving data

Labelling, according to Lennie et al. (2011), means organising all data in order to make it easy to use for analysis. During the labelling process, where the data came from and how it was collected are clearly documented and categorised. Using software (in this case, MAXQDA) helped with data organisation, retrieval, and the whole coding process. During the archiving process, data was identified by its basic information.

For example:

- Who? – name of interviewee
- How? – e.g., Skype, Zoom
- When? – date and time
- What kind of technique? – interview, vignette, survey.

Data was always archived in well-protected folders. Even when working in the cloud, folders were password-protected. It was during this phase that the participants' real names were replaced to ensure that the interviewees' exact identity could not be identified.

3- Revisiting research questions

Revisiting research questions at this stage was crucial to capture all the different portfolio resources, rules of the game, and underlying concepts; this process helped tremendously in the subsequent steps of coding data.

4- Analysing contextual and demographic data

Demographic and contextual data about research participants was put into a template that included each participant's age, nationality, gender, number of years in Jordan, latest educational attainment, etc.

5- Starting the coding process

First, all notes, memos, and transcriptions were read carefully. Comments were made on the margin with any preliminary key patterns, themes or issues in the data being noted. A *pattern* refers to a descriptive finding such as 'Most of the participants reported that they were highly satisfied with the BL course'. A *theme* is a broad category or topic such as 'barriers to

education’. The process of ***coding*** involved subdividing the data, as well as assigning categories (Dey, 1993). “Coding also helps you to begin the process of systematically analysing it, working out what the data is telling you and the relationships and patterns in your data” (Lennie et al., 2011, p. 8).

Table 3.3 *An Example of Coding*

CODE	Brief definition	Full definition	When to use?
Past experience	Experiences that preceded the interviewee’s settlement in Jordan	Impact of past experiences, events, background, and circumstances within the interviewee’s home-country	Use this code when interviewee narrates something about his/her past (any event or situation prior to his/her settlement in Jordan)

6- Identifying and summarising themes

This step included organising the data and giving each piece an indicative heading that might be used later during the reporting stage. Next, came summarising of the main themes, drawing on contextual data and other information that was useful in better understanding the findings.

7- Putting data into perspective

This step included the process of summarising the main findings under broad headings such as capabilities. As Lennie et al. (2011) note, “Interpretation goes beyond description. It means attaching significance to what your data is telling you, making sense of your findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions and lessons learned, and imposing order onto a complex and messy world” (p. 10). Making connections was perceived as the most difficult part of the analysis phase, which meant there was a need to read, and reread the transcripts multiple times and then to reflect on each and every statement.

8- Triangulating data sources and 9-Discussing findings with participants and incorporating feedback

These two processes are discussed below under the heading **Validity**.

10- Highlighting individual case profiles

A case profile for each research participants was developed. According to Stake (1995), case profiles are developed in light of defined research questions and a deep understanding of the

impact of specific circumstances on each of the cases. He added that “these questions, the contexts, the history, the case itself need more than to be described, they need to be developed” (p. 123). Chapters 5 to 7 provide this development, while chapter 8 provides the broader cross-case analytic picture in response to the research questions.

3.8 Safeguarding Validity

According to Attia (2012), “Safeguarding validity is essential to establishing rigor in qualitative research” (p. 89). According to Leung (2015), validity relates to the

appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the methodology, the sampling and data analysis is appropriate, and finally the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context. (p. 325)

Simons (2009) summarised the same issues by emphasising the main goal behind validity, i.e., establishing the warrant for the investigation or research in terms of “whether it is sound, defensible, coherent, well-grounded, appropriate to the case” (p. 127). This study applied two main techniques to ensure validity: 1) triangulation and 2) discussing findings with participants.

3.8.1 Triangulation.

Cresswell (2012) defined triangulation as

the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. (p. 259)

Denzin (1978), on the other hand, viewed validity as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (p. 291), a technique widely used nowadays by qualitative researchers (Silverman, 2006), because it “minimizes biases that may arise from the use of one instrument of data collection, and raises researcher confidence in the findings, especially if such strategies are different from one another (e.g., questionnaire data versus observation) (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2007, as cited in Attia, 2012, p. 89). Smith (1975) used an interesting metaphor to explain the role and importance of triangulation. For Smith, triangular in research is similar to the way in which military strategists use multiple reference points to

locate an object's exact position. Given basic principles of geometry, multiple viewpoints allow greater accuracy. Likewise, researchers could, according to Smith (1975), via triangulation improve the accuracy of their judgments by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomena.

In this investigation, triangulation was applied not only across methods, but also across data sources, types of data, subjects, etc.

- Across data sources – by comparing findings and outcomes of interviews with the conducted literature review and updated reports. This triangulation was specifically useful when analysing the impact of restrictive legislation on SRY.
- Across types of data – by comparing themes across notes, memos, and transcripts to increase confidence in the study's findings
- Across subjects – by interviewing other personnel involved in the implementation of the BL programmes, e.g., JRS–Jordan's professional and postsecondary education project director, the cofounder of SKY School, and establishing email conversations with the regional director of the Kiron MENA region
- Across data collection methods – by drawing on the data collected from the baseline questionnaires and interviews to cross-check findings from vignettes and vice versa, cross-checking findings from vignettes by mapping those to outcomes from interviews
- Across narrations – by asking the same question twice to the same interviewee, using different wording, in two different sessions, to check for consistency.

3.8.2 Discussion of findings with participants.

Numerous researchers (e.g., Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2002; Seale, 1999) have emphasised the importance and usefulness of taking findings back to research participants for validation as a way to establish trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), doing that is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314), and is probably the only profound way of clearing any errors in interpretation, in addition to being “a significant means of identifying one's own subjectivities and misconceptions” (Maxwell, 2005, as cited in Attia, 2012, p. 90).

Additionally, this process “can highlight biases and specific interests and can reveal contradictions in your data that may not be easily explained” (Lennie et al., 2011, p. 17). In this investigation, research participant checking was employed as a strategy for maintaining validity. These discussions were recorded and were referred to as participants' checking discussions. In fact, in one case, the participant corrected my understanding of an attitude of his and provided further reasons that explained the impacts of that specific attitude.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH ETHICS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter shed light on the methodology and research design of this investigation. It outlined the various data collection tools and identified how they were to be implemented in a complementary manner. In addition, it highlighted the study's data analysis techniques and processes. This chapter, however, delves into issues related to the ethical challenges and dilemmas that researchers face when researching vulnerable and marginalised populations. It starts by listing the differences between a study conducted within a refugee context and that in a peaceful setting. The ethical challenges discussed in this chapter range from power imbalances between the researcher and the research participants, to issues of neutrality versus solidarity, and from the intricacies of informed consent to refugees' multiple narrations and identities. Each of those challenges is identified. More importantly, however, insight is provided into the actions taken to overcome those challenges.

While it could have been part of the literature review, the discussion of research ethics when investigating refugees and their context has been provided in a separate chapter due to its importance and seriousness. This chapter sheds light, through multiple real-life examples, on the potentially detrimental implications and consequences if research ethics are not duly observed. The major concern, as will be discussed in detail below, is the occurrence of in situ ethical dilemmas which need immediate reactions and wise decisions. The discussion below raises a red flag whose purpose is to alert researchers entering that terrain of investigating refugees against relying only on the procedural ethic guidelines outlined by their respective institutions and ethics committees. Entering the field with a good understanding of the numerous ethical dilemmas that one might face (as in my case) greatly helps the researcher in terms of what to expect and, accordingly, how to react to those ethical situations. While I came across myriad good resources on ethical concerns when conducting research with refugees, none could be found that compiled a complete list of ethical dilemmas to anticipate when dealing with this population, and so this chapter tries to establish such a list.

4.2 Vital Ethical Considerations when Researching Refugees

While most scholars begin by highlighting ethical constraints and challenges in a straightforward manner, Clark-Kazak (2017) begins her article by listing the reasons why research related to the context of forced migration is so different from research focusing on ordinary peaceful settings and how these differences result in a totally different set of ethical considerations. Her list included the following:

1. Researchers conducting research about refugees might revoke or jeopardise the fragile right of the refugees to remain in the host country.
2. Too often refugees are dependent on sponsors, organisations or service providers for survival and/or their legal status. In particular, when research is conducted by/or in partnership with such organisations, this dependency relationship raises questions about the real, voluntary nature of participants' consent.
3. Research participants who have lived in (or are still living in) conflict zones might be engaged in or affiliated with terrorist militias or may be conducting illegal activities and may disclose that information during the research. "Because researchers are not protected by similar legal privileges for doctors and lawyers, there may be limits to confidentiality of information, posing ethical challenges" (p. 1).
4. Refugees, as well as asylum-seekers, are usually obliged to tell their story many times to immigration officials, to legal professionals, to service providers, and to decision makers, each time recalling painful experiences of conflict, violence, violations, and abuse. Researchers' questions and interviews might, therefore, be an additional psychological burden.
5. An often-overlooked challenge is sharing the research findings with displaced people and nonacademic partners in an accessible and timely manner.

4.3 Procedural Ethics versus Ethics in Practice

In light of the complexities outlined in the previous section, any research involving refugees has to be contextually sound and temporally and socially flexible. Ethical considerations must always, at all stages, be placed at the forefront of the research (Kaukko, Dunwoodie, & Riggs, 2009). Most of the ethical intricacies when working with refugees are well recognised academically (Birman, 2005; Bloch, 2004; Ellis et al., 2007; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; Liamputtong, 2008; MacKenzie, McDowell, & Pittaway, 2007; Rodgers, 2004; Voutira & Doná, 2007). However, "practical solutions to these challenges are somewhat less well described" (Block et al., 2012, p. 69) and "there are very few books that document and provide advice on how to go about performing sensitive research with vulnerable persons"

(van Liempt & Bilger, 2012, p. 452). Bilger and van Liempt (2009) noted that these ethical challenges are not static and that there is a need to reflect upon those dynamic challenges from the time a research project starts until its findings are presented in the public domain.

Researchers distinguish between *procedural ethics* which involve formal processes of gaining consent through institutional ethical committees and *ethics in practice* (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Procedural ethics aim to uphold fundamental principles and to promote the ethical conduct of research. However, “existing ethical guidelines cannot cover all the concerns which arise when researching complex social problems” (Czymoniewics-Klippe, Brijnath, & Crockett, 2010, as cited in Block et al., 2012, p. 70). Another set of vital ethical challenges also exists. These Guillemin and Gillam (2004) have termed ethics in practice. The later type of ethical challenges, i.e., ethics in practice, involve identifying and “responding to *context-dependent* circumstances and ethical contingencies – or ‘ethically important moments’ – that arise over the course of research project” (Block et al., 2012, p. 70, emphasis in original text). Ethically important moments are “difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of research” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 262) and “demand moral considerations and ethical choices as a part of a researcher's daily practice” (Rossman & Rallis, 2010, p. 379, as cited in Tomkinson, 2015). The examples below are illustrative of some of those difficult and important moments.

4.4 “Symbolic Violence”: The Asymmetrical Power Relations

Bourdieu (1996) termed the asymmetries, i.e., the imbalance in power between researchers and research participants “symbolic violence” (p.19). He warned that research may inflict symbolic violence through misunderstanding or misrepresenting research participants as a result of researchers’ and research participants’ occupying different positions within social structures. Accordingly, “the most disempowered participants are the most vulnerable to being subjected to symbolic violence through research” (Block et al., 2012, p. 71). Bourdieu (1996) elaborated on that point by noting that:

It is the investigator who starts the game and who sets up its rules: it is most often she who, unilaterally and without any preliminary negotiations, assigns to the interview its objectives and uses, and on occasion, these may be poorly specified—at least for the respondent. This asymmetry is underlined by a social asymmetry which occurs every time the investigator occupies a higher place in the social hierarchy. (p. 19)

According to Birman (2005), one of the consequences of the power differentials that exist between the researcher and his/her research participants is the possibility of ending up with a

coercive relationship. This case is especially observed in research that includes those known as ‘undocumented aliens.’ While such individuals would want to avoid participation, they “may also not fully trust that they are free to decline participation” (Birman, 2005, p. 167). In other words, there is a sense of perceived limited freedom to decide. In those cases, although not wanting to be part of any research, participants do not refuse to participate “because they feel a social pressure to do so” (van Liempt & Bildger, 2012, p. 457) and disclose unwillingly information they would rather not share.

This investigation includes only cases that have a legal status within Jordan, i.e., with UNHCR-registered refugees, and did not include other cases that were still in the process of applying for this status. I was aware that cases with fragile or unsettled legal status might not reveal the same amount of information as settled cases would due to a fear that their words might be used against them; furthermore, even if they did disclose information to me, they might not have revealed it with the same amount of accuracy as registered refugees would.

This is a very serious ethical challenge. I, therefore, followed Bourdieu’s advice (1996) to apply reflexive practices of research (see below for more details on reflexivity). Numerous researchers have observed the importance and benefit of ethical reflexivity, especially when “researchers and research participants have disparate lifeworlds” (Block et al., 2012, p. 71).

4.5 Neutrality Versus Solidarity

For over 15 years there has been a hot debate around the tension between seeking to maintain methodological neutrality in research and a belief that research should have an explicitly political or moral stance (Jacobsen & Landau 2003; Landau & Jacobsen, 2005; Rodgers, 2004; Voutira & Doná, 2007). “For many, the often-desperate plight of refugees renders any position, other than overt solidarity, as ethically inappropriate, and these critics vigorously defend the propriety of a nexus between scholarship and advocacy in refugee research” (Block et al., 2012, p. 73). Birman (2005) started her article “*Ethical Issues in Research with Immigrants and Refugees*” by stating that, “As is the case with much of social science, research on immigrants and refugees is not morally neutral” (p. 155). Mackenzie et al. (2007) declared clearly that:

When a human being is in need and the researcher is in a position to respond to that need, non-intervention in the name of ‘objective’ research is unethical. Further, it could be argued that if researchers are in a position to assist refugees to advocate on their own behalf ... that it is morally incumbent on them to do so. (p. 316)

Mackenzie et al. (2007) added that “wherever possible, social researchers should aim to develop research projects that not only identify problems ... but that help to promote autonomy and rebuild capacity.” (as cited in Block, 2012, p. 73). Years before, Bourdieu had in 1996 also discussed this neutrality versus solidarity tension. He rejected the idea of neutrality in research and stood for solidarity and described it as a necessary condition for “non-violent communication” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 20).

The following is an instance that reflects one of those ethical moments where the researcher had to decide which side to take; i.e., neutrality or solidarity and how some creative thinking could provide appropriate ways out to the dilemma. Reem Talhouk from the Open-Lab/Newcastle University and Anja Thieme from Microsoft-UK conducted a study (Talhouk & Thieme, 2016) to investigate the feasibility and acceptability of incorporating technology into the provision of antenatal care (ANC) for refugees in rural Lebanon. They conducted focus groups with families living in very poor informal tented settlements (ITS) that lacked most essential resources and services. Despite being very clear in their consent letters that participants would not receive any type of remuneration, this was still expected by some of the participants. Midway through the focus groups, participants would ask “What are we getting out of this?” Some of the participants left before completing the focus group discussions when they were informed that there was no remuneration. Additionally, participants approached researchers with their medical prescriptions asking for advice, explaining that “they cannot read or write and do not know whether they should continue taking their medications” (p. 4). The two researchers described how unsure and confused they were due to these ethical concerns that arose in situ and stated:

Witnessing the dire living conditions of the participants and their health problems that are persisting ... made us as researchers feel that we should be doing more to help. After being bombarded with health questions, one of the researchers who is a registered dietician ... gave advice regarding boiling water and milk before consuming it, cheap high protein foods, and the benefits of breastfeeding. (p. 4)

This example was highly illuminating for me. I was provided by on-the-ground practitioners with the further advice that students would expect ‘something’ in return for their participation in the research. Numerous advisors assured me that meeting this expectation is very important. I, therefore, had to find an incentive that would

- 1) provide me with some window to promote their autonomy and rebuild their capacity
- 2) instil some sense of mutual benefit and thereby lessen the perception of an asymmetric power relationship

- 3) motivate the cases to participate in the research, despite their difficult life circumstances.

After a long thinking process and lots of consultations with on-the-ground practitioners, I decided to provide participants with customised consultative session/s related to their educational options within Jordan, outside it, and online. After analysing each case, I prepared a PowerPoint with my findings of open up opportunities that each participant might want to consider to achieve his/her aspirations. Then I conducted an online Skype session to go through the PowerPoint and provide consultative advice. One of the cases found the PowerPoint very helpful and informed me that she had even shared it with other Syrian friends.

4.6 The Reactivity Trap

However, there is a very thin, blurry line between ‘solidarity’ and what Kloos (1969) called ‘reactivity,’ i.e., when researchers become deeply involved and familiar with their informants (Kloos, 1969) and thereby influence the behaviour and responses of informants, thus compromising the research findings. I believe that there will always be an inevitable degree of ‘influence’, yet it is the researcher’s responsibility to try to limit the degree and extent of that influence as much as possible. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) gave some extreme examples from the field about reactivity:

... implicitly or explicitly condoning or enabling illegal behavior, or taking sides in armed conflicts. Most social scientists who have worked in the humanitarian field know of researchers who have helped people commit illegal acts, such as smuggling goods or people across borders. Academics have been known to engage in quasi-military activities, taking sides with rebel groups and aiding them with information. (p. 9)

According to van Liempt and Bilger (2012), the action that will be taken by the researcher and his/her stance, whether to help respondents or not, is strongly influenced by her/his personal views. Although, I deeply agree with the concerns mentioned above, in my case there was little opportunity for me to fall into such a trap, as

1. I do not belong to any service provider, humanitarian organisation or educational institution.
2. My engagement with the research participants was always confined to the time of the interview session, which did not open a space to befriend, or to become deeply involved and familiar with the research respondents.

3. More importantly, I very strictly followed reflexive practices (see below) in order not only to adopt a continuous process of critical scrutiny with respect to my position as a researcher, but also for the whole research situation (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

4.7 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality issues are the most important ethical considerations, for one simple reason: i.e., breaching the confidentiality and disclosing participants' identity might put the participants at risk of harm. The following incidence, from a researcher's diary, might clarify what such detrimental risks might be:¹⁰

December 1998: Bethlehem, West Bank:

I sat surrounded by students. My Jewish Israeli friend, who had served in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), stood a little distance away, unnoticed, as I talked with twelve Bethlehem University students, while conducting research for my thesis (Israeli/Palestinian student perceptions of final status issues). After conversing for some time, a few of them divulged their Hamas identity in order to put their responses in context, not knowing that a former IDF person stood nearby. I immediately recognized my mistake. (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003, p. 10)

Multiple researchers have noted that "research involving 'access to records of personal or confidential information' is generally considered as involving more than minimal risk" (Duvell, Triandafyllidou, & Volmer, 2010, p. 228). The risk is aggravated when participants put the researcher in the position of a 'secret holder', which happens sometimes without the researcher's even being aware of it. This knowledge places extra demands on the researcher to be super cautious about when, to whom, where, and, more importantly, how information is going to be revealed. Accuracy, sensitivity, and sophisticated understanding of the context are critical to avoid harming any participant (van Liempt & Bilger, 2012).

I encountered this situation with two of the cases, who revealed that they were working illegally. They were very cautious in their answers about work and their employment history. They did not reveal information related to the "where" and "since when" work questions. I respected that silence; I understood the sensitivity and did not ask for more information. However, this situation alerted me to how important it is to abide very strictly to confidentiality practices and to keep the cases as anonymous as possible. I replaced their names (first and surname) within the report and added password protection to the data analysis software and research folder.

¹⁰ This is a citation from Jacobsen and Landau (2003) which took the incident from Mehlaqa Samdami's Research ethics in complex emergencies. *Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Fall, 2002.*

Issues related to confidentiality, however, do not stop here. They are complicated and all the more so when the research consists of a limited sample. When the research is composed of limited cases or participants, it is not enough to simply change someone's name, because participants "may be identified already by the fact of being part of a certain group" (van Liempt & Bildger, 2012, p. 457). According to Fisher et al. (2002), "members of the research team need to guard against inadvertently revealing information that they became privy to as a result of the study" (Fisher et al., 2002, as cited in Birman, 2005, p. 169). Additionally, data collectors or research assistants originating from the same culture as the participants can be problematic, because respondents may feel that they might not honour their promises of confidentiality, especially when there is a small sample (Birman, 2005). For this reason, Jacobsen and Landau (2003) suggested recruiting data collectors who are proficient in the language but do not belong to the same culture or community as those studied. With the hope of reducing the risk of breaching confidentiality, I decided to be the sole data collector and not to recruit anyone to do the transcriptions. Although, this service is provided very cheaply in Jordan and Egypt, confidentiality outweighed comfort and time-saving. Understanding the risks entailed when conducting research with a limited number of cases, I decided never ever to spell out the name of another case, during my interviews. I always resorted to the generic statements "I have heard that...., Someone told me that...., Some refugees think that....".

4.8 Complexities of Informed Consent

When Ellis et al. (2007) and Mackenzie et al. (2007) discussed informed consent, they did so in the context of the power disparity between researchers and research participants. While this disparity in power relationship should be "considered at all stages of the research, from design to dissemination, the issues raised are particularly acute when it comes to negotiating informed consent" (Block et al., 2012, p. 72). For some researchers, e.g., Ellis et al. (2007), "the very concept of informed and voluntary consent inherently involves culturally bound, western values of individual autonomy, self-determination, and freedom which may defy cross-cultural translation" (Ellis et al., 2007, pp. 467-469). According to Israel and Hay (2006), informed consent is based on two principles: 1) participants' comprehension of the research and 2) their agreement to voluntarily participate. It is through that process that participants get to know about the research goal/s, but more importantly are given the opportunity to calculate the risks and decide for themselves whether they want to participate or not. "The ethical rule of voluntary participation or 'informed consent' requires the provision of information to participants about the purpose of the research, its procedures, potential risks, benefits and alternatives" (Christians, 2005, p. 144). Researchers who do not

share the same cultural background nor have undergone similar experiences to those of their research participants are mostly unable to assess the risks and harms participants might face when taking part in the research. Furthermore, researchers might “ignore the values, the lifestyle and the cognitive and affective world of the participants but are guided by their own worldviews and ignorance about the participants’ realities” (Van Liempt & Bildger, 2012, p. 457).

However, trying to obtain informed consent from vulnerable and marginalised populations is loaded with ethical dilemmas and challenges. Czymoniewicz-Klippel, Brijnath, and Crockett, (2010) stated clearly that “processes of obtaining consent that involve providing written explanations and consent forms are inappropriate for populations or individuals who are likely to have low literacy rates, or may be reluctant to sign documents” (as cited in Block et al., 2012, p. 72). Birman (2005) explained that this reluctance might be due to a fear that this informed consent “takes away the possibility of anonymous participation and may create great fears about loss of confidentiality” (p. 166). Additionally, refugees who have had negative interactions with authorities or who come from different cultural traditions may be suspicious of written consent forms (Clark-Kazak, 2017). In some cases, the reluctance to sign the consent letter stems from prospective participants’ fear that doing this would have some negative consequences on their security. Obtaining informed consent was by far the biggest ethical challenge I encountered throughout this investigation. How I decided to deal with that challenge is illustrated below through the lessons I learned.

4.8.1. The iterative model.

For this research, the advice of Mackenzie et al. (2007, p. 310) to adapt an ‘iterative model’ has been followed. Mackenzie et al. (2007) argued that it is of great importance to obtain participants’ consent in an iterative manner while involving them in ongoing negotiation in order 1) to avoid the erosion of participants’ capacities for self-determination, 2) to ensure that participants do not lack familiarity with research processes and evolving research directions, and 3) to develop a shared understanding of what is involved at all stages of the research process.

Throughout this investigation participants were asked to provide their consent at different intervals, e.g., before starting a new session. The start of each session would include some information about the research and where it was heading to and asking the participants once again if they were happy to do the interview. I believed that Mackenzie’s iterative model

would ensure the construction of a trustworthy and respectful relationship. Negotiating research procedures is an important step which should not be underestimated due to its impact on participants' motivation and enthusiasm.

4.8.2. The option of oral informed consent.

The University of Oxford was one of the first international academic institutions to conduct rigorous social research on Syrian refugee youth. Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014) outlined the various ethical challenges they faced; informed consent was at the top of their list of challenges. After clearly explaining the research, its procedures, phases, etc. and after emphasising that participation was voluntary and that refusing to participate would have no negative consequences on their status, the research team asked participants to provide them with oral consent. The team had disseminated participants information sheets (PIS) in Arabic and English, which included references to the research leader and contact details for any complaints or feedback on the research process. According to the team, deciding to go for oral consent had cultural justifications.

Cultural context is a critical factor in negotiating informed consent in an ethical fashion in the Arab Middle East. Arab culture has a strong oral tradition where 'one's word' is as good as a written contract. The repressive and authoritarian regimes of the region, particularly the Syrian Ba'athi state have made many Syrians cautious with regard to bureaucracy and officialdom. In previous research in Syria and Lebanon, it was noted that even well-educated people who were informed and willing to participate in research felt uncomfortable in signing official looking paperwork. (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2014, p. 7)

Allowing researchers in the field of refugees and forced migration to resort to oral consent is gaining more ground. The "*Ethical considerations: Research with people in situations of forced migration*" document broadly adopted by Canadian authorities¹¹ states that "researchers should consider the option of 'oral consent' in those cases with clear procedures on how to obtain and record such oral consent" (Clark-Kazak, 2017, p. 12). The Guidance Note published by the European Commission (2016) considers oral consent to be an alternative form of consent.

After some effort to obtain signed forms, this investigation decided in favour of obtaining recorded oral consent. None of the cases was ready to sign the forms, as they simply did not

¹¹ This document has been recently adopted by the Executive Committees of the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS), and York University's Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS).

reply back to the email with attached 'Consent Form'. As I understood that the participants' consent entails 1) the provision of all necessary information about the research and 2) a reaffirmation of their voluntarily readiness to take part in it, I, therefore, undertook the following steps:

- 1- I sent the project manager of the BL programme the 'Participants Information Sheet'(PIS) in both languages (see Appendix II), and this was then forwarded to course participants asking them if they would be happy to take part in the research.
- 2- When a case expressed readiness, I would ask if he/she have read the PIS and if they had any questions.
- 3- I would restate the information on the PIS before the start of the first interview session.
- 4- Prior to the start of every interview session, I would ask the interviewees if they were happy and ready to take part in this interview. This form of consent would then be recorded.

4.8.3 The gatekeeper's noninterventions.

According to Faden and Beauchamp (1986), respect for autonomy plays a crucial role not only in the justification of informed consent, but rather more in the functioning and usefulness of it. When it comes to providing refugees with full autonomy and their right for self-determination, a stumbling block known as 'the intervention of the gatekeeper' is immediately visible.

Gatekeepers are service providers or organisations on which the researcher relies to provide him/her with access to prospective participants. Sometimes, those gatekeepers would decide, on behalf of the refugees, whether to participate or not. Making this decision could possibly happen in both direct and indirect ways, e.g., by making refugees' participation or answers conditional on providing their service/s. Too often researchers would report that NGOs were providing them with access to research participants who had not given their consent to anyone. Those participants would come to the research totally uninformed, unprepared, and usually frustrated. Being dependent on sponsors or service providers for basic services and resources might diminish participants' autonomy and so certainly contradicts the concept of voluntariness. A consent is considered to be valid only if voluntarily given (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1978).

It is fully understood that in cases where gatekeepers are involved, it is not 'ethically acceptable' to allow them to intervene in the refugees' decision, in any way.

In cases where gatekeepers have been involved, it is important that potential research respondents understand their right to refuse to participate at any stage in the research process, and that this refusal will not affect service provision or level of care. (Clark-Kazak, 2017, p. 12)

The last chapter, which entails recommendations for in-the-field researchers, includes an incidence that I encountered related to gatekeeper intervention and how I responded to it.

4.9 Ethical Reflexivity

A reflexive researcher is one who constantly takes stock of his/her actions as well as his/her role in the research process and subjects these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of the research data (Mason, 1996). A researcher's influence is inevitable. As Malterud (2001) noted, "A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (pp. 483-484).

McGraw, Zvonkovic, and Walker (2000) pointed to the connection between reflexivity and ethics and viewed ethics as one aspect of reflexivity. According to them "[Reflexivity is] a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge" (p. 68). Hertz (1997, p. viii) noted that the reflexive researcher does not merely report the "facts" of the research, but also actively constructs interpretations ("What do I know?"), while at the same time questioning how those interpretations came about ("How do I know what I know?"). Jenkins (1992) was concerned with providing guidance on how to be ethically reflexive. He reflected on Bourdieu's words. According to Bourdieu (1986, as cited in Jenkins, 1992), the reflexive process comprises taking two steps back from the subject of the research. The first step back is the objective observation of the research subject; the next step back is the reflection of the observation itself. During the first step back the question "What do I know?" is posed, and the second step poses the "How do I know?" question (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

One valuable piece of advice that I found useful throughout this investigation was Lincoln and Guba's (1985) advice to develop a reflexive journal, a diary where regular entries are kept during the research process. There the researcher can store his/her methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflection upon what is happening in terms of his/her own emotions, values, and interests. According to Roller and

Lavrakas (2015), those diaries provide a documented first-hand account of interviewers' bias and their preconceptions and enrich the overall study design by providing information about what may have negatively influenced the findings. I followed that advice and found it very helpful. Below is an entry from my diary that reflects my awareness of my personal emotional status and its impact on the research.

November 5, 2018:

I have no clue, to which extent my new feelings will impact my research. But I am sure, these new emotions will have their impact on enhancing my sympathy towards the refugees that I am going to interview very soon. I moved to the United States almost ten months ago and my legal papers are all still within the hands of the USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). I am starting to feel frustrated, unstable and concerned. I still have no permanent residency papers, no work permit and cannot travel outside the US. A very unpleasant feeling overshadows my life, my mood and feelings. What about the refugees, who have to live with those turbulent feelings for year and years? I feel so sorry for them and although I am considering myself an 'outsider' I can now relate to something they are facing.

4.10 Multiple Identities

During their journey, and more so upon their arrival in the new host country, refugees are usually being repetitively interviewed by authorities, service providers, border officials, journalists. These interrogation-like interviews aim to find inconsistencies in a refugee's life story that is dealt with in a very suspicious manner. For the refugees, these interviews are very tricky. They know that "providing a 'wrong answer' can have drastic effects on the person's current and future life, for example, a negative decision on the asylum claim, detention or imprisonment, deportation, losing a job and so on" (van Liempt & Bilger, 2012 p. 460). Refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers develop narratives adapted to the circumstances they find themselves in. Over time, due to the environment of suspicion they live in, they develop an ability to know how best to present themselves through diverse identities, each fitting a different setting.

This situation presents another ethical challenge: how can a researcher untangle the different identities, stories, and versions? Which one should she believe? Which one is authentic? Because they have built this survival mechanism, and because of the environment of suspicion, it is very much to be expected that they will convey a story to the researcher that

they want him/her to hear. “What information will be disclosed to researchers very much depends on how participants assess the researchers’ role vis-à-vis the respondent” (van Liempt & Bildger, 2012, p. 460). Refugee participants might, for instance, elaborate, highlight or upgrade information they expect might yield some benefit, while presenting information that would possibly have negative effects in such a way that it will not cause any harm, e.g., leaving out certain details. A situation as complex as that needs the researcher to be attentive to the ‘inconsistencies’ in collected data. A good piece of advice is to put information into context by “reflecting on how participants have presented themselves and their situation and when and particularly why participants could possibly have kept certain details back or have ‘adapted’ their story” (van Liempt & Bildger, 2012, p. 462). In order to overcome this challenge, I implemented two techniques: 1) building trust through a more informal introduction of myself and getting rid of any vibe of tension or frustration and 2) asking the same question but in another manner during the second or third interview to discover any inconsistencies. If any inconsistency arose, I would ask for clarifications and go one level deeper with my questions.

CHAPTER 5

FIRST CASE – SAMED AL KHABIRI

5.1 Overview

The previous chapter provided insight into the ethical research challenges a researcher has to expect when dealing with persons undergoing forced migration and shed some light on the ethically difficult moments I had to deal with throughout this investigation. This chapter moves on to provide insight into the findings that resulted from the case-by-case analysis. Chapter 5 examines the first case portfolio and outlines the emergent themes. A separate chapter is then devoted to each subsequent case. Each of the chapters 5 to 7 starts with an introduction that provides information about how I contacted the case, as well as when and how the interviews were conducted. This information is then followed by sections that shed light on the BL programme the respective case enrolled in it. Next, the case portfolio is displayed using the research question lens in an attempt to find answers to each of the following questions:

Does Blended Learning empower Syrian refugee youth living in Jordan?

1. Is blended learning, in the case of Syrian refugee youth, an empowering capability?
2. Does blended learning help Syrian refugee youth to overcome their restrictive rules of the game?
3. Does blended learning improve Syrian refugee youth's resource portfolio?

Selecting Samed to be the first case presented was a purposeful decision. Samed's profile sets the scene and provides readers with an authentic picture of the reality, challenges, expectations, and dreams of those within the SRY context. Samed's case provides an illustration of how the war impacted, and to some extent destroyed, SRY educational aspirations and dreams. This chapter contributes also to our understanding on how interwoven, interconnected, and almost how neatly knitted together the different aspects of the refugees' context are. Samed's psychological state impacted his aspirations and led to a spirit of apathy which, in turn, was the reason behind his educational decisions. Even though his self-esteem, feelings of value, and self-worth were negatively impacted by the surrounding legislative

restrictions that impede a refugee's progress or development, Samed's self-esteem, feelings of value, and self-worth were enhanced through his engagement in the BL programme.

5.2 Introduction to Samed's Profile

The cofounder of SKY School who had sent out the PIS to all alumni students who had engaged in the peacebuilding course, provided me with Samed's contact information. I contacted Samed via email and he replied expressing his willingness to be interviewed using Skype. I interviewed him twice and the total interview time was 164 minutes. He preferred to do the interviews in English. His English level was astonishingly high. All interviews were sound-recorded. Each of the conducted interviews (with Samed, as well as the other two interviewees) started with my setting the scene, explaining the research goals, process, research participants' rights, and what the participant could expect. I informed Samed about the incentive for taking part in the research, i.e., customised consultation session/s introducing him to all the diverse educational options open to him in Jordan, abroad, and online.

At the time of the interviews Samed was 23 years old and he had reached Jordan in 2012. Together with his family, Samed had left Aleppo hastily without taking any of his educational certificates. He had, prior to his refuge journey, sat the high school exams in Aleppo, but he had no proof of that, as his school had been bombed. When the family reached Jordan, they were totally broke and Samed had to find work immediately, although he was just 16. He worked first in the water treatment company, then later in diverse restaurants as a waiter. During the interview time, Samed was working for a digital game company as a production manager. He was fully aware that his work was illegal and that he might be detained. He had never resumed his education. Samed had enrolled in and completed the 10-week long peacebuilding BL course that was provided by SKY School during Fall 2018.

5.3 Background to SKY School's Blended Learning Programme

The SKY School¹² course which started at the end of August 2018 aimed to help participants to explore ways through which they can build peace in their communities through learning about issues relating to peace and exploring the reasons for conflicts on a local and global level (Sky School, n.d.). This course was open to Ammani residents who are: between 16 and

¹² SKY School is a registered UK charity and is based in London and Singapore. It started to provide learning programmes for refugees and displaced youth in 2017 and rolled out with further courses in 2018 reaching out to Greece, Jordan, and Kenya through partner local organisations. For curriculum development, SKY School partnered with United World Colleges in East Asia, one of the largest international schools in curriculum articulation (Sky School, n.d.).

26, who can read, write, and speak English at intermediate level, are able to use a smartphone, tablet, and/or computer for 6 hours per week, and who are eager to become a peacebuilder in their community. In order to successfully complete the course, the participant had to devote 10 hours per week (4 hours online and 6 offline). The course material and the instruction language during the f2f meetings were in English.

The f2f meetings of the peacebuilding course took place on the 2 weekend days (Fridays and Saturdays) and lasted 3 hours (11:00-14:00). This course had four facilitators who interacted with the 30 participants. These meetings took place in the Ahlan World Centre. The centre which provides Arabic teaching to non-Arabic speakers is located in Jabal Al Lweibdeh in central Amman. For online communication, for accessing the online learning material, and for submission of assignments, the participants used AULA, a mobile-compatible application.

5.4 Is Blended Learning, in the Case of Samed, an Empowering Capability?

5.4.1 Overview.

Before answering this question, two definitions will be revisited: the definition of empowerment and that of capabilities. Empowerment, as mentioned previously, is “the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It means increasing one’s authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect one’s life. As people exercise real choice, they gain increased control over their lives” (World Bank, 2002, p. 11). Capabilities, on the other hand, represent what is effectively possible and represent freedoms or valuable opportunities to lead the kind of lives people want to lead, to do what they want to do, and be the person they want to be (Robeyns, 2016). Empowering capabilities, therefore, is a term used henceforth to refer to those options, opportunities, and freedoms that increase the cases’ authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect their lives.

In order to understand Samed’s situation, it is very important to differentiate between what is feasible and possible and what is *effectively possible*, or to use the wording in the above definition, what is *a valuable opportunity* that can effectively help people to be the person they want to be, and to live the life they want to live, using Sen’s terms, to reach their functionings. According to Robyens (2005), all that what a person is able to be and to do, i.e., one’s functionings “constitute what makes a life valuable.” (p. 95). This is why this investigation goes beyond the educational values attached to the cases’ learning experience and extends to everything that makes their lives valuable.

This investigation, as mentioned before, used a backwards analysis, i.e., it first tried to understand Samed's aspirations (i.e., aspired functionings), i.e., what he wants to be and the life he would like to live, and then looked into the BL programme he engaged in, in order to see if this experience has helped him to move towards his aspirations.

5.4.2 Samed's aspirations.

Overwhelmed by feelings of frustration and uncertainty about the future, Samed was not ready to talk about his aspirations. He seemed hesitant to speak about his "wish" and was afraid that my first impression would be that he is unrealistic or a dreamer. His wish, although it might seem simple, is difficult to attain.

My future goal, my aspiration, let us say my 'wish' ... (sarcastic laugh) is to study, to finish my education. I want to study sociology, but have little hope that this might be realised one day (Interview, 21/02/2019, S1).

Samed explained why he laughed sarcastically, by painting a rather pessimistic, hopeless, and gloomy picture of his life.

My educational options are very limited. When I went out of Syria, I did not take my certificates with me. I have no options to continue my studies. The doors to any formal education are, therefore, closed. I do not have any support from the government that should be responsible to teach refugees. Life is very expensive. UNHCR is providing education, but is not providing food and shelter and I cannot leave my family starving and go to study (Interview, 24/02/2019, S2).

In the case of Samed, it is very obvious that he lacks what Tiwari (2011) described as "**strong** aspirations that become the driver for achieving the valued functionings" (p. 5, author's emphasis). It is that lack of strong aspirations or a real internal driver that impacted his actions, decisions, and perceptions related to education and surrounding educational options. Not being driven by a strong motivation, and being overwhelmed by surrounding restrictive circumstances, led to apathy towards the opportunities and choices around him and a general mood of hopelessness. This, in turn, explains why Samed was not interested to know about possible options.

I did not hear about the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) Social Work BL course, although it is in the area of my interest, but I do not think, even if I knew about it, I would not be able to enrol as I have to work (Interview, 21/02/2019, S3).

He did not ask for any further information about options that were mentioned to him, nor did he show interest in understanding more. This behaviour might be reinforcing evidence of what the literature review has already revealed. The number one reason for not continuing their education (Syrians aged 12-25 in the MENA region), according to Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014), was lack of interest. According to Edraak (2017), young Syrian males considered entering the labour market to be more “promising” (p. 2) than continuing their education. However, in the case of Samed, it was not so much a matter of finding a “promising” job or brighter life options, but rather a matter of enforced circumstances.

When I reached Jordan, I had just finished high school, I didn't have my educational documents; my father was broke, the whole family was broke. I had to work. We didn't have money to feed ourselves. I had to work to keep the food on the table (Interview, 21/02/2019, S4).

In short, Samed’s low motivation to achieve educational functionings led to attitudes and behaviours that impacted benefitting from available educational options. His apathy was a result of economic hardships and difficulties. Again, as mentioned before, there is a continuous mutual impact and relationship between the various agency-based resources and the surrounding rules of the game. In the case of Samed, his economic situation (an agency-based resource) impacted his decisions towards further education and impacted his psychological status tremendously. His psychological apathy, his pessimistic mood, and hopelessness, in turn, led to a low level of interest in making use of available educational options.

5.4.3 Samed’s capabilities.

When analysing Samed’s interviews, a clear distinction could be made between what is feasible and what is effectively possible or effectively empowering. The BL programme he engaged in was, because of a set of factors (see below), feasible and possible and even enjoyable, but these factors do not mean that it has been a valuable opportunity leading to empowerment. The section below provides an explanation of that conclusion. First, the factors that made the SKY School course feasible and possible are illustrated. There are two sets of factors: first, factors that facilitated Samed’s initial decision to enrol in the course and

secondly, factors that turned the course into an enjoyable experience, leading to motivations to actively engage in it and complete it. This explanation is followed by a discussion on why the course, despite all those factors, should not be viewed as an empowering capability, i.e., one that leads to the achievement of aspired functionings.

5.4.4 Blended learning: A feasible opportunity.

5.4.4.1 *The economic factor.*

While repeatedly mentioning his dire economic situation and that he is the sole breadwinner and needs to ensure that there is always “*food on the table*” (S2, S4), Samed owned a smartphone and was able to access a shared laptop. He used both WiFi and 3G to submit his assignments which sometimes took him more than 4 hours to complete (Interview 21/02/2019, S5). However, the fact that the course was offered for free was crucial and fundamental in his decision to take it. He cannot afford to pay for his learning. When discussing any possibility of finding a balance between work and study, he answered clearly that the economic factor plays a big role.

Studying for a degree and working in my situation is impossible. I work full-time and sometimes even with overtime just to ensure being able to meet the ‘necessities of life’ (Interview 21/02/2019, S6).

Offering the course for free rendered the course feasible. In other words, the economic factor is essential and fundamental when taking the decision to enrol in a BL course.

5.4.4.2 *The time factor.*

The f2f meetings took place only during weekend days, which was very convenient for Samed, as he was working during weekdays. In addition, the fact that each of the sessions did not exceed 3 hours helped very much in making the whole experience feasible for Samed whose priority was to maintain his job and secure food for his family.

Sky School had the f2f meetings during the weekend days, making it possible to work and still follow up with the course (Interview 24/02/2019, S7).

This is an important lesson for practitioners: BL programmes have to accommodate to the circumstances of working learners and providing the courses at weekends is a good option that renders the programme feasible.

5.4.4.3 The location and facilities factor.

The f2f meetings took place downtown. Samed found that to be convenient and said, “*It was not too far*” (Interview 24/02/2019, S8). However, Samed was not so happy with the facility itself, which he perceived to have been too small.

It [the learning centre] was small; there were two ways to attend the course. We attended most of the programme outside, on the terrace, but there were no tables, and you had to take the notes without any tables while sitting there. And when we sat inside, it was really small, all 30 participants did not fit into the room (Interview 21/02/2019, S9).

This is another lesson learnt from this study. Finding premises for the f2f meetings that are accessible for the learners is very important. However, despite the importance of providing sufficient and comfortable learning facilities within the learning premises, this aspect is not particularly important and evidence shows that learners are ready to adapt to insufficient and uncomfortable facilities as long as other factors such as the economic factor and convenient time have been taken care of.

5.4.4.4 The topic factor.

One of the main factors that influenced Samed’s decision to engage in the course was the topic itself. The topic was in accordance with an area that interested him: peacebuilding.

I enrolled in the course, because I am interested in humanitarian issues and particularly in peacebuilding, because I volunteer a lot. It is the topic that motivated me to enrol (Interview, 21/02/2019, S10).

This is a clear indicator that designing courses that accord with refugees’ interests is crucial and extremely important. Refugees do not just enrol in just any course, because it is available, free or feasible. Despite their dire educational options, refugees insist on choosing what they like, what interests them and they enrol to learn about topics or subject areas they are passionate about.

5.4.4.5 The information factor.

Samed had no issue with finding information about the course. “*I got to know about the course through social media. There I saw an online ad, I liked what I was reading and I went and registered*” (Interview 21/02/2019, S11). Owning a smartphone, Samed was a regular browser of the internet, especially social media. However, as was obvious, it was not due to

the lack of information outlets and platforms that Samed did not hear about other offerings like the social work course provided by JRS (S3), but rather more his apathy and feelings that all options just lead to dead ends and that there is no hope of pursuing his studies.

5.4.5 Blended learning: An enjoyable experience.

There was a set of factors that rendered Samed's BL experience enjoyable. It was due to those factors that Samed completed the course and was able to engage in it actively and make use of the opportunity. The course facilitators played a huge role in turning Samed's experience into a fun one. He spoke very highly about the facilitators and their teaching approach.

The facilitators were awesome, open-minded, funny, and actually very good. When someone is teaching, he has not to be firm all the time. They used to throw jokes, be funny, be supportive, and even when someone would say an opinion that would be strange or not acceptable, they would take full responsibility. They enjoyed giving us the class. They were there whenever we asked them anything (Interview, 21/02/2019, S12).

Again, it is important to understand the context, in order to appreciate the importance of the teaching approach and facilitation factor. The BL course Samed engaged in was a contrast to his previous educational experiences that had been neither constructive nor fun. He appreciated very much being exposed to a different approach that turned his learning experience into fun, while his previous schooling experience has been "terrible". *"I finished high school in Aleppo. It was a public school, ... the way of teaching was TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE" (repeated and with strong intonation) (Interview, 21/02/2019, S13).*

For Samed, the SKY School course was his first encounter with a constructive, collaborative, learner-centred approach that allows learners to express themselves and which gives them a voice and respects their opinions. Prior to his engagement with SKY School, Samed had enrolled in another peacebuilding course that was provided in a conventional (f2f) mode by a local NGO. That experience was neither constructive nor fun.

I took once, another peacebuilding course, but I did not complete it, because people, who delivered the course were close-minded. For example, I went to the class once wearing shorts, but at the end of the class the teacher would come to me and tell me that I should not wear shorts. He started to tell me culture stuff and bla bla bla, and that this is not acceptable. Additionally, some of the teachers and students were

talking about other religions in a hateful way. There was no[t] acceptance spirit. (Interview, 21/02/2019, S14).

This extract conveys a very straightforward message for BL programme implementers. Recruiting competent facilitators is paramount, and applying a learner-centred teaching approach that provides the learners with the necessary opportunities to express themselves is a fundamental success factor. The fact that the learners have not previously been exposed to constructive or learner-centred approaches does not mean that they will not seek learning experiences that are of quality and in contrast to their previous experiences.

5.4.6 Blended learning: An empowering capability?

This section attempts to investigate if this feasible opportunity, which Samed took advantage of and engaged in, has been empowering to him, i.e., helped him to be the person he wants to be or to live the life he wants to live. Samed wished to study sociology, to continue his education, and to enter university. His aspirations were educationally-bound, because of his perceptions towards the role of education. According to him, education:

plays a huge role in developing one's awareness, about his eco-environment, his context and surrounding. It enables us to understand problems we face and find the proper solutions for them (Interview, 24/02/2019, S15).

However, despite that positive perception towards education, despite being offered feasible educational opportunities, and despite the fact that the learning experience had been fun, the BL course Samed engaged in cannot be viewed as empowering, because it did not help to move him towards his aspired functioning. He was open to any kind of achievement, any kind of positive progress (professionally, educationally, in terms of life skills, etc.), but capitalising on this openness has not been realised through the course engagement.

I don't see any opportunity that came along with or after the course was finished. It might, but until now I didn't see any opportunity coming (Interview, 21/02/2019, S16).

Samed used the generic word “*opportunity*” most probably because he meant any kind of professional improvement or progress, e.g., internship, training, employment. The course did not help him to solve the issue of unattained certificates or how to continue his formal education. It did not provide him with a path towards undergraduate education, nor did it open up any new professional horizons. Samed was not even able to make any use of what he

learned in the course. i.e., the developed skills and/or attained knowledge. He believed that peacebuilding is very much needed in his community and that his knowledge and developed skill set could be of much use. However, due to the restrictive environment surrounding him, he was not able to implement, on the ground, what he had learnt.

If a course like this is available in Jordan, there should be organisations that can help to facilitate using the stuff we learnt around peacebuilding: implement it on the ground. I learnt how to be a peacebuilder, but I cannot do the 'peacebuilding work'. There are peacebuilding organisations, but I am not allowed to be hired by them. There should be organisations that would provide course graduates with the right environment, and the right work space, the right conditions to share their ideas. There was nothing of that sort; they just taught us stuff; there was no project, for instance, to work on after the course. I have learnt this for a purpose, to help others, but I cannot do that because there is no organisation out there, that would provide me with an opportunity to help others, and I cannot start by myself (Interview, 21/02/2019, S17).

When refugees enrol in a course, they do so with a purpose in mind, i.e., to implement their newly developed skill set on the ground to benefit themselves and their community. Not helping them to reach that goal is like “not closing the learning cycle”. BL programme managers and implementers need to think about how to overcome that barrier, because not addressing this issue renders the whole experience “nice to have” rather than “empowering”.

Researchers have observed a mismatch between offered educational programmes and labour market needs. An article by Dakkak et al. (2017) noted that most available education programming directed to SRY in Jordan does not provide what they termed “the right currency”, i.e., skills needed to move closer to their aspirations, which is not just an academic certificate, but skills that would enable them to achieve their primary goal of acquiring a paying job.

This investigation adds to the idea that there is a mismatch between offered educational programmes and refugees’ educational aspirations, their aspirations to continue their formal education, and to graduate from university. Additionally, this investigation highlights a lack of opportunities to implement attained knowledge and developed skills, which might, with time, provide refugees with an impression that those experiences are totally ‘worthless.’

5.5 Does Blended Learning Help Samed to Overcome Restrictive ‘Rules of the Game’?

Samed was very vocal about the impact of his refugee status on his life, his limited options, and his inability to achieve his aspirations. He viewed all the legislation and policies that have been set to regulate the life of refugees in Jordan as constraining his freedom: freedom to travel, to work, and to move freely:

Basically, Syrians in Jordan have no options: you are not allowed to work, you are not allowed to drive, you are not allowed to travel, you are not allowed to leave the country ... they always say “you are not allowed” (repeated three times) because you are Syrian. I faced so much racism and so much discrimination in my life. I tried so hard, tried, tried, tried (repeated three times) SO HARD (intonation), until I reached a point where I want to give up. I have been trying to leave the country, I have been trying to immigrate, but all the doors are closed in front of me. I reached a point to think about illegal immigration, but I am not for that choice, and even if I was, I do not have the money for it (Interview, 21/02/2019, S18).

I even thought to go back to Syria. Even this I can’t do, because they want me to join the army. If I do not do that, they will consider me a deserter. Here I am a refugee without any human rights. I cannot study, I cannot work, I cannot do anything. I have been trying so hard, until at one point I started to give up. I am just giving up now. I am in the process. he he (sarcastic laugh) (Interview, 21/02/2019, S19).

When I wanted to attend school again, I was already 19. I asked about redoing high school. I was informed that I have to redo the whole cycle starting from sixth grade, because I did not have my educational documents. I did not bring my documents, my school back home was demolished, and I do not have any family members anymore there. And if I go back, I have to enter the military. The embassy of Syria in Jordan was not very helpful. They wanted me to go back and to serve in the military (Interview, 21/02/2019, S20).

In order to answer the question “Does blended learning help Samed to overcome restrictive rules of the game?”, the complex picture of Samed’s reality has to be unpacked. To do so, I will divide the situation into two parts: the supply and the demand side. On the **demand side** resides the demand for further education, for being provided with an opportunity to continue his studies, to enter university, and to finish an undergraduate degree. This, however, is a complex reality, because there are so many barriers and obstacles; on top of those is the restrictive legislation that constrains refugees’ freedom: freedom of work, freedom of travel, etc. Not being allowed to work hinders refugees from generating income that might help them

to pay for any fees needed to further their education. Not being allowed to travel hinders their ability to benefit from any open scholarships and internships outside Jordan. Only being allowed to enrol in education after providing the proper documentation that proves previous learning attainments renders reintegration into the formal school system impossible and renders enrolling into university unfeasible

On the *supply side*, there are some educational opportunities; the SKY School course is just one of those. Because the course is being provided by an NGO that has no partnership or official relationship to the national authorities, i.e., the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research (MoHE), means that it is not allowed to issue any recognised certificates that would help learners to further their education or benefit them when entering the labour market. Even if the certificate is recognised by the government or the private sector, the refugee learner is not allowed to work using his developed skills and attained knowledge due to restrictions dictated by the Ministry of Labour (MoL). In other words, what the BL programme is providing the learners with is much less than what is needed. It is providing them with some skills, with an opportunity to engage with multicultural colleagues, an opportunity to enhance their English language, and a fun learning experience. However, all that is just ‘nice to have’ and is not in any way empowering, i.e., supporting their efforts to reach their aspired functionings.

On the supply side, there are other options, e.g., online learning courses. However, even these programmes are not responsive to the real needs or the actual demands. To this extent, Samed did not consider them to be “options”.

Online learning!!! (sarcastic laugh). Don't you think I tried? I have truly tried. What is offered and is affordable is very limited. I had the chance to study computer science at the University of the People¹³. The majors that I found there were very limited: hospitality, business administration, and computer sciences. It was not really helpful. I want to study sociology or social sciences. Other online degrees are not an option, because they are unaffordable (Interview, 21/02/2019, S21).

¹³ University of the People (UoPeople) is a non-profit, tuition-free, American accredited online university that is dedicated to opening access to higher education globally by offering associate and bachelor's degree programmes in business administration, computer science, and health science as well as master's degree programmes in business administration and education. UoPeople was founded in 2009 and accredited in February 2014. It has 18,552 students enrolled from more than 200 countries and territories. 1,000 of these students are refugees, of whom 600 are Syrian (UoPeople, n.d.).

However, these were not the only reasons for not perceiving online degree programmes to be valuable options.

Additionally, most people here in Jordan do not trust the blended and online degrees, or the online universities. They do not accredit those institutions nor recognise or accredit those courses and studies (Interview, 21/02/2019, S22).

In other words, not being accredited renders online courses, even if provided by renowned institutions, worthless. They, therefore, do not help refugees to continue their education or enter the labour market. Consequently, even the purely 100% online courses provided by US or European universities do not help in addressing the actual demands and needs of refugees, if those courses are not nationally recognised and accredited. There is a huge mismatch between what is provided and offered by NGOs and the complex needs and demands of refugees. This mismatch is a very clear indication of the lack of coordination between programme providers and the national authorities, i.e., currently the MoHE or the MoL. This investigation seconds Edraak's recommendation (2017): "Skills training courses or educational programs targeting Syrian refugees should take into account restrictions imposed by the MoL..." (p. 3).

5.6 Does Blended Learning Impact Samed's Resource Profile Positively?

In order to rigorously analyse the impact of the BL programme on Samed's agency-based resources, some light will be shed on those resources prior to and then after Samed's enrolment in the course. Two salient agency-based resources emerged during the interviews: 1) self-esteem (a psychological resource) and 2) English language skills (a human resource).

5.6.1 Self-esteem.

Entering Jordan at the age of 16 and having to work immediately in the informal sector (mostly as a waiter in restaurants) opened Samed's eyes to the importance of excelling in two skill sets: 1) interpersonal communication skills and 2) English language skills.

My manager at a restaurant once told me, "Look, Samed, we are all getting our salaries from those tables, and on those tables there will be sitting one million mentalities. If you know how to communicate with each one of them, satisfy each of them, you will be good at your job. This is where I learnt how to communicate. It is actually the No.1 life-skill. (Interview, 24/02/2019, S23).

As this comment clearly displays, Samed had already developed this skill set prior to his enrolment in the course. The course did not actually add much to his already developed communication skills, but was rather a good place and opportunity to implement and make use of those skills. He used his communication skills to help, support, and provide mentorship to his peers. Doing these things boosted his self-esteem and provided him with a sense of value and pride, which is a very important psychological agency-based resource. The course provided Samed with a feeling of being productive, helpful, and worthy in the middle of very limited options and opportunities that could boost those emotions. The way he spoke about the impact of the course on his emotions and feelings of self-worth says a lot.

I provided a lot of peer support. I really wanted to help my peers. I wanted people around me to participate and put some value for themselves. Every time, I was in a group they wanted me to represent them, but I did not want that. I kept saying to them, “Last week I represented you, now it is your turn, you have to represent yourself and represent us... we have to go in a group.” I insisted, because I want everyone to benefit (Interview, 24/02/2019, S24).

At SKY School, most of the attendees were introverts, because they did not talk, share their opinions or engage. I was different. I am an extrovert who is used to throw jokes that made everyone laugh; I used to engage and be very active. In fact, everyone loved me. The facilitator and the colleagues in the course used to tell me that I am turning it into a funny and amusing experience. When I, for any reason, skipped a meeting, they would come to me and say, “Why didn’t you come, man? It was so boring.” This made me happy (Interview 24/02/2019, S25).

This love of interpersonal interaction might be one of the reasons why Samed would not find online courses and degrees to be suitable for him. He feels happy when he engages with others, when he supports them, and when he interacts with them. It is very obvious that it is those ‘moments’ that provided Samed with happiness and a sense of worth and value and helped to enhance and boost his self-esteem. Out of all that happened during 10 weeks, the mention of this specific comment “Why didn’t you come, man? It was so boring” (S25) is a clear indication of how much those appreciations impacted him and, as he mentioned, were reasons to make him happy.

5.6.2 English language skills.

Language is usually the main skill Syrian refugees seek to enhance after settlement. “.. in Jordan and Lebanon, the languages of instruction (English and French) were ones most Syrian

students had not mastered, since Arabic is the language of instruction in their home country” (Elgeziri, 2019). Having been taught only in Arabic up to secondary level, with very minimal English, has put the Syrian refugees, when arriving in Jordan, in a very disadvantaged position. Research proves that “Language is an equalizer. When a child can speak and write in the host country language they develop the confidence and self-assurance to communicate with their peers, building a solid educational foundation that serves them for the rest of their lives” (British Council, 2018).

For that reason, enhancing their English language skills is usually refugees’ main concern and endeavour after settling in a new host country. Samed was no exception. Throughout his 7 years in Jordan, Samed has worked extensively on his English-language skills. Samed’s previous experiences, his failure to reintegrate in the formal system, and his inability to find affordable degree programmes that would accept him without asking for his certificates have been all rational reasons to resort to independent self-learning to acquire the English language skills he needed. He implemented different techniques or strategies to enhance his English language skills.

First, I used to meet some people who speak very good English; they used to come to me at the restaurant to provide me help with my English. I tried to communicate with them, but I always failed. Then I met a guy who spoke English fluently, and he told me that YouTube might help me. So, I started to watch YouTube videos, I started with ABC. Then I used for my learning some applications, and I continued to learn by myself (Interview, 21/02/2019, S26).

It was only when talking about his achievements that Samed’s tone and voice became more cheerful and I could imagine the “shining face” behind the screen. With a tone of pride, he talked about the most successful techniques he had used to enhance his language.

The most helpful strategy was watching TV series, such as ‘Friends’ and ‘How I met your Mother; I used to watch them with English subtitles. Honestly, I never understood anything the first couple of seasons. It was at first watching people moving and moving their mouths and I did not understand anything, but I watched it again and again and bit by bit I started to understand (Interview, 21/02/2019, S27).

After 2 years of very dedicated self-learning, Samed resorted to a new strategy, i.e., conventional courses. He had worked very hard on his English and his efforts had not been

fruitless. When he looked around, he found that the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS)¹⁴ were providing a lot of English courses, at all levels. He was intent on enrolling in one of those, but was offered a better opportunity.

At the JRS they told me that I can take an exam, and if I am one of the top 10, I might be allowed to study at the British Council. I took the exam, and there were 700 others who were taking it. I was one of the top 10 and then I had to sit for an advancement test, after which I got a full scholarship at the British Council. When I was studying at the British Council, I was allowed to sit for the IELTS for free. My score was 5.5 (Interview, 21/02/2019, S28).

Samed talked with lots of enthusiasm about how his efforts have not been in vain, and he was extremely proud to have scored 5.5 in his IELTS test, a level which he would not have believed possible a couple of years previously. It was obvious how much those achievements meant to him and how much they were impactful in his vision that he still can progress.

A couple of observations can be drawn from the previous narration:

- 1- Despite there being a lot of free English courses in Jordan like the JRS courses, Samed resorted mainly to independent self-learning to enhance his English, which has been, in his case, a successful strategy. He was able to develop different techniques to achieve his goal. Despite there being a need to learn English, not all refugees do resort to courses to enhance their English; some would rather depend on themselves.
- 2- Watching YouTube videos and TV series was a successful strategy to enhance Samed's English. This is an important observation that will be revisited again in the next chapter.
- 3- Independent learning skills to enhance English proved, in the case of Samed, to have been very successful and effective.
- 4- Psychologically, Samed's achievement impacted him positively. He felt proud, enthusiastic and talking about his language skills was one of the rare incidences where he abandoned his hopelessness and pessimistic tone.
- 5- The BL programme did not add much to his language skills, but provided an outlet to speak and implement and apply acquired language skills.
- 6- Having acquired a higher level of English, prior to his enrolment (compared to his colleagues), Samed was able to play a mentoring role which provided him with feelings of

¹⁴ The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, that they may heal, learn, and determine their own future. JRS programmes are currently found in 52 countries (Jesuit Refugee Services, n.d.)

happiness and contentment.

“Did the course Samed enrolled in, impact his language skills positively?” This question does not have a straightforward answer. The course did not develop his skills; it was not his strategy to learn English, but rather it provided him with an opportunity to apply learnt English. The course provided him with a chance and opportunity to practise and to implement previously acquired skills. This may have been the case because: 1) Samed’s language level was already good prior to his enrolment and 2) It was not his intention or motivation to enhance his English through the course, but rather to engage in a course about peacebuilding and to acquire cognitive subject-related knowledge.

CHAPTER 6

SECOND CASE – MAHMOUD AL-DAWLA

6.1 Overview

This chapter provides a different perspective on the psychosocial situation of an SRY. While Samed was a manifestation of a depressed, hopeless, and educationally speaking not terribly ambitious person, Mahmoud is almost the opposite. He is an example of a highly ambitious and enthusiastic person, who is dreaming of pursuing a master's degree and who has a plan and is eagerly working on it. This chapter is an eye-opener to the diversity of 'realities and contexts' those SRY live in. While both Samed and Mahmoud fulfilled the case selection criteria, they were chosen primarily because of their two very different personalities, their totally different backgrounds, and their totally different aspirations. This chapter provides the reader with a vivid, yet striking portrayal of their two different realities, which highlights how those realities and contexts impacted their empowerment and their perception of the usefulness of the BL programmes in achieving that empowerment.

6.2 Introduction to Mahmoud's Profile

As in the case of Samed, the cofounder of SKY School provided me with the email for Mahmoud. During my introductory conversation with Mahmoud I got to know that he had enrolled in two different BL courses: the SKY School's peacebuilding course and a HOPES course in business English provided by the British Council. Because of having those two experiences, Mahmoud's interviews, which focused on both courses, provided a wealth of data. I first conducted first two depth interviews with Mahmoud during mid-February 2019 using Skype. Those interviews consisted of: 1) depth interview questions, 2) vignettes, and 3) questionnaire questions. Mahmoud was very outspoken and each time added a new dimension to the discussion. However, after starting to analyse the data, I needed to conduct a third interview to uncover deeper levels of his experience. The third interview was crucial. It not only reassured me that my understanding of some aspects was heading in the right direction, but also corrected my comprehension of others. The total interview time spent with Mahmoud was 168 minutes. Mahmoud preferred to speak in Arabic and did not mind having the interviews voice-recorded.

At the time of the interviews, Mahmoud was 23 years old. He had moved from Syria to Jordan 5 years previously. As soon as he arrived in Jordan, he started high school, first in a public school, then in a private one. When he graduated from high school, he enrolled in a fees-based private university, i.e., Philadelphia University in Amman. He spent 1 year there, but could not afford to continue. Although he was working in a full-time job, the fees were too high. However, having achieved a high, grade point average (GPA) during his first year at Philadelphia University had put him in a good position to apply for a scholarship. He won a scholarship to study at Al Zarqa University, which secures his current education financially. During the interviews he was in his junior year studying electronic engineering.

6.3 Background to HOPES Blended Learning Programme

The course Mahmoud attended is actually part of a much bigger programme called HOPES, which stands for "Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians", This multimillion US dollar project is funded by the European Union's Regional Trust Fund and implemented by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) together with diverse international development partners (HOPES, n.d.). The programme consists of several work packages; e.g., academic counselling, a scholarship fund, and an English access programme. Mahmoud participated in part of the later. The English access programme consists of 100 hours of f2f classes with a British Council-trained local teacher, blended with a 40-hour online British Council course (British Council, n.d.). The programme has been targeted at Syrian refugees (80%) and underprivileged Jordanians (20%).

This BL course ran between July 16th and Sep 16th, 2018, with the f2f meetings taking place 4 days a week at Al-Quds College, which is located outside Amman. The organisers offered the participants two choices: either to attend the f2f meetings in the morning (8:00-11:00) or in the afternoon (14:00-17:00). Al-Quds College had a lot of facilities and was technologically well-equipped (Interview, 19/02/2019, *M1*). The online assignments were to be submitted on the British Council's platform. The platform was academically structured and focused on academic activities and interactions (Interview, 19/02/2019, *M2*).

6.4 Is Blended Learning, in the Case of Mahmoud, an Empowering Capability?

6.4.1 Mahmoud's aspirations.

Unlike Samed, Mahmoud had clear ambitions and aspirations. He knew exactly what he wanted to be and what kind of life he would value. Mahmoud's aspirations and future goals were all bound up with education.

*I want to continue studying. I really hope that, when I finish my bachelor's, I can enrol in a master's programme. I really do want to continue my masters in electronic engineering. I actually have a project in mind. I will start my graduation research next semester, but I wish I [could] have the opportunity to continue my research at a postgraduate level. My research focuses on 'how elevators function, and how to develop those functions' (Interview, 18/02/2019, **M3**).*

*I do think that the only way to achieve my goals is by moving out of Jordan. I don't care which country I would go to. I do not mind wherever in the world, as long as there is an opportunity, I would go there. I want to go to a country where I can pursue my master's studies, in the field that I started, but I need to find a safe country, where I can do something, where I can study and then work in my field. But here, I am totally unable to do anything, not even to enrol in a training programme (Interview, 19/02/2019, **M4**).*

These extracts show that Mahmoud had strong aspirations, motivations, and ambitions that would drive his endeavours towards achieving his functionings, i.e., graduating with a master's degree in electronic engineering. He was even very clear about how to achieve that ambition, i.e., finding a scholarship and moving out of Jordan. His ambition towards and passion for electronic engineering was so strong that he would act and take decisions only in line with that 'passion'. One of the vignettes required Mahmoud to provide advice to a Syrian refugee who is offered a scholarship to study another major other than the one that he likes and had started to study. Mahmoud opted for passion, i.e., for him, following one's passion comes first.

*I will not advise this young Syrian in the scenario to go and take the offer for scholarship. He has a passion for something, he should follow that passion. He will not be able to excel and succeed in something that is not aligned to his passion. I do not advise him AT ALL (intonation) to go for anything other than his passion (Interview, 18/02/2019, **M5**).*

Again, as with the case of Samed, this response is an indicator that refugees, despite their limited and dire educational opportunities, would want to enrol in options and programmes that align with their passion. Learning this lesson could be valuable for programme

implementers who need to fully understand refugees' interest areas, passions, and needs prior to the design and implementation of any new programmes.

The following explication of Mahmoud's situation provides additional evidence about how refugees take their decisions to enrol in a specific educational programme. Mahmoud had, prior to enrolling in the HOPES course, actually enrolled in a long list of other courses and programmes. He had enrolled in a set of courses that would support the development of knowledge and skills related to his major, i.e., engineering, for example, ICDL (International Computer Driving Licence) courses and AutoCAD, simulation and programming courses (Interview, 19/02/2019, **M6**). His enrolment in English courses, HOPES being one of them, was also motivated by a desire to build skills that would help him during his university studies. He knew the importance of English competencies when studying a major that belongs to the applied sciences, because most of the learning resources are in English (Interview, 19/02/2019, **M7**). The courses Mahmoud had chosen, therefore, represent a combination of his passion and needs.

Another set of courses Mahmoud enrolled in was centred more on the development of skills and knowledge related to integration, adaptation, and being productive in the new context, i.e., to a real pressing need in his social life. He enrolled, for instance, in a course provided by Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) related to the provision of first stage support for people with posttrauma. He also enrolled in the SKY School's peacebuilding BL course, motivated by a feeling that peacebuilding is very much needed in his community (Interview, 19/02/2019, **M8**). His enrolment in those courses represents an act to address pressing social needs, a motivation towards being productive and helpful on a communal level. Mahmoud's case affirms the necessity of offering educational programmes that align with refugees' needs and interest areas. This investigation points to the necessity of discovering more precisely the exact needs and interest areas of these young people.

6.4.2 Blended learning: A feasible opportunity.

The blended learning programmes Mahmoud enrolled in, whether the SKY School peacebuilding course or the HOPES course for business English, were feasible and accessible options. Nevertheless, as will be explained below, the fact that something is possible and accessible does not mean that these factors can, of themselves, be considered to fully or comprehensively provide empowering capabilities.

6.4.2.1 *The economic factor.*

Mahmoud did not speak very openly about his economic situation. This reticence is understandable, as, within the Arab traditions, a male would not disclose embarrassing information in front of a female, especially if she is a stranger and there is no urgency to do so. However, it was possible through the very scattered information that Mahmoud divulged to build a picture of his economic status. First, Mahmoud was working, even though he knew that this is illegal.

Currently, I am working, however, only part time and not in my area of expertise (electronic engineering). Any kind of job that I would find I would take (Interview, 18/02/2019, M10).

Second, despite working as a full-timer with overtime shifts during his sophomore year at Philadelphia University, he was unable to afford the tuition fees and so he had to apply for a scholarship to be able to continue his studies (*Interview, 18/02/2019, M11*). He also mentioned that he needs to find sponsors who would support his graduate research financially (*Interview 18/02/2019, M12*).

Putting the issue of finance in context illustrates the importance of offering BL programmes (i.e., HOPES courses as well as the Sky School peacebuilding course) free of charge. Students, especially those studying an applied science major, have to pay for learning resources, and there are always other costs associated with their studies. If both BL courses had not been offered for free, Mahmoud, like Samed, would not have been able to enrol in or attend them. Moreover, the transportation to AL Quds College was provided by course organisers, which was very important, because the transportation costs (entailing 2 hours back and forth to Al Quds College) would have rendered the whole programme unaffordable.

6.4.2.2 The time factor.

Mahmoud had engaged in two courses: the SKY School's peacebuilding course and the HOPES course provided by the British Council. As regards the former, he was very satisfied that the f2f meetings took place during the two weekend days, as he had to attend college and having weekend meeting ensured that there was no time conflict between both sets of commitments (*Interview, 18/02/2019, M13*). The HOPES f2f meetings, on the other hand, took place during weekdays. However, participants were given options.

For the HOPES course, we met 4 days a week (on weekdays). But they provided us with two options, either to attend the morning (08:00) sessions or the afternoon ones (14:00) and each session was 3 hours long (Interview, 14/03/2019, M14).

Here again programme implementers can learn a valuable lesson from this study finding. If the f2f meetings cannot be offered at weekends, the provision of optional time slots is another creative way to accommodate the circumstances of working and studying youth. Those factors are important and should not be underestimated, as they render a programme accessible and feasible.

6.4.2.3 The location and facilities factor.

In the case of Mahmoud, location was a challenge. The HOPES course f2f meetings took place at Al-Quds College which was on the outskirts of Amman. To commute there was problematic.

Al Quds College was really far, on the way to the airport, one hour away from Amman downtown. It was far to everyone. But they provided buses for us (Interview, 19/02/2019, M15).

However, Mahmoud was very satisfied with the level of the facilities provided at Al-Quds College. *“Al Quds College was open to us with all its facilities. You know how college facilities are, i.e., a really high level” (Interview, 19/02/2019, M16).* Mahmoud’s experience contrasts with Samed’s. In the case of Samed, the facilities were not comfortable, while the location was convenient. However, Mahmoud again provides evidence that refugees, when satisfied with the programme offered to them, are ready to adapt and to live with what they are provided. However, in both cases, being provided with a free course was a fundamental factor that impacted their decision to enrol. Here again, the perception that the study students have engaged in is a worthwhile learning experience plays a huge role in that adaptation. Furthermore, it indicates that learners assess the value, benefit, and their level of satisfaction throughout the course and take decisions related to course completion or withdrawal accordingly.

6.4.2.4 The information factor.

Mahmoud had a technique to ensure he would not miss any new offerings or opportunities:

I learnt about the course through the JRS Facebook page. I usually browse the internet and especially Facebook to stay updated with any new opportunities for education or for further development; I have categorised those pages as 'see first'. Therefore, any new notification will appear and I will check it (Interview, 19/02/2019, M16).

An extensive discussion on information about HE opportunities within the context of SRY in Jordan can be found in chapter 8.

6.4.3 Blended learning: An unfavourable capability.

6.4.3.1 *Not suitable for applied sciences.*

According to Robeyns (2003), the CA as an analytic framework does not take human “preference formation, socialization, subtle forms of discrimination and the impact of social and moral norms for granted, but rather analyzes those up-front” (p. 15). I kept these words in mind during the data collection and analysis stages. For this reason, there was always an interview question about the interviewee’s preferences and how they would order their learning preferences, as I was aiming to discover where on the preference list they would position BL programmes.

Because Mahmoud views his options only through his ‘passion lens’, BL, as well as online courses, were not high on his preference list. Mahmoud believed that because he has a passion for electronic engineering, a very hands-on study field, online and BL options would not be suitable.

If you are asking me about the possibility of viewing online learning or BL as being paths towards one’s goals, I would tell you honestly, this depend on the major or the field of study. As for me, someone who is studying electronic engineering, online courses are not suitable, as electronic engineering is an applicable and practical field of study. My field depends a lot on experiments and scientific labs. How would this be done online? (Interview, 19/02/2019, M17)

6.4.3.2 *Less/lack of human interaction.*

Yet, there was another reason why *conventional educational options*¹⁵ were placed high on the preference list. Mahmoud viewed conventional education as comprising effective communication dimensions, i.e., communication that includes body language, facial expressions, and intonations.

¹⁵ Conventional or traditional educational options means within this research attending physical, formal and by the authorities accredited (brick and mortar) educational institution.

In the case of conventional education, you are able to see and interact with the tutor or instructor; you can see the body language, something people miss when they take the course online. Body language, as well as one's intonation, are important and significant in understanding what is meant. Therefore, the expression of ideas is more easy when they take place in a conventional setting. People will understand the exact meaning and feeling. Because of those obstacles, virtual or online education is of less value (Interview, 19/02/2019, M18).

Mahmoud's words indicate that he is someone who really wants to engage actively in his learning, who wants to participate effectively. "I am not behind just a certificate, but I want to learn, to understand" (Interview, 18/02/2019, M19). This link between real learning taking place and effective human interaction and student-instructor/student-student interaction has been perceived to be paramount for an effective and constructive learning experience. In Mahmoud's opinion, online courses have a lack of human interaction in a learning setting, something that he saw as an obstacle to effective learning and as a justifiable reason to perceive BL and online learning as of less value. Mahmoud's explanation here as to why BL and online learning are less favourable options indicates why they might be viewed as choices people resort to if they have no other options.

6.4.3.3 Lack of programme accreditation.

Mahmoud perceived online and BL as lacking necessary and essential human interactions, which he considered to be "*fundamental communication components for effective learning*" (Interview, 19/02/2019, M20). That deficiency led BL options, but more so online ones, to being viewed as of less value. Moreover, online courses are perceived as having less value by many people. For example, according to Mahmoud:

Additionally, BL or online learning courses are perceived in our Arab World to be of less value, and are not recognised as the conventional degrees. You know how important it is to have a certificate that is accredited and recognised (Interview, 19/02/2019, M21).

Mahmoud viewed scholarships as the right way to go. Obtaining a scholarship sits at the top of his preference list. Therefore, he was working very hard to enhance his IELTS scores, as having the right IELTS level is a mandatory scholarship requirement. Mahmoud believed that, if he were granted a scholarship, he would achieve a range of diverse but very important targets:

- to study at a postgraduate level

- to move outside of Jordan and find suitable educational options
- to be assured that he is in a country where he is allowed to be employed in the same field that he studied.

As clearly indicated above, even in the case of crisis and conflict and where educational options and opportunities are dire, refugees have their own preferences. These preferences have a strong impact on their perceptions towards different learning options. Accreditation of programmes and the recognition of certificates are a major factor that impacts perceptions towards the various options. Nonaccreditation by national authorities led to an impression and general perception that those programmes are of less value. Another aspect that played a role in constructing that perception was the lack of sufficient or adequate human interaction in online courses, an engagement that is considered to be paramount, fundamental, and directly linked to effective learning. Such a perception may explain why BL programmes, with their f2f meetings, are viewed more favourably and are preferred over purely (100%) online courses where this human interaction is totally absent.

6.4.4 Blended learning: An empowering capability?

6.4.4.1 *Learning and practising acceptance.*

When asked about his perception towards his BL experience and whether he found it to have been empowering, interestingly, Mahmoud answered this question with the word ‘*indirectly*’. He viewed the BL courses he engaged in as having been useful and beneficial in some ways, even if they were not direct pathways towards his aspirations.

If I am going to do my master’s degree or further my education in another country, I would have, due to the course, met people from other cultures and would have interacted with different people. A skill that I will need when I travel abroad (Interview, 19/02/2019, M22).

One of the main things that I learnt is that while we were talking about peace, it is possible to ‘LIVE (intonation) the concept of peace’. There were students who had so diverse opinions, cultures, nationalities, and even Syrians from the same country, but who were so different and had so different opinions. However, when we discussed issues, we were ‘ok’ with all those opinions and ideas. There was a mood of acceptance (Interview, 18/02/2019, M23).

In other words, the courses Mahmoud enrolled in have provided him with skills and experiences that are needed if he is one day to travel outside Jordan and pursue his studies

abroad. The exposure to people from different cultures and backgrounds and enhancing one's 'acceptance towards the others' is a fundamental skill that he knew to be valuable. These courses have also been somewhat empowering, i.e., they were helpful in moving Mahmoud slightly towards his aspirations, in two other ways.

6.4.4.2 Shifting away from authoritarian instructor-led approaches.

Mahmoud was exposed for the first time, during both BL courses, to learning approaches that were based on principles of providing learners with opportunities to express themselves freely and openly. Mahmoud described the approach very precisely, which indicated that he had never experienced such an approach before.

The learning approach that was followed during the peacebuilding course allowed us to speak up, freely and openly. They would tell us “speak up, say whatever you want, no one would stop you from saying your opinion. Everyone has an opinion and he is free to express it. You are free to say whatever you want; no one would interrupt you or tell you directly and, in your face, you are wrong”. That is why, we discussed, argued, exchanged opinions, but we did not debate. (Interview, 18/02/2019, M24).

At this point, it is worthwhile to mention that this spirit of acceptance and inclusion is not common within most Arab countries, and definitely not within the school system.

Noncompliance with mainstream ideas and opinions is mostly not acceptable. There is a lot of sensitivity. “We are Arabs, when sensitive issues are tackled, then there is NO (intonation) acceptance AT ALL” (Interview, 18/02/2019, M25). These words provide a further indication of how important those learning styles and approaches are when delivering BL for refugee youth.

Again, it is important to be able to appreciate the importance of such an indirect impact of the BL programmes and it is important to put the words in context. Mahmoud had suffered from a very outdated, authoritarian, and instructor-led schooling system, where rote memorisation was the norm and blind obedience was the expectation. He was not provided, even at secondary level, with reasons for studying specific subjects, and there were no options or choices of subject areas. Again, being a person driven by passion, Mahmoud was annoyed that he had to study subjects he does not relate to at all. Within the Arab public schooling system, there are on the whole no channels for students to raise their voice, express their opinions, or ask for change.

We were learning the basics in Syria, but here I was exposed to a much higher level, or a different level. For instance, in the humanitarian subjects, the students had learnt a great deal about the history of their country; I did not have a clue about that. I did not have the required knowledge base like all other costudents. I was exposed to a huge amount of new knowledge that I was asked to grasp during a very short period of time. And you are asked to learn and grasp all that, although you might not be interested. I, personally, was not interested in the history of Jordan (Interview, 18/02/2019, M26).

This is a clear indication that the learning styles that are based on collaborative learner-centred approaches were totally new to Mahmoud. Again, if Mahmoud is to be successful one day and find a scholarship to pursue his graduate studies abroad, he will carry those valuable, new experiences with him, as they will be very much needed in his new context. However, even if he stays in Jordan, the BL programme will have provided him with some enjoyable and constructive learning experiences that have changed his perceptions about education and how it should be delivered.

On the other hand, Mahmoud's experience of being exposed to different teaching and learning styles shows that refugee youth very much appreciate any opportunity to be heard, respected, and included. In other words, even if refugees had been exposed during their previous schooling to teacher-centred rote learning based on authoritarian teaching approaches, that experience does not mean that they do not expect and appreciate learner-centred constructive teaching approaches that are based on learner respect.

6.5 Does Blended Learning Help Mahmoud to Overcome Restrictive 'Rules of the Game?'

Like Samed, Mahmoud spoke very vocally about restrictive legislative regulations that dictate his life, constrain his options, and limit his ability to move forward. Mahmoud's frustration had to do with his legal status as a refugee, a status that does not allow him to work, to be employed or even to enrol in training that is related to a field of study (in his case, engineering).

You are not allowed to work in the same field of your studies. ...There are certain job categories that are open for refugees; however, these are not suitable for someone who has been studying for 5 or 6 years. Those jobs are, for instance, to work as a

janitor or porter. I do respect those who work in those jobs; however, my question is, why should I work in a specialisation that is not mine (Interview, 19/02/2019, M27).

In almost ALL, ALL, ALL (repeated three times) cases, when you go and want to be employed, they would tell you that the open vacancies are exclusive for Jordanians. (Laughing) Can you imagine, this requirement comes 'built in' in each and every job advertisement that you would read in the country (Interview, 19/02/2019, M28).

As a Syrian, I am even not allowed to engage in training that is essential to graduate. Just engaging in training. I AM NOT ALLOWED (very frustrated tone). (Interview, 19/02/2019, M29).

What should I tell you, after my graduation, I am not allowed to do ANYTHING (intonation), not even to get a driver's licence (Interview, 18/02/2019, M30).

Those restrictive regulations impacted Mahmoud greatly. They impacted his decisions, his preferences, his choices, his future vision, and his current perception of the programmes and projects that are made available, e.g., the BL programmes provided for refugees. Mahmoud viewed all those “*brilliant and amazing*” courses (M31), be they blended, online or conventional, and all the diverse learning options that are out there for refugees in Jordan as a mere “*waste of money*” (M31), because the constraints around them do not enable the course graduates to utilise the skills and knowledge they have gained. Mahmoud was of the view that there is another way to help the refugees.

Instead of spending and wasting all that money on all those brilliant and amazing educational programmes, donors should implement one huge project in which the refugees can be recruited. The revenue or profit that results from such a project can then fund educational programmes. This way, you will turn people from mere consumers to producers. Now refugees graduate and either stay at home or do work in a completely different area than the one that they have been studying. If you do such a project, you invest in the human capital, instead of wasting it. I KNOW (frustrating tone) this will face the stumbling rock of 'Jordanian labour regulations' (Interview, 19/02/2019, M31).

Mahmoud's words provided an eloquent description of his frustrations and daily concerns. However, the crucial question that should be asked here is “How can BL programmes help in overcoming those restrictive circumstances?” There are a couple of actions that can be

undertaken to transform the offered BL programmes into more empowering capabilities that help in overcoming those restrictive rules of the game. Different players could undertake some of these steps, as discussed next:

6.5.1 Programme providers.

It is crucial that programme providers incorporate those circumstances and factors (e.g., MoL legislation) during the design phase of any programme.

Skills training courses or educational programmes targeting Syrian refugees should take into account restrictions imposed by the MoL regarding Syrians' inclusion in the Jordanian labour market. These programmes should aim to identify key areas in the Jordanian economy where non-Jordanians are permitted to work and provide highly specialised and rigorous training in the required skills, in order to make Syrians more eligible for vacant job positions, thus improving their competitive advantage. (Edraak, 2017, p. 3)

6.5.2 The Jordanian government.

There are actually two very important steps that can be undertaken to turn the already offered and available courses into empowering capabilities. The first involves partnering with “higher education institutions and academic content providers to promote post-secondary educational programs to Syrians” (Edraak, 2017, p. 4). Such a step, if linked properly to the labour market needs would not only enhance the livelihoods of many Syrian youth, but also benefit the Jordanian economy as a whole (Edraak, 2017).

The second, more crucial step, involves giving official recognition and accreditation to the available BL programmes. In fact, there is a lot that needs to be done in that direction. First, there is the need to change the prevalent perception that ‘recognition’ is linked only to the labour market and to further education.

Recognition involves both the processes that foster empowerment, choice and individual agency, and the creation of opportunities that refugee youth and adults can exploit, given their personal and social circumstances. Helping realize the potential of Syrian refugees must involve the cultivation of individual agency and motivation to learn and the provision of meaningful opportunities. (Singh, Idris, & Chebab, 2018, pp.15-16)

In other words, the recognition of BL programmes is important in its own right, as it is a route to empowerment and “a means of enhancing individual capabilities and competences (Singh et al., 2018, p. 16). Moreover, accreditation of BL programmes and recognition of their certificates will address the reluctance of Syrians to enrol in those courses (Edraak, 2017) and will provide those programmes with very much needed legitimisation.

6.6 Does Blended Learning Impact Mahmoud’s Resource Profile Positively?

As was done in the previous chapter which looked at the case of Samed, this chapter seeks to shed some light on Mahmoud’s resources prior to and then after his enrolment in the BL programmes. Three agency-based resources emerged during Mahmoud’s interviews: his English language skills, his confidence level and speaking skills, and his employability skills.

6.6.1 English language skills.

Before mentioning how the BL programme impacted Mahmoud’s English skills, it is important to draw a picture of his efforts to develop his skills in general, with a specific focus on his English skills prior to his enrolment in the HOPES course, as developing those skills was quite a long journey. Mahmoud’s refugee journey, his experiences within the second shift¹⁶ school, and his efforts to adapt and integrate taught him a tough lesson.

When you leave your country and you are in diaspora you have to realise that you cannot depend on anyone's support, you have to depend on yourself (Interview, 18/02/2019, M32).

Back there in Syria, all members of the extended family lived near each other and we gathered often. I had very close relationships to my cousins and nephews, which has been really nice. But now, we learnt to be more independent. You cannot in your new context depend on those around you. Everyone has to depend on himself (Interview, 18/02/2019, M33).

Having developed such an independent and persistent personality, Mahmoud was eager to pursue his learning. He was aware that his previous educational experience had not developed the skill set and the knowledge base that he should have had at this point. He decided to depend on himself and his capabilities through self-directed learning. His life’s motto has been “If you do not develop yourself, no one would do it for you” (Interview, 18/02/2019, M34).

¹⁶ In Jordan second shift schools are designated to be attended only by Syrian refugees, while the first shift is attended by Jordanian children.

Driven by that motto, he decided that his time online would be devoted to the sole purpose of learning. Chatting and connecting to his extended family who were now scattered around the globe constituted only one tiny part of his online time, as the majority was education-focused. He explained that the reason behind that choice is his eagerness to understand, to broaden his knowledge, and simply to learn.

I study almost everything using YouTube. Tutoring at my university is really good, I cannot complain, but there are always some points or aspects that are not 100% covered. This is because I am not behind just a certificate, but I want to learn, to understand (Interview, 18/02/2019, M35).

This is a clear indication that in the case of Mahmoud, as with Samed, YouTube played a large role in his endeavour to develop his skills and increase his knowledge base. However, the phrase “*I am not behind just a certificate, but I want to learn, to understand*” is also indicative of the fact that Mahmoud values education and knowledge in their own right, even if that learning is not attached to a specific certificate. This valuing of education for its own sake explains Mahmoud’s (and maybe also Samed’s) eagerness to develop the skills he needs through independent learning, a route which does not lead to certification of one’s learning attainment.

When it comes to his English language skills, Mahmoud needed to see some improvement in a short time. However, this did not happen when he tried to enhance his English on his own. He, therefore, enrolled in some courses. However, his efforts to enhance his English via conventional courses was not challenge-free, and he encountered some failures.

When I came to Jordan my English was not bad, but slightly above bad. School did not help in developing my language skills; therefore, I enrolled in an ordinary traditional centre, and paid for the course. But as you know, in our Arab World the centres are following mostly rote memorisation and teacher-centred approaches. Moreover, there is a huge emphasis on grammar and not so much focus on speaking and listening (Interview, 18/02/2019, M36).

Driven by his motto “*If you do not develop yourself, no one would do that for you*” (M34), Mahmoud decided to try again, but this time with a more well-respected organisation, i.e., the British Council.

Then I studied at the British Council. I took a 4-month course. It was actually that course that impacted me very much. I took it 3 years ago. I then entered the IELTS exam. Although, I only scored a 5 on the exam, but for me this was a great achievement. Since that time, I am working very hard on improving my English (Interview, 18/02/2019, M37).

What Mahmoud needed was this positive boost in his confidence. Encouraged by his achievement, he was then ready to strive further through self-learning. He had needed to be assured that he is, at the end of the day, not so “bad”.

Since that time (i.e., scoring a 5 on the IELTS exam), I started to do everything and anything possible to improve my English. I listen to English music, watch English movies, read English articles. I just do ANYTHING, ANYTHING (repetition with intonation) (Interview, 18/02/2019, M38).

After having reached the intermediate level of English language skills through those efforts, Mahmoud decided to enrol in a more specialised course on business English, i.e., the HOPES course. Concurrently, he applied to the SKY School. Mahmoud clearly affirmed that both courses impacted his English language level positively, but that the British Council course, because of its focus on language and specifically on business English, had a greater impact. Mahmoud viewed this enhancement in his language skills as one of the greatest outcomes of attending the HOPES BL course. In some way, i.e., indirectly, the course was empowering, as it could be linked to his ultimate endeavour to study engineering.

When it comes to assessing the impact of HOPES and if it has been a step forward, towards reaching my aspiration, I would say, it helped me to reach my aspirations, but in an indirect way. Most of the material covered in the course, especially when it comes to the online material, was about business English; you know there are common expressions and terminologies between both fields: business and engineering. This was of huge value to me. I learnt a lot of expressions and vocabularies. Videos played the biggest role in acquiring those English skills. I value the online component of the course, as it provided a lot of visual material (Interview 14/03/2019, M39).

A number of observations that can be deduced from Mahmoud’s journey:

- 1- Mahmoud resorted to a mixed strategy to enhance his English language skills that combined self-directed learning and enrolment in courses.

- 2- Mahmoud needed some assurances that his efforts were moving in the right direction, to confidently engage in self-directed learning.
- 3- YouTube played a major role in Mahmoud's learning journey.
- 4- Mahmoud viewed the improvement of his specialised English to be an indirect step towards reaching his aspiration.
- 5- Mahmoud perceived his HOPES course to have been indirectly empowering.
- 6- Mahmoud perceived videos as having been very effective in acquiring English language skills.

6.6.2 Confidence and public speaking skills.

Mahmoud saw a clear enhancement in his confidence and speaking skills after his enrolment in the SKY School course. Again, his previous education, that was based on teacher-centred approaches and on rote memorisation, had not helped in developing those skills, skills that are so crucial if he is to pursue his education in a developed country.

Before enrolling in the peacebuilding course, when I was asked to talk to a stranger, step up on the stage, or give a short speech, I could not do that; I lacked the confidence. I would shiver and tremble. I was not able to talk to a stranger, like you now, someone I'd just got to know, and, if I did, I would need every couple of seconds to pause and drink water. Previously, I would feel very frustrated when talking to people I'd just got to know. Now I have the full confidence to talk in front of a public, without trembling (Interview, 18/02/2019, M40).

Enhancing confidence and complex skills such as the oral skills is the fruit of implementing constructive, cooperative, learner-centred, and inclusive learning approaches that provide learners with ample opportunities to speak up and express themselves.

The teaching strategy of the SKY School course was based on group work, and each time everyone would join another group so that he gets to know all those in the cohort. They were very clever that we do not intermingle only with one of our friends, because if this happens then the learner would not benefit from the course. This way you would get to know all of the students, you interact with all of them, befriend all of them, and you speak to all of them. It was very collaborative with lots of fun group assignments (Interview, 18/02/2019, M41).

What Mahmoud narrates here is not new, as there is considerable evidence “that working cooperatively increases students' self-esteem, their ability to work independently and use their autonomy” (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Slavin, 1991, as cited in Muttaqin, 2016, pp.3-4). However, his comments are an affirmation of the paramount importance of implementing cooperative, learner-centred approaches when delivering BL programmes, as it is only through this teaching approach that youth will feel engaged, included, and motivated to learn. Building confidence and self-esteem has always been important, but it becomes even more important, when it comes to dealing with refugees who have undergone traumatic events.

6.6.3 The development of employability skills.

Mahmoud perceived the development of skills that are essential to entering the labour market to have been a great benefit of attending the HOPES course. He appreciated very much the development of his skills in terms of being able to write a resume, a motivation letter, and a letter of interest. All those were new to him. Additionally, the course developed his presentation skills, e.g., how to present a project, how to pitch an idea, and how to write a proposal. Public schools in the Arab Middle East usually do not touch on those skills, not even at high school level. The development of those employability skills took place alongside the development and enhancement of skills needed in the workplace, e.g., group work, collaboration, and communication skills (*Interview, 14/03/2019, M42*).

It might be argued that those skills are worthless as long as refugees in Jordan are not allowed to work and to enter the job market. However, there are two counterarguments here:

- 1) Those skills are useful, irrespective of the labour market and the restrictions to work in the formal sector because writing of a resume, a motivation letter, or cover letter is needed for other purposes such as applying for scholarships, internships or just to market oneself on professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn).
- 2) There has been in the last 2 years (2017-2018) some progress in widening the provision of work permits for Syrians due to the commitments of the Jordan Compact.

The Compact has opened up a route to legal work for Syrian refugees living in Jordan, pledging jobs to refugees in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and giving Syrian refugees the right to work in specific sectors through work permits...By October 2017 some 71,000 [work permits] had been issued [to Syrians in Jordan]. (Barbelet et al., 2018, p. 4)

In view of the fact that there has now been some minor progress in issuing work permits for Syrians (due to the Jordan Compact commitments), it is more urgent than ever to align BL

programmes with the right skills to empower SRY, either by paving the way to the labour market or into further education.

CHAPTER 7

THIRD CASE – AMANI NABIL

7.1 Overview

This chapter deals with the only female case within this investigation. Her case sheds light on another interesting and crucial aspect of the realities of SRY. While chapters 5 and 6 explored the different personalities and aspirations of two young male Syrian refugees, this chapter provides the reader with greater insight into the impact of gender on refugees' empowerment and the attendant factors that may impede female empowerment. To a great extent, societal expectations, shaped through traditions and norms, influence the lives, realities, aspirations, and abilities of Syrian refugee females to achieve their goals and functionings. Kleine (2009a) has alerted researchers to the idea that an 'axis of exclusion', gender being one of them, has to be taken into consideration and analysed in order to provide readers with a rigorous picture of the context. In fact, this axis made itself crystal clear with each new interview and each new encounter with Amani. This chapter, therefore, enriches our understanding on how patriarchal traditions and norms that dictate the lives of Syrian females negatively impact their abilities to benefit from available educational opportunities.

7.2 Introduction to Amani's Profile

I was referred to Amani by a professor at the University of Yarmouk who delivered, as part of his curriculum, some BL courses. I had asked him to see if some of his students who have a refugee status would be willing to take part in this research and engage in some interview sessions, but none had been willing. As a result of sending out a number of reminders and further attempts, one of the professor's students referred him to Amani, who had enrolled and completed some BL courses provided by Kiron (see below). I contacted her and she was very open to taking part in the research. Three, 157-minute-long voice-recorded Skype interviews were conducted with Amani during December and January 2019. Interviews consisted of 1) baseline questionnaire questions, 2) depth semistructured interview questions, and 3) vignettes. Amani felt more comfortable doing the interview sessions in Arabic. Like all other interviewees, I informed Amani at the start of the interview sessions about the research goals, processes, and her rights, as well as the provision of a customised consultation session related to her educational options, as an incentive.

Amani was 19 years old and had just started to study business administration at the Luminos Community College/Amman. Together with her family, Amani had left Syria 8 years before. They settled in Irbid, the second largest city in northern Jordan. Amani finished her high school in Jordan in a public (second shift) school. Amani had enrolled during spring 2018 in four BL courses: 1) business administration, 2) English, 3) computer science, and 4) social work. She started college midway through her BL courses.

7.3 Background to Kiron Blended Learning Programme

The BL programme Amani enrolled in was developed and delivered through a partnership between Kiron Open Higher Education for Refugees¹⁷ and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD). JOHUD was the organisation responsible for the learning centre where the f2f meetings took place, the center's staff, and its activities (Church, personal communication, March 4, 2018)¹⁸. Kiron, a nonprofit organisation that has its headquarters in Berlin and an office in Jordan aims to help refugees access HE learning opportunities by combining digital innovation with on-the-ground partnerships. Kiron provided the platform along with all related learning material. English was the language of instruction.

The courses consisted of f2f meetings that took place at Basma Center three times a week for each course. As there was no conflict in terms of the timing of all of those meetings Amani was able to enrol in all four courses concurrently. There were weekly online assignments that had to be submitted on the Kiron platform. Kiron delivered the courses using Google Classroom, a platform that facilitates collaboration, submitting assignments, and fostering communication.

7.4 Is Blended Learning, in the Case of Amani, an Empowering Capability?

7.4.1 Amani's aspirations.

¹⁷ Kiron Open Higher Education for Refugees is a social start-up that was founded in 2015 with the goal of reducing existing barriers to higher education for refugees through digital learning and support services (Global Forum on Migration & Development ,n.d.). Kiron Open Higher Education (Kiron) is a German-based nonprofit edtech organisation promoting the use of digital solutions in higher education to enable free access to higher education and successful learning for refugees worldwide. In order to overcome the barriers refugees face, they can start studying with Kiron by participating in a digital study program based on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) with the ultimate aim to transfer to a regular offline study program at one of Kiron's partner universities with Kiron credits recognised (Suter & Rampelt, 2017).

¹⁸ Allison Church, Director of Regional Programme, MENA and Country Manager, Jordan

Prior to moving to Irbid in Jordan, Amani lived in Dera'a, a rural area that is famous for its conservative lifestyle¹⁹. Nevertheless, her family appreciated education and would provide anything that was needed so that their sons and daughters would get a “good education” (Interview, 27/01/2019, A1). This “family culture”, as she called it, of valuing education impacted Amani throughout her life. She developed a very clear perception of the role and importance of education.

All kind[s] of education empower people greatly. Education is like a wide ocean; it has no boundaries, and, therefore, each level adds up to one's skills and experiences and the next level would add more and more; there is no ending to that process. This process widens one's knowledge, one's intellect. It has a start but no ending (Interview, 25/01/2019, A2).

Growing up in a family that viewed education as a core capability, Amani viewed education not just as a goal and a purpose, but also as a path towards other aspired functionings.

I really want one day to be able to travel, to travel around the world, starting with Turkey. Don't ask me why; I just love it. I am fully aware that I need to take a lot of steps prior to being able to travel. EDUCATION (very strong intonation) is what will make my dreams possible. But, EDUCATION (intonation) is in itself a goal, a very clear goal (strong intonation). I want to gain knowledge, more and more knowledge and to develop my skills. Having provided a picture of my 'big dream', I can also tell you about my smaller one that branches out from that tree-trunk: to finish my 2-year college, enter university, and find a job that is in alignment with my potentials. But at the end, gaining knowledge and developing skills is the main goal (Interview, 25/01/2019, A3).

The previous statement highlights clearly that education is not just an aspiration, but also an end in itself. This point was re-emphasised when Amani said:

I have a purpose and my purpose is to enhance my knowledge and skills. I am very passionate to learn more and more and excel in my studies until I reach high levels of education. I now consider education to be my path (Interview, 25/01/2019, A4).

¹⁹ For more information about the position and role of women in rural Syria, see Ellis, E. (2016, June). Women from rural Syria believe childbirth is their only role, specialist tells conference in Vancouver. *Vancouver Sun*. Retrieved from <https://vancouversun.com/news/national/women-from-rural-syria-believe-childbirth-is-their-only-role-specialist-tells-conference>

Amani did not restrict her aspirations to a specific degree or educational level. Her aspirations were of a generic nature, i.e., to enhancing her knowledge and skills. In this sense, her aspirations differed from those of Samed and Mahmoud, whose goals were bound up with the achievement of a specific degree and bound in with the conventional educational system. Amani's aspirations were more fluid, allowing her to view any learning opportunity as a valuable opportunity and an effective step forward. Viewing education in its generality to be as open as an ocean, where each new knowledge acquisition or skill development leads to new horizons and levels, impacted on her perception on how beneficial, useful, effective, and empowering the BL programmes she enrolled in have been.

The formation of those generic aspirations has been, and can be, explained by analysing the gender axis (to use Kleine's, 2009a terminology). Being a female, coming from a conservative context where norms and traditions play a fundamental role, Amani was not expected to one day be a breadwinner.

Here, in my surrounding community, females rarely work and it is not common to find them going out to support the male breadwinner. They either study or enter marriage. This is what is accepted, according to our traditions (Interview, 27/01/2019, A5).

In other words, the pressure Samed and Mahmoud felt, because they were expected to support their families financially, was absent in the case of Amani. While Samed and Mahmoud needed a degree to find a promising and dignifying job, Amani was studying for the sake of learning and being educated. Societal expectations differ according to gender and are more impacted by norms, customs, and traditions than by laws that have established equal rights. According to the Syrian constitution, women have been granted equal rights with men since 1949, i.e., they were granted the right "to control their own assets, own property and manage their own businesses" (Hilton, 2017). However, culturally "their roles and responsibilities continued to be largely confined to the home" (Hilton, 2017). Those cultural norms "govern the lives of the females and even their family members rather than the laws and sometimes rather than the religion" (Habib, 2018, p. 3). Research conducted in 2016 by UN Women found that only 6% of Syrian women in Jordan were employed. A survey conducted a year later, i.e., in 2017, by WANA Institute, found out that this percentage had reached 8%, but with only 2% being full-time employees (WANA Institute, 2018).

It is worth mentioning that Amani's aspirations, besides being very generic and strong, were primarily internalised, as she lacked external encouragement from her family, who were neutral when it came to her enrolment in BL programmes.

When it came to the enrolment in the BL courses, I had very limited support; my self-motivation has been stronger than any support or driving force around me (Interview, 25/01/2019, A6).

It was clear that, had it not been for her internal self-motivation, she would not have enrolled in the courses. No one around her knew about this innovative learning mode, nor did anyone encourage her to go and discover more about it. In short, Amani possessed what Tiwari (2011) described as "strong aspirations that become the driver for achieving the valued functionings" (p. 5). It is due to those strong, generic, and internal motivations that she enrolled in all four BL programmes simultaneously and overcame a set of problems and challenges to complete the courses. Amani's case demonstrates the necessity not only of investigating the absence or lack of motivations, but additionally of analysing their nature.

7.4.2 Blended learning: A feasible opportunity.

7.4.2.1 The economic factor.

The courses that Amani took were all free and students were even provided with stipends to pay for any additional costs such as transportation. The stipends were crucial because the learning centre was not close to Amani's home.

To be honest, the fact that the courses were offered for free played a big role in my decision to enrol. I am already paying fees for the community college. I would not be able to pay for two different learning settings (Interview, 24/01/2019, A7).

As mentioned earlier, providing BL programmes in the context of SRY in Jordan for free is crucial. SRY are suffering from acute economic circumstances that hinder their ability to pay for any supplementary learning programmes, especially if they do not lead to formal recognised certificates.

7.4.2.2 The time factor.

Amani gained a place at college while midway through her BL courses. There was a time conflict between the courses and her classes at college. Instead of quitting the courses, she

resolved the situation. She was so passionate about them and sensed their value that she took the following action:

I handed an apology for nonattendance for a semester at the community college until I have completed the BL courses. The college administration accepted my apology, and when I finished my BL courses, I started my studies at the community college (Interview, 24/01/2019, A8).

Amani's case provides a clear example of the interaction and mutual relationship between the personal traits (human-based agency resources) of the learner and the BL programme. In the case of Amani, this relationship can be envisioned as a spiral relationship. Positive family attitudes towards education led to a view that education is empowering. In turn, that perception led to Amani's strong aspirations to enhance her knowledge and to develop the skills needed to reach higher and higher levels. Driven by those aspirations, Amani enrolled in all four courses concurrently. The BL programmes were effectively delivered, which contributed to feelings that they were valuable. Amani was satisfied and motivated to engage in the courses and to find solutions that would not compromise her attendance. Her determination was an additional factor that impacted her actions towards finding a solution. Her problem-solving skills helped her to find a satisfactory way to resolve the time conflicts that arose from trying to attend so many courses at once (i.e., sending an apology letter to the college).

7.4.2.3 The location and facilities factor.

Basma Center, where the f2f meetings took place, was far from Amani's home. She had to pay for transportation, but the offered stipend helped to overcome that challenge. However, the center's premises were not convenient and the center lacked a lot of necessary equipment.

The course providers paid us a stipend that was really very limited, but was enough to pay the transportation to the center. The courses themselves were for free. I live far away from Basma Center. However, at the center we suffered from electricity outage and the center lacked sufficient microphones, plugs.... We wish that the center would provide sufficient equipment and ones that are of a higher standard and more up-to-date. The center was not a learning center, per se, as it was initially a recruitment centre, a centre for logistics services (issuance of IDs, issuance of legal documents.). There was also a gym next to the room where we met. (Interview, 24/01/2019, A9).

Again, Amani's case provides further evidence that SRY are ready to adapt and accommodate to whatever facilities they are provided with, as long as the courses that they are offered are free and do not cause them any economic hardship. However, it is very important also to mention here that refugees are ready to accommodate and adapt, as long as they can envision a value in those courses.

7.4.2.4 The information factor.

Amani heard about the offered courses first from a friend (i.e., through word of mouth), but as she was not so sure about the authenticity of those courses, she resorted to social media to read more about them, their requirements, and details.

When a friend told me about the offered courses, I went online and did an intensive search. I needed to understand more, more about the provider, the topics, the enrolment requirements Social media was a good place to find needed information. The JRS Facebook page is an important outlet for us, refugees. Only, when I felt that I have a good understanding of what will be offered and what is to be expected I went to the centre and enrolled (Interview, 24/01/2019, A10).

An extensive discussion on the centrality of social media as an information channel providing refugees with updated information about educational offerings is provided in chapter 8. The discussion also deals with the reasons behind SRY position the JRS Facebook page as their primary information channel on learning opportunities.

7.4.3 Blended learning: An unfavourable opportunity.

When asked to provide a preference list of learning options, Amani provided the list below. However, her list emphasises and reflects her personal preferences rather than any real choices she has taken in her life. The order of learning options, according to Amani's preferences, was as follows: 1) traditional conventional HE options, 2) BL courses, 3) online courses, and 4) studying abroad through scholarship options (*Interview, 27/01/2019, A11*).

7.4.3.1 Conventional HE.

Having undergone the experience of enrolling and completing a set of BL courses, and being now a student at a conventional college, provided Amani with the confidence to compare both learning modes.

The traditional mode of learning is much more beneficial for me and for most of people, due to its social and psychological impact. The traditional mode comprises all different aspects a person would need to grow, while the blended format of learning is lacking some of those aspects, especially the social aspects of engaging with people in real life. Those social aspects are fundamental components of learning. This is why I lean more towards and prefer the traditional format of learning. This is why most of people like and learn through the traditional mode of learning, which is also why it is the most common form of education in society (Interview, 25/01/2019, A12).

Like Mahmoud, Amani valued and appreciated the human interaction that takes place in a conventional (bricks and mortar) educational institution. She emphasised clearly that this kind of human interaction has social and psychological impacts that help learners to grow. She saw those interactions as occurring at their fullest in conventional traditional learning settings. It is also observable that she clearly indicated that this is not a “*personal preference*” but rather a “*societal one*”, i.e., one that is held by most people within her surroundings.

7.4.3.2 BL programmes.

While her sister and most of her friends enrolled in only one or two courses, Amani enrolled in all four of the offered BL courses. However, BL, even if accessible and affordable, does not constitute Amani’s first learning choice 1) due to her preference to be engaged in conventional learning settings (A12) and 2) due to the impact of mainstream perceptions and attitudes within her community.

The blended learning is not useful for everyone. I do believe that the traditional educational mode is more beneficial, as it has more components and is more comprehensive. This is also the belief of so many (Interview, 25/01/2019, A13).

While Mahmoud spoke of online and BL programmes as being of “*less value*”, Amani used the words “*less beneficial, not useful for everyone*”. Both described this as a mainstream, societal perception and not a personal one. Both emphasised that these perceptions are to be understood as consequences resulting from lack of human interaction and, as Amani put it, the “*fundamental social and psychological components of learning*”. Their comments are a clear indication of how much mainstream perceptions played a role in Mahmoud’s and Amani’s opinions and preferences.

7.4.3.3 Online programmes.

Like Mahmoud and Samed, Amani did not own a personal laptop and had to share her sister's. Being dependent on a device made online learning less favourable. In addition, depending on small mobile screens to submit assignments was not very convenient. Therefore, Amani could imagine how uncomfortable and difficult fully online course would be:

Enrolling in an online course, one that is fully online, would be difficult for me, because it would mean following up with lectures and assignments on a digital screen, something that I hate. During the BL course, I was following up some of the assignments and lectures using a mobile device, which was inconvenient, I feel more comfortable working on the wider screen (Interview, 27/01/2019, A14).

In short, the dependence on technical devices such as laptops that are not always accessible or on smartphones that provide access to material through a smaller screen made the online component of BL rather inconvenient for Amani. While all three cases owned smartphones, and could access the material via those, that fact does not mean that they all find online a comfortable learning experience.

7.4.3.4 Studying abroad/scholarships.

Placing studying abroad at the bottom of her preference list might be viewed as being in contradiction with Amani's dream to "travel around the world" (A3). However, this ranking can be understood by considering two factors: 1) her age and limited experience and 2) her fear of 'Islamophobic' trends in 'western' countries. First, Amani who was 19-years old during the interviews, had never travelled to any country other than Jordan. Having graduated from a single-gender (all-girls) school which she attended up to grade 12 and then having attended a second shift school in Jordan, i.e., an all-Syrian school, indicated that she had had very little opportunity to engage with students from the opposite gender and from multicultural ethnic backgrounds. These limited experiences might explain her decision to put options that would expose her alone to totally different and foreign contexts, without her usual family support, at the bottom of her list. Additionally, she expressed concern about living in a country that might be discriminatory against Muslim females wearing the hijab.

In case I am offered a scholarship, I would not want to travel to any other country, other than Turkey. Turkey is, culturally speaking, closer to us. If I would travel there, I would not encounter any prejudice or discrimination. This is important for me, as I

am wearing the hijab. In Turkey, there are a lot of Muslims living there (Interview, 27/01/2019, A15).

Given the reasons mentioned above, positioning BL second on Amani's preference list is very logical. On the one hand, BL comprises partial and very much needed and appreciated human interactions during the learning experience, and, on the other hand, BL does not expose her to contexts that are totally outside her comfort zone, e.g., studying in a country that might have Islamophobic tendencies. BL proved to be somewhat of a middle option, coming between the highly favourable conventional learning settings and the least preferred scholarship option.

The following are some important points worth noting:

- 1) The human interaction that occurs during a learning experience is very much valued for its sociopsychological implications.
- 2) The perception that online courses are of 'less benefit' is, according to Amani, a mainstream one.
- 3) Online courses are not viewed as a favourable option because of their dependence on devices that are either not very accessible or not comfortable to use.
- 4) While all three cases own a smartphone and were using it for accessing the BL material and submitting assignments, using a smartphone is not a very comfortable option for all.
- 5) Amani, being a female who wears the hijab, found studying abroad the least favourable option, due to her concerns about being exposed to discrimination and prejudice.

7.4.4 Blended learning: An empowering capability?

The analysis below attempts to discover if the four feasible courses that Amani enrolled in were empowering, i.e., helped her to enhance her knowledge and develop her skills and, ultimately, be the person she wants to be and live the life she wants to live. It is argued that the courses Amani enrolled in have actually brought her nearer to her aspirations. Besides the generic knowledge constructions and new skills Amani acquired through the courses, some experiences actually helped her to proceed with her endeavours. Amani's case is the only case where a direct link could be found between what had been offered nonformally in a blended mode and the formal, conventional HE setting.

7.4.4.1 The determination of college major.

When Amani started her BL courses, she was not sure what major she should choose in college. She was interested in business administration, but was not so sure if this was the best

fit for her. Her knowledge about the major and what it entails were really limited. Enrolling in the business administration BL course had a huge impact on her determining, with great confidence, her future major. In other words, the BL course helped Amani to take an informed decision related to the direction of her HE.

The business administration BL course provided me with insight into this field of study. This was very helpful. I realised how passionate I am about the major; I discovered that through the assignments, the lectures and even the assessments. Now, here I am studying business administration at college (proud tone)
(Interview, 25/01/2019, A16).

To appreciate this impact, it is important to be reminded that in the Arab World the whole concept of student academic counselling that is prevalent in Europe and the United States is nonexistent. Students who graduate from high school are mostly at a loss and would mainly rely on experiences of other college students or their parents' advice when deciding on what to study at the HE level. It is for this reason that Amani found her enrolment in the courses at this critical time in her life to have been very valuable.

Amani's case is an indicative example about how a nonformal BL programme could be empowering for SRY, by providing services that are generally unavailable to them such as the provision of pre-enrolment counselling, learning support (e.g., the services of writing centres), and general student life counselling. In other words, complementary services, while not directly linked to academic progress and development, are crucial support arms that could be offered through BL programmes.

7.4.4.2 The construction of knowledge about online learning.

When Amani read about the courses, she had never heard about BL before. No one in her family had enrolled in any kind of learning that was unconventional, i.e., online or blended learning courses. When asking her about the number one impact of her online courses, she immediately replied:

The number one benefit from engaging in this experience, I would say, has been gaining knowledge about what is online learning, how to enrol, and how to engage in an online learning platform. I would say I am competent now when it comes to that.
(Interview, 24/01/2019, A17).

In order to understand why this benefit was ranked above all others, one has to remember the uncertain position these refugees are in. Amani herself, despite being a student at college, expressed clearly that she appreciated the chance to learn about other learning options which might be of huge value if things go wrong, i.e., if she is for any reason not able to continue her studies in a conventional college or university.

I wanted to have an idea about online learning. No one knows, maybe I would need this knowledge and skill one day in the future. Also, I might need the knowledge that I gained in those courses one day, maybe to find work. (Interview, 25/01/2019, A18).

This is an example of an empowering capability, of freedom or a valuable opportunity, and an expansion of choices. Amani's BL courses provided her with the freedom to choose between different learning options providing knowledge about those options, i.e., BL and online learning modes. Before enrolling in the courses, Amani had less freedom, less choice due to her lack of knowledge, but now since having enrolled in the courses and gained that substantively new knowledge, she has expanded her choices and her abilities to make informed decisions about different options and opportunities.

7.4.4.3 The construction of knowledge about diverse topics.

However, Amani also expressed very clearly her appreciation of being provided with an opportunity that led to widening her knowledge in diverse subject areas. She was specifically interested in business administration and English. The former aligned to her area of interest (the field of management and administration), while the second was selected because of a perceived need to enhance her English language skills. Amani enrolled in the other two courses, i.e., computer science and social work, driven by mere curiosity to know more about those subject areas. *"I am a very curious person by nature; therefore, I enrolled in all offered BL courses"* (Interview, 25/01/2019, A19).

Taking BL courses is very neatly aligned to her generic aspirations, i.e., to enhance knowledge and develop skills. Again, as mentioned before, having those generic aspirations impacted her perception of how empowering the courses she took have been. The newly acquired knowledge related to diverse subject areas and to unrelated topics can be considered to be a step forward towards her aspirations that were neither bound to a specific topic nor a specific educational setting.

7.5 Does Blended Learning Help Amani to Overcome Restrictive ‘Rules of the Game’?

7.5.1 Early and forced marriages.

The dominance of patriarchal mentalities and mindsets was repetitively reflected in Amani’s words and statements. She herself did not face a huge objection from her family when it came to continuing her education; yet, she was aware that she was blessed with a family that is “open-minded” (Interview, 25/01/2019, A20), and that this is not the case with all her friends and relatives. Amani was well aware that traditions might be counterforces that might hinder females from continuing their HE, even if online or blended. Those traditions are reflected in two particular areas: 1) early and forced marriages²⁰ and 2) gender segregation.

Forced marriages that are based on a patriarchal mindset were a common challenge for females in Amani’s society, as they hinder their ability to continue their education, even blended education.

Forced and early marriage is very common in my community. Especially after the crisis, we would see a lot of forced marriages. I have a friend who was forced to marry. Her husband was not open-minded and she was not allowed to continue her studies. She was divorced after a couple of months, and now she is at home, trying to continue her studies. She is open to any options; she wants to continue her education, to pursue her dream and exercise her ‘right’. We hear more of those instances happening in the camps more than in the cities. Families in the cities know now the importance and crucial role of education, much more than families residing in the camps (Interview, 25/01/2019, A21).

However, Amani herself was a reflection of how conservative and predominantly patriarchal traditions might shape decisions and reactions related to BL and educational options. Amani was provided with a vignette scenario of a lady that has to decide either to continue a BL course she has started or to enter into a marriage that has been arranged by her parents, who are suffering from pressing economic circumstances. Amani’s stance was clear: there are no

²⁰ “Child marriage, or early marriage, is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. Forced marriages are marriages in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union. A child marriage is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent” (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, n.d.).

compromises, when it comes to traditions and deeply rooted customs. One has to follow the “rules” (A22).

If this proposed young man is open-minded and agrees to let her attend the BL f2f meetings and complete her course, after marriage, then this situation is resolved. But if he does not agree, then she should still marry him. There is no third way, either she convinces her parents, or she marries this young man. This is how things work in our societies. We need to understand the ‘rules’ (Interview, 25/01/2019, A22).

This is a clear indication that despite having “open-minded” parents (A22), despite her strong perceptions of the importance of education, and despite being exposed to more nonconservative (i.e., mixed-gender) learning environments, traditions and norms still have a strong influence and leave clear imprints when it comes to educational choices. Amani’s opinion about how to resolve a situation where traditions conflict with the choice of engaging in BL demonstrates how restrictive and powerful those traditions are. Amani views the right action to be obeying and submitting to those “rules”, even if they limit one’s options and freedoms. BL is, in that sense, not very helpful in effectively overcoming restrictive rules of the game.

7.5.2 Gender segregation.

A patriarchal mentality in favour of *gender segregation* is another obstacle females have to face when it comes to enrolling in a BL course that comprises some f2f meetings attended by both genders.

There are some families that refuse their girls to go to the learning centre to attend the f2f meetings, because these meetings are attended by both genders. Those families would rather prefer to have the girls stay at home. This, of course, would hinder them to continue their education. Those families sometimes would go even so far as to force the girls to marry (Interview, 27/01/2019, A23).

This gender segregation extends from real life to the virtual world. The internet is perceived by some males in Amani’s society; i.e., Syrian refugees living in Irbid, as a public terrain that allows both genders to get to know each other, chat with each other and, thereby they perceive it to be counter to their aspired segregation. This perception very clear hinders opportunities for female SRY to enrol even in 100% online courses.

There is a clear impact of traditions on females' ICT usage in my society. I have a cousin; her male siblings do not allow her to use the social media or to browse the internet. She downloads everything in secret. (Interview, 27/01/2019, A24).

This is another obvious example about the power and widespread impact of deep-seated traditions that govern females' choices and learning options. Traditional patriarchal mentalities represent restrictive rules of the game and control females' ICT use, even when that usage is purely educational and does not entail any f2f encounter with the opposite sex. The interference of those norms (i.e., patriarchal mentalities) with females' choices to learn using the internet has limited the benefit of online learning options to a great extent. Those options might be perceived at first glance to be valuable options and opportunities, especially for marginalised refugee females, but this investigation illustrates that this is not so true due to deeply-rooted and steadfast Syrian norms and traditions. Traditions, as restrictive rules of the game, are so powerful that they render the online and the BL options not only not empowering, but even nonaccessible.

7.6 Does Blended Learning Impact Amani's Resource Profile Positively?

Again, as with in the case of Samed, some light will be shed on those resources that Amani possessed prior to and then after her enrolment in the BL courses. It was found that in her case the impact of the courses varied greatly when different agency-based resources were compared. The account below examines the two main agency-based resources that were impacted by Amani's enrolment in and engagement with the BL courses: English language and ICT skills.

Amani attended middle and high school in Jordanian public schools. According to Amani, in Syria there was more focus on providing students with French language competencies, while in Jordan English was the focus.

I tried to enhance my language in the past but was not very successful. First, I attended some courses, but those were focusing only on grammar and not on how to use the language for everyday life. But more importantly, I could not focus too much on enhancing my language, as I was preoccupied with finishing my high school. To try to enhance my language has been something that I needed to do (Interview, 24/01/2019, A25).

Amani was well aware that her English language needs improvement and, therefore, enrolled in the English BL course. She counted improvement of English and ICT skills to be the main skills she developed throughout the course.

The main competency that I gained and enhanced during the courses has been increasing my English language skills. Actually, I improved my English language, as well as my ICT skills, and it motivated me very much to learn more and more using the internet (Interview, 27/01/2019, A26).

I also learnt a lot from the computer science course. Now I am able and much more competent navigating the internet, browsing it, and using applications, I had no idea about all that at the beginning (Interview, 24/01/2019, A27).

Here, Amani is demonstrating how much her language and ICT skills improved due to the BL courses she attended. In other words, Amani viewed the courses as having had a positive impact on her human-agency resources; she also believes that there has been a large improvement in the way those skills have developed. We need to put language and its importance in context in order to be able to evaluate the importance of that improvement. Developing the language (English) that is mostly used to access learning material, to browse the media, and to follow up with international reports builds “a solid educational foundation that serves them [refugee students] for the rest of their lives” (British Council, 2018, para. 4).

CHAPTER 8

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

Through a case-by-case analysis, the previous three chapters articulated three accounts of BL experiences. Using a CA lens, these chapters examined whether the empowerment of SRY has been realised through their enrolment in this type of ICT-based learning. This analysis allowed salient themes to emerge and led to an in-depth understanding of the intersecting factors that played a role in achieving (or failing to achieve) aspired functionings. As mentioned previously, a qualitative case study approach was selected to highlight each case's peculiarity and to capture the multidimensional aspects of their realities. That peculiarity and uniqueness is not eclipsed or diminished through the cross-case analysis; rather, this form of analysis illuminates this investigation's discussion by bringing the three cases together. By placing all three cases next to each other and examining the three profiles comparatively, this chapter offers comprehensive answers to both the research's overarching and its subquestions, namely:

Does blended learning empower Syrian refugee youth living in Jordan?

1. Is blended learning, in the case of Syrian refugee youth, an empowering capability?
2. Does blended learning help Syrian refugee youth to overcome their restrictive 'rules of the game'?
3. Does blended learning improve Syrian refugee youth's resource portfolio?

This chapter adds to our understanding of the fundamental importance of observing and addressing the contextual rules of the game when designing educational programmes for refugees. Those programmes will not be able to help their end-beneficiaries to reach their aspired functionings, i.e., will not be empowering, if restrictive contexts and surrounding impediments are not fully addressed. This chapter provides sufficient evidence that it is not enough to offer feasible programmes (economically affordable, within proximity, and within convenient timings) for refugees. It is even not enough to design the programmes in a pedagogically sound and engaging manner. While all that is 'fine', it is not enough. Unless and until the surrounding restrictive context within which the refugees live is addressed, those

programmes will not be ‘empowering’. Despite the difficulty of addressing very complex and sometimes deeply rooted restrictions, it is a ‘task’ which programme designers inevitably have to undertake, if they really aspire to provide ‘empowering programmes’. Those programmes do not exist in a vacuum, but rather in a highly complex and complicated context that shapes SRY realities and lives.

8.2 Is Blended Learning, in the Case of Syrian Refugee Youth, an Empowering Capability?

8.2.1 Aspirations.

This investigation took a backwards analysis approach, i.e., it first analysed SRY’s aspired functionings, goals, and aspirations and then studied the impact of their enrolment in BL programmes in order to investigate if those experiences have helped them to move towards achieving their aspirations. A considerable volume of literature has recognised that Syrian refugees highly value education and desire to continue interrupted schooling, progress their HE or attain more skills for the labour market (Shuayb, 2014; UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children & UNHCR, 2014; Ahmadzadeh, 2014). “While a high percentage of young people may not currently be in education, the majority aspire to return to formal or non-formal education to pursue their long-term goals” (Shuayb, 2014, p. 14). This investigation seconds those words. All three cases, Samed, Mahmoud, and Amani, expressed aspirations that are education-bound. For them, continuing their education represents their main life aspiration (i.e., aspired functioning). However, there are a set of observations related to SRY aspirations that deserve some attention:

- Aspiration of SRY within urban settings versus those within refugee camps
- The impact of previous educational attainments
- Aspiration of male versus female SRY.

8.2.1.1 Aspirations of SRY within urban settings versus within refugee camps.

When analysing aspirations of refugees residing in MENA region urban settings, reports emphasised the consistent aspirations of refugees to continue their schooling and education (see citations above). Reports focusing on camp refugees’ aspirations, however, draw a different picture. When surveying SRY residing in the three main refugee camps in Jordan (the Za’atari, Azraq, and Emirati Jordanian camps) in order to understand primary reasons behind engaging in nonformal BL programmes, the Edraak team found out that refugees cited

a desire to “improve basic skills to find work” three times more frequently than any other reason; they also believed that acquiring technical and vocational skills would open up opportunities in the local labour market and would increase the likelihood of finding a job (Edraak, 2017). Especially in Za’atri camp, there is an increased demand for informal paid labour immediately outside the camp during the harvest months (Younes & Morrice, 2019). While in urban settings, there are, as mentioned in chapter 2, only very limited work options, because of the challenges of acquiring a work permit. Those working without a permit are always at risk of being detained. SRY in urban settings might have come to the conclusion that studying and obtaining some degree or certificate is a safer and more achievable option. However, the lack of access to work options and work permits alone does not fully explain the reasons behind SRY within urban settings have deep aspirations to continue their interrupted education. Their previous educational attainments and the level they have reached prior to the crisis is also an influential factor.

8.2.1.2 *The educational attainment of SRY and their aspirations.*

According to UNDP, UNHCR & ILO (2015), not more than 10% of Syrian refugees residing in urban communities (noncamp settings) have completed secondary education and only 6% have obtained an undergraduate degree. These figures indicate that the three cases explored in this investigation belong to those 10%, and if he successfully graduates next year, Mahmoud will be one of the 6% with an undergraduate degree. Despite all the restrictive regulations and the dire economic situation, the three cases are suffering from, they still belong to a somewhat privileged sector of their community. They must be aware of that and would not want that privilege to go uninvested, as this investment is what they can hold on for a better future. This fact has an effect on their future goals and aspirations, which were all elaborated as being bound up with education. Those life goals, in turn, influenced their perceptions towards education in general, as well as their perceptions of the different educational modes, and of decisions in terms of taking up nonformal programmes that were offered and available to them.

8.2.1.3 *Aspirations of males versus females.*

The case profile analysis identified a difference in the nature of Mahmoud and Samed’s aspirations, on the one hand, and those of Amani, on the other. Mahmoud and Samed expressed aspirations that are clearly attached to a specific educational field (studying electronic engineering in the case of Mahmoud and sociology in the case of Samed) and that aim, in their opinion, could only be accomplished through enrolment into formal conventional (bricks and mortar) educational institutions. Amani’s goals were different. She expressed

rather a generic and fluid goal, i.e., to gain knowledge and develop skills, a goal that is neither attached to a specific field nor to a specific learning mode. Education per se is her bigger aspiration. For Amani, gaining knowledge and accessing education is a goal, path, and purpose. A subset of that goal is her desire to finish college, attend university, and then find a suitable job. In this study, two reasons emerged for that difference in male versus female aspirations:

- This difference can be explained by highlighting dominant societal expectations regarding gender. Being a female, coming from a conservative context where norms and traditions play a fundamental role, Amani was not expected to enter the labour market. Employment in the workforce is not viewed as her role. This cultural expectation explains why Amani is not so concerned, worried or frustrated about obtaining a degree or attending a specific type of educational institution that would guarantee a decent and promising job. While it is true that she preferred conventional educational settings, the discussion here focuses on her expressed generic educational goals and reasons behind those.
- Amani was just turning 19 at the time of the interviews. She had graduated from high school and had just taken her first steps within college. She was still too young to think about employment and entering the labour market, in contrast to Mahmoud who has just 1 year to go until university graduation and Samed who has already been in the labour market for around 7 years.

Those differences might explain why, for Amani, all kinds of education, regardless of how, when, and through which path they are obtained, is considered to be empowering, while for the two males only educational programmes that lead to some concrete steps towards either further education or a decent job are considered “empowering”. Samed and Mahmoud measured empowerment and an empowering action by assessing its ability to narrow the gap between their current situation and their aspired functionings.

8.2.2 Capabilities.

The Human Development and Capability Association (2013) compared capabilities to a budget set: “... a person with many capabilities could enjoy many different activities, pursue different life paths. For this reason, the capability set has been compared to a budget set. So capabilities describe the real actual possibilities open to a person” (p. 2). While not fully disagreeing with this statement, it is argued here that it is the *currency* of money, and its

alignment (compatibility) with the respective market, i.e., context, what renders financial resources “valuable”. This is exactly what Robeyns (2016) meant when she defined capabilities as “what is *effectively possible*”. In this sense, capabilities represent “freedoms or *valuable opportunities* to lead the kind of lives people want to lead, to do what they want to do, and be the person they want to be” (emphasis added).

This investigation concludes that the BL programmes the three cases enrolled in and completed cannot be fully described as valuable opportunities that lead to full empowerment, i.e., a full realisation of aspired functionings. While being feasible, accessible, and sometimes even enjoyable, those programmes were neither aligned to the cases’ preferences nor to their aspirations. The following section sheds light on that statement by illustrating that the investigated BL programmes

- were feasible (possible) opportunities
- were enjoyable and constructive learning opportunities
- did not align with SRY preferences
- did not fully align with SRY aspirations.

8.2.2.1 Blended learning: A feasible learning opportunity.

A set of factors rendered the programmes that these three cases enrolled in possible and feasible. Those factors were crucial in their decisions to enrol and are, in most cases, a good example of how providers designed the course requirements in such a way as to cater for refugees’ socioeconomic context.

8.2.2.1.1 The economic factor.

All three BL programmes were offered free of charge to Syrian refugees in Jordan. This was a decisive factor in the cases’ decision to enrol in them. Samed was very clear that he could not afford to pay for his learning and that he is working “*full time and sometimes even with overtime just to ensure being able to meet the necessities of life*” (S6). Mahmoud was working part-time and was open to any income-generating work he could find to be able to pay for his daily needs (M10). Like Samed, Mahmoud would not have been able to enrol in the BL programme if it had been fees-based. Amani’s family was already paying for her college fees, and any additional budget for further education was neither feasible nor possible. Therefore, she emphasised that the fact that the courses were offered for free played a big role in her decision to enrol (A7).

Moreover, the fact that associated costs, e.g., transportation, were taken care of was vital. Amani was provided with a stipend to pay for her transportation (*A9*). Mahmoud did not have to bother about transportation to the far-away Al Quds College, as the programme providers provided transportation for free (*M15*). In short, because SRY are suffering from acute economic circumstances that hinder their ability to pay for any nonformal learning programmes, providing BL for free and taking care of associated costs have a profound influence on refugees' decision to enrol.

8.2.2.1.2 The time factor.

Mahmoud and Samed belong to the vast majority of SRY working in the informal sector. Consequently, any learning programme that entails f2f instructional meetings needs to schedule these at times that suit working youth when incorporating these meetings into their course design. The HOPES course that Mahmoud enrolled in offered students a number of different morning/afternoon timeslots (*M14*), while SKY School organised f2f meetings on weekend days (*S7*). Amani's courses were organised during the morning and, at one point, these times conflicted with her college classes and the BL programme. Most probably, this type of conflict between commitments would also have been very inconvenient for Syrian working youth. Amani was able to solve this issue by asking her college if she could postpone her start date (*A8*).

Here practitioners can learn an important lesson: BL programmes have to accommodate to the circumstances of working and studying learners, either by providing their courses at weekends or by providing the learners with a variety of time options. These are good solutions that render offered BL programmes feasible.

8.2.2.1.3 The location and facilities factor.

The f2f meetings of the programme Samed enrolled in took place downtown in a convenient location (*S8*). For the two other cases, Amani and Mahmoud, the f2f meetings were not held close to where they lived and in both cases transportation (in the case of Mahmoud) and transportation costs (in the case of Amani) were taken care of by the programme providers. In other words, programme designers of BL programmes have either to select locations for the f2f meetings that are accessible for most learners or to add transportation costs within their financial planning.

While the location of the premises and the financial compensations provided to reach them played an important role in learners' decision to enrol, the quality of available facilities within

the premises were less crucial. Samed complained about insufficient space for learners, and that they had to sit in the patio without any desks or tables (*S9*). Amani complained about repeated electricity outages and a lack of technical facilities, e.g., microphones, plugs etc. (*A9*). However, both Samed and Amani completed the courses they enrolled in and adapted to the situation. This is another lesson learnt. Evidence shows that learners are ready to adapt to insufficient and uncomfortable facilities, as long as other factors such as the economic factor and convenient timing have been taken care of.

8.2.2.1.4 The information factor.

All three cases mentioned social media as their main information channel. Samed came across the course announcement for one BL course when browsing social media (*S11*). Mahmoud was a frequent visitor to the JRS Facebook page and he did so to stay updated with any new learning or internship offerings (*M16*). Amani used social media to verify information that reached her via a friend about the BL programme. The JRS Facebook page was also mentioned in that instance (*A10*). This finding indicates the importance of the availability and accessibility of information about offered educational programmes. Information about the three different BL programmes was disseminated via a well-known and commonly browsed social media channel, i.e., the JRS Facebook page.

However, this observation does not align with the findings of previous researchers. According to Lorisika, Cremonini, and Jalani (2015), an initial barrier to accessing education at a postsecondary level is the lack of available information about potential opportunities. For urban refugees in particular, gaining access to information about available opportunities is a challenge. Populations are often dispersed through a variety of urban centres which lack obvious information points or portals used to communicate the educational avenues that are open to them (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). This barrier is exacerbated by the lack of coordination between current providers; as a result, potential students have to access information about multiple initiatives in multiple places (Al-Fanar Media, 2015; Lorisika et al., 2015).

However, this investigation showed that none of the three cases had issues accessing information related to educational options. There might be two reasons to explain the discrepancy between previous research findings and this research's participants' experience. First, the literature cited above dates back to the years 2015 and 2010 and a lot has changed since that time, especially in terms of refugees' settlement and the realisation that the crisis is a protracted one. In the interim, new mechanisms for information exchange have been

developed. Second, the JRS has during the last 3 years turned into an information and socioeducational hub for refugees in Jordan (Jumana Yacoub, personal communication, January 1, 2019)²¹. This point was further supported by interviews with non-Syrian refugees (a Sudanese, a Somali, and an Iraqi refugee), who all spoke about JRS as being their preferred ‘safe place’ (Mubarak, AbdelGani, and Ahmed, personal communications, December 15, 2018 - January 28, 2019).

It is very important to understand the context, in order to comprehend why this specific Facebook page (i.e., JRS Jordan) has gained precedence over more formal portals owned by renowned international organisations such as the Higher Education Alliance for Refugees (HEAR), Al Fanar Media with its searchable scholarship database, and UNESCO’s Jami3ati. The JRS was able to turn itself into a trusted, credible, and professional (real and virtual) hub for refugees providing free English courses, organising social and cultural activities, and regularly updating its Facebook page with valuable information, e.g., educational, vocational opportunities, internships, scholarships. More importantly, JRS was able to overcome the issue of lack of trust mentioned in the ICT4Refugee report.

Smartphones are not typically regarded as an information portal with which one can independently search for information and resources from an external source. Rather, information flows are overwhelmingly peer-to-peer. If people need to know something, they will most readily seek answers from within their social network rather than, for instance, googling it. It’s likely that this is in part to the issue of trust: for people who have lived in a situation where media reports are being distorted by partisan propaganda, mistrusting reports from authorities and preferring personal corroboration may well be a sound strategy. (GIZ, 2016, p. 11)

JRS’ distancing of itself from politics and political debate, providing information in a timely manner, and offering educational counselling have helped in diminishing the spirit of suspicion and mistrust prevalent within refugee communities. This is clear evidence that building trust within the refugee community is not impossible, if a good amount of effort is sincerely exerted. I discovered that the Facebook page had started in 2014 and that it provides visitors with credible daily updated information about options, opportunities, and even sociocultural events, festivities and activities. Announcing BL programmes in crisis contexts needs to be done through easily accessible channels that are perceived to be trustworthy and credible. Achieving this end might be as easy as making use of an already existing, credible Facebook page rather than constructing new searchable databases and portals.

²¹ Jumana Yacoub was at the time of this research JRS-Jordan’s Professional and Post-Secondary Education Project Director.

8.2.2.1.1 *The technology factor.*

The findings of this research support Alfarah and Bosco's (2016) findings relating to

- 1) the role of social media within the context of the Syrian displaced population and that Facebook, in particular, acts not only as a major means of communication, but also as an information channel;
- 2) the importance of YouTube as a tool to access free online teaching and learning resources;
- 3) the common acceptance of using ICT4E, as long as it is free of charge or offered at low cost.

However, while Alfarah and Bosco (2016) found out that there is at least one shared mobile per family within conflict zones in Syria and in refugee camps, this research shows that each of the refugee cases had his/her own mobile and that mobile ownership was common to this particular age group despite their relatively low economic status. When Mahmoud and Samed were asked if they owned a smartphone, their immediate response was "*Of course*". The fact that this answer was delivered in a sharp and confident tone indicated that they wondered if this was a real question. Their tone reminded me of *The Globe Post*'s (December, 2018) headline, "Water, phone, food," in that order" (Kaplan, 2018), which shows that these are the most important items for refugees. Kaplan (2018) concluded that, "Although access to technology and media savviness varies among different groups of refugees based on income and education levels... smartphones and the ability to access social media platforms through them are now an essential part of a refugee's toolkit.

8.2.2.2 *Blended learning: An enjoyable learning opportunity.*

The previous section illustrated all those factors that rendered the BL programmes feasible and possible for the three Syrian cases living in Jordan. The next section now sheds light on those factors that rendered the BL programmes enjoyable.

8.2.2.2.1 *The topic factor.*

The three cases investigated enrolled in BL programmes because they either covered a topic they were interested in or addressed a specific need. Samed enrolled and engaged actively in the SKY School course because it accorded with his interest in peacebuilding (*S10*). Mahmoud enrolled in a set of courses that would develop skills and provide him with knowledge related to integration, adaptation, and being productive in the new context he found himself in (*M8*). His motivation to enrol in the business English course was also needs-oriented. He was aware of the importance of English language competencies when studying a

major that belongs to the applied sciences, because most of the learning resources are in English (*M7*). Amani, on the other hand, represented a case that combined both motivations: passion and need. She was passionate about business administration, as she was thinking of selecting it as a college major, but knew little about this field (*A16*). Whereas her enrolment in the English and the computer science courses was driven by perceptions that those are skill sets that she needs at this point in her life (*A19*).

This finding is a clear indication that designing courses that are in accordance with refugees' interests is both important and crucial. Refugees do not just enrol in a course simply because it is available, free or feasible. Despite, their dire educational options, refugees insist on choosing to enrol in learning programmes that either align with their passion or to a clear need. It is important to provide them with options that align to their passion and their needs and so allow them to integrate as productive and useful citizens in their new context.

8.2.2.2.2 *Competent facilitators and inclusive learner-centered approaches.*

All three cases spoke very positively about the BL programme facilitators and their crucial role in rendering the whole experience a joyful one. Samed admired their open-mindedness, competence, fun character, supportive attitude, and, primarily, their acceptance of all opinions, all ideas, and thoughts, even those that went against mainstream ones (*S12*). For Samed, the Sky School course was his first encounter with a constructive, collaborative, learner-centred approach that allows learners to express themselves and that gives them a voice and respects their opinions (*S14*). SKY School facilitators were able to turn his experience into a fun and enjoyable one. It was also one that was in total contrast to his previous schooling experiences, which he described as “*Terrible*” (*S13*). Samed and Mahmoud enjoyed their BL experience, as it was uniquely different to their previous experiences, which had been outdated, authoritarian, and instructor-led and which were based on mere rote memorisation, blind obedience, and discipline. In other words, despite not having previously been exposed to learner-centred and constructive learning that respects the individual learners, the cases very much valued this style of education and that is one of the reasons why they actually, despite some challenges and difficulties, completed their courses. Providing learners who have not been exposed to constructive, inclusive, and learner-centred approaches with such programmes does not mean that they will not expect and appreciate this new learning style.

The case study findings provide clear evidence that when provided with competent, supportive, open-minded, and not too strict facilitators, learners are motivated to engage and participate actively in the course and ultimately complete it. This finding might indicate that in the case of refugees, BL is preferable to purely online courses, because of the personal and

human interaction that take place during the f2f meetings. It is those meetings that made the experience an enjoyable. The fact that all three specifically and so eloquently mentioned the facilitators and their approach is an indication that those factors precede learning material and technical innovation in their importance. In fact, the three cases only very rarely mentioned the online assignments and learning material on the BL platform. Once again, this finding shows how important the human interaction during the f2f meetings is for the success of BL courses.

8.2.2.3 *Blended learning and Syrian refugee youth preferences.*

None of the three cases considered BL to be their most favoured learning option. All three cases preferred conventional, formal learning settings. Samed, despite the very limited options open to him, viewed an academic degree from a conventional college or university to be his most preferred option. As his chances of entering university began to diminish, he started to look for other options, i.e., blended and online educational courses. The online programmes that he found were either affordable but covered majors that did not interest him, or matched his field of interest but were financially unaffordable (*S21*). In this case we can see that ‘online’ courses were thought of as an alternative route and not as a primary one.

Mahmoud, on the other hand, did not make any effort to find online engineering degrees or programmes, as he was convinced that this subject area would need laboratory facilities and experiential learning experiences that the online sphere would not offer him (*M17*). For Mahmoud, studying abroad by applying for a scholarship is “the” way towards his aspired functionings, i.e., studying engineering at a postgraduate level (*M4*). The HOPES BL programme he took can be viewed as an auxiliary path that might facilitate his academic progression, but again not as a primary or direct route towards his aspirations.

As for Amani, BL fell somewhere in the middle of her preference list. At the very bottom was studying abroad, because she was too afraid to leave her comfort zone to study in a country whose citizens might be Islamophobic (*A15*). Like Samed and Mahmoud, Amani’s first preference is studying in a conventional learning setting (college or university). Second on Amani’s list came BL and it was placed ahead of fully online programmes. All three cases mentioned two very clear reasons for pushing BL and online courses down their preference lists: 1) lack of accreditation and 2) less/lack of human interaction.

8.2.2.3.1 *Lack of accreditation and recognition.*

The benefits of recognising nonformal learning exceed access to the labour market and the ability to continue one’s education or training and include an individual’s capacity to learn,

the construction of self-esteem, confidence, and the courage to set off on a lifelong learning journey.

Recognition [of nonformal learning attainments] involves both the processes that foster empowerment, choice and individual agency, and the creation of opportunities that refugee youth and adults can exploit, given their personal and social circumstances. Helping realize the potential of Syrian refugees must involve the cultivation of individual agency and motivation to learn and the provision of meaningful opportunities. (Singh et al., 2018, pp. 15-16)

A UNICEF study found out that despite good examples of nonformal learning programmes in the main five host countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey), a large number of these programmes directed at SRY were under-resourced and marginalised, mostly because there are no frameworks for accreditation, neither in terms of quality of programmes nor in terms of pathways into recognised qualifications (Singh et al., 2018). For this reason, almost all BL, as well as fully online nonformal learning programmes directed at refugees in Jordan, have up to this point not been accredited, and their certificates are not officially recognised by governmental authorities, a situation that has led to a widespread perception that those programmes (in their generality) are of a less value than conventional accredited educational programmes. There is a two-way relationship between accreditation policies and people's trust towards those programmes. Not being officially recognised or accredited leads to dominant feelings of mistrust and feelings of mistrust, in turn, hindering the undertaking of real, active steps towards ending this state. All cases within this investigation expressed their perception that the state of nonaccreditation is due to programmes' having "*less value*' (M18) and a "*mistrusted position*" (S22).

It is worthwhile mentioning here that within the Arab World 'certificates' are esteemed and highly valued, to the extent that Arab countries are usually described as "countries of certificates". However, the only certificates that are valued are those that have an official stamp from national authorities, e.g., the Ministry of Education. This finding provides an important lesson: NGOs that undertake the provision of educational programmes need to coordinate and discuss accreditation and recognition with national authorities. Unfortunately, this is a very daunting and time-consuming process, and not undertaking it might lead to a second 'lost generation' of young refugees.

8.2.2.3.2 *Less/lack of human interaction.*

The second reason behind viewing conventional educational options as preferable to blended and online learning modes is the lack of what Mahmoud considered effective communication dimensions, e.g., body language, facial expressions, and intonations which are, according to

him, essential for a clear understanding of what is being said. The lack of that aspect within a learning setting would render it of “*less value*” (M18). Amani also highlighted the need for human connection and presence which involves vital social and psychological aspects for effective learning. She described those interactions as “*fundamental components of learning*” (A12). She perceived those interactions as being implemented at their fullest in the conventional traditional learning settings. It can also be seen that she clearly indicated that this desire for human interaction is not a personal preference but rather a societal one, i.e., one that is held by most people within her surroundings (A11, A12). This finding is a reminder of how important the human factor is perceived to be within BL settings. However, this finding also leads to the assumption that purely online courses, even if provided by renown international educational institutions, would not have the same attraction for refugee youth as other options that entail more human interaction.

There is ample evidence from previous research to support the idea that Mahmoud’s and Amani’s perceptions are neither unique to their status as refugees nor to their background as Arabs or as residents of a low-income country. Research has shown that many Americans who received instruction through online courses reported “feeling something is missing from their educational experience. For all the convenience and flexibility online instruction offers, too many programs have been designed without an appreciation for the necessity of human connection and collaboration in the learning process” (Boyers, 2013, para. 1). Too often programme providers focus merely on offering reading materials, a series of lists of the more salient points, as well as presentations from a one-dimensional speaker, without offering sufficient opportunities to engage, ask questions, and participate in small-group discussions. “Most students are social beings, who require partnership and active participation to be optimal learners” (Boyers, 2013, para. 2). Mahmoud’s words indicated that he wanted to be a “*real learner*” and that “*he is not behind the certificate*” (M19). This link between real learning taking place and effective human interaction and student-instructor/ student-student interaction has been further synthesised and researchers have concluded that the level of human engagement and interaction found within quality online learning “stimulates cross-cultural exchange, exposes the student to new ideas and approaches to learning, and forges relationships that can significantly increase their understanding of the material, and, ultimately, their likelihood of success” (Boyers, 2013, para. 5).

8.2.2.4 Blended learning: An empowering capability?

An empowering capability is one that enables people to reach their aspiration, to live the lives they value, and to do what they value doing. This investigation started by analysing the aspirations of the three SRY to discover if BL programmes were able to narrow the gap

between those aspirations and the current situation of the three young refugee cases. Although these individuals were all Syrians, residing in urban settings, falling within the same age range, and having all attended and completed a BL programme, each case was a unique entity, due to the cases' different backgrounds, experiences, expectations, and life contexts. Their realities were different and highly multidimensional. This diversity might clarify why the BL programmes had different impacts on each of the three cases.

Metaphorically, we might imagine empowering capabilities as being a bridge that would lead individuals to the achievement of their aspirations. However, a number of questions need to be asked in order to judge if a capability offers a real and valuable bridge.

- Is the bridge accessible and do the people know about it?
- Is the bridge solid and robust enough to allow people's safe passage?
- Is the bridge really leading directly to the individual's goals or are there other paths that still need to be taken to reach those goals?
- Is the bridge clear of stumbling blocks or is it filled with obstacles that partially or fully hinder people's passage across it?

This bridge metaphor is used as a way to visualise the role and impact of the BL programmes and to analyse if they have been empowering capabilities or not. The bridge has to be accessible and information about its existence should be available. As mentioned in the previous section, the BL programmes were accessible and feasible; it was also possible for students to enrol and engage in them. None of the investigated cases had any issues in terms of gaining access to information related to the programmes. All three knew about their existence and were able to enrol easily.

The second question that then needs to be addressed is: Is the bridge solid, robust, and free from risks so that the travellers are encouraged to pass over it in safety. The BL programmes entailed a set of factors that made the learning experience not only safe, but even enjoyable and constructive. There were no factors that led to a decision to withdraw or not to complete a BL course. Due to their feelings of satisfaction, and joy, and their belief in the benefit of BL their courses the three cases continued attending the f2f meetings and submitting the assignments. As mentioned before, facilitators played a big role in helping and supporting learners during their experience and turning it into a pleasurable one.

Is the bridge (are the BL programmes) really leading directly to the participants' goals or are there other paths and routes that need still be taken to reach those goals? As we have seen, the

three cases had very different needs, experiences, expectations, and contexts, and, as a result, we are now faced with three pictures:

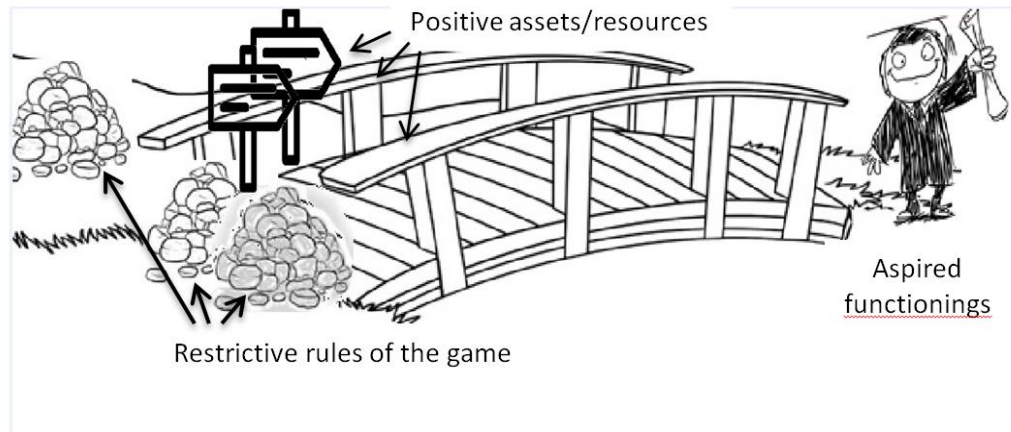


Figure 8.1 A visual metaphor of empowering capabilities.

Samed's aspiration was to be able to enter university and study sociology. The BL programme did not shorten the distance between him and his aspired goal. Samed still needs to have official documentations; he still needs to prove his previous educational attainments; and, he still needs to have the financial capabilities to pay for such an endeavour. There are still a lot of steps, paths, and routes to be taken for him to achieve his goal. The BL programme was, in that sense, not empowering; it did not lead to his goal, nor did it shorten the path towards it. However, this assessment does not mean that his BL course was not beneficial on other levels and other dimensions.

Mahmoud, who aspired to be able to study engineering at a postgraduate level, engaged in two BL programmes. Each of the two programmes helped him indirectly in reaching his goal. The courses he engaged in provided him with skill sets, e.g., English and employability skills, and developed some important psychological capabilities, e.g., acceptance and tolerance, which are crucial for his journey towards his goals. These attributes are necessary tools which will help him to reach his goal. Those skills and assets can metaphorically be viewed as handrails and signposts on the bridge/road to reaching his goal. However, without the addition of further steps on further paths those tools will not lead to his final destination on their own. In other words, the BL programmes Mahmoud engaged in are only indirectly empowering.

Amani had an expansive dream of gaining knowledge and building skills and a more precise one (a subset of the bigger dream) which entailed finishing her 2-year college course, entering university, and then finding a suitable job. The courses she attended broadened her knowledge base, built new skill sets, and opened up new horizons of understanding and comprehension related to diverse topics. She moved towards her “big” aspirations using the bridge (the BL courses). Additionally, enrolling in Kiron’s business administration BL programme was a very good opportunity for her to learn more about this specific field. The knowledge she attained there helped her tremendously in confidently selecting her major. This was a step towards her smaller dream. Consequently, Amani is the only case where there is some evidence of some ‘direct’ impact of the BL programme on her aspirations. Metaphorically speaking, Amani walked across the bridge and used it to move forward. However, once again, the bridge itself, without further paths and routes does not ultimately lead to her goal. She needs to continue her studies at college; her parents need to continue paying for her education; and, she needs to excel academically to reach her goals. Nonetheless, overall, the BL courses that she took proved to be valuable opportunities, effectively helping her to achieve her aspired functionings.

Is the bridge (are the BL programmes) clear of stumbling blocks or is it filled with obstacles that partially or fully hinder people’s passage across it? In other words, are there restrictive challenges that hinder the BL programmes ability to achieve their supposedly ‘empowering’ role? The answer is straightforward; YES, there are multiple obstacles, challenges, and restrictions that render the programmes neither fully nor directly empowering. To imagine the situation, we need to think of the stumbling blocks as being really huge, heavy, and hard to move. Those obstacles are actually the restrictive rules of the games that stand in the way of SRY and which hinder them from being able to reach their goals (see below), even if they have undertaken some bold steps on the bridge. Samed and Mahmoud felt totally constrained by the restrictive legislation that confines their freedom. Amani’s case provided a picture of Syrian refugee females who face stumbling blocks in the form of conservative patriarchal traditions that do not render the BL programmes empowering and, even in some cases, accessible.

8.3 Does Blended Learning Help Syrian Refugee Youth to Overcome Their Restrictive ‘Rules of the Game’?

8.3.1 Introduction.

A very clear difference between the two genders appeared immediately when they were asked about their perception of what constitutes the most challenging formal and informal restriction that they have to deal with. For the males, it is the restrictive regulations that hinder them from working, travelling, moving freely, and constrain a set of other freedoms. Amani, being a female, perceived traditions that originate from the predominant patriarchal mindsets to be the number one challenge that impedes a lot of females from being able to achieve their educational aspirations in general and to enrol in or complete BL programmes in particular. Education policies within Jordan are the third set of “rules” that affected the cases educational opportunities.

8.3.2 Restrictive regulations controlling refugees’ freedom.

Both Samed and Mahmoud’s status is confined by a set of legal restrictions that control their freedom to work, to travel, to move, to rent a house, to gain a driving licence, etc. As mentioned before, capabilities represent a person’s real opportunities and real freedoms to achieve aspired functionings. The legal restrictions that Samed and Mahmoud talked about suppress ‘real freedoms’ and so hinder real empowerment of refugees. There are actually diverse perspectives and angles through which this complicated issue can be discussed. However, the section below unpacks those complexities by looking in detail at the demand versus the supply side of educational options and opportunities.

On the demand side, there is a large and growing population of SRY residing in Jordan who present undeniable challenges for the host country and strain already limited resources. Yet, at the same time, Syrian youth in Jordan also present “a unique opportunity for long-term economic growth and development, provided that strategic investments are made to propel youth-development” (Zabaneh, 2018, para. 9). Approximately one third of the population affected by the Syrian crisis is young people between the ages of 10 and 24 (Sirin & Sirin-Rogers, 2015). However, only 1 to 5% of these young people are enrolled in HE (Dakkak, et al., 2017). The problem is one of “snowballing”, because there are more and more secondary students graduating and waiting for an opportunity. However, as this investigation has shown, that probability does not stop them from putting education at the top of their list of their life goals.

The two most cited social factors that lead to the anxiety and frustration of SRY are unemployment and lack of quality education (World Bank, 2005); these factors result in a “large, idle youth population whose lives are effectively put on hold as they wait out the end of the war” (Mercy Corps, 2013, p. 13). Being dramatically physically and psychologically

impacted by the conflict, lacking chances of quality education, of security, protection, and basic services results in growing frustration, hopelessness, and sometimes even radicalisation (Sirin, & Sirin-Rogers, 2015). In short, there is a pressing and urgent demand for the realisation of a set of rights for SRY and quality education at postsecondary level is their foremost right. The lack of fulfilment of those needs creates a precarious situation and one which is highly detrimental to overall social cohesion in Jordan. This investigation has illustrated that SRY aspire to continue their education, enter university, and obtain formally accredited certificates that would help them to find a decent and dignifying job. Presently however, there are just too many challenges that prevent that outcome from happening. The SRY suffer from harsh economic circumstances, which make it virtually impossible for them to pay college or university fees. They are facing insurmountable difficulties as regards obtaining work permits, which prevents them from generating sufficient income for an educational endeavour. Moreover, their situation as refugees puts extra constraints on their freedom to travel outside Jordan which destroys any hope of working outside Jordan or studying abroad.

On the supply side, analysis of secondary resources (media, organisation reports, and academic literature) shows that there was very limited yet consistent dialogue on the issue of HR for Syrian refugees prior to 2016.

Throughout the 6-year Syrian refugee crisis, education for refugee children has been prioritized in development, humanitarian aid, media coverage, discussion, and research. So far, the majority of support in the field of education has targeted the age group 6-18, which is typical in an emergency situation. As a result, the age group 18-25 has mostly been forgotten. The initial response to higher education was isolated and sporadic, only recently becoming coordinated as the crisis and consequent displacement became protracted. (DAFI, 2013, as cited in Al-Hawamdah & El-Ghali, 2017, p. 7)

The continuous and clear decline in HE enrolment rates of Syrian students was followed by a response from Jordanian policy-makers to attempt to include the sector in their policies (El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017). However, one of the main focal dilemmas is the noninclusion of refugees when it comes to policies, legislation or actions that impact their daily lives. Barbelet and Wake (2017, as cited in Barbelet et al., 2018) have found out that “refugees’ *perceptions of policies and programmes* are often quite different from their official design and implementation” (p. 5, emphasis in original). Whether failure to involve refugees’ perceptions and perspective in: the Jordan Compact; the newly issued work legislation; the educational policies; or, the offered programmes was intentionally done or unintentional, the end result is that refugees have been left in the dark and this has had a negative impact on refugees’:

- 1) perceptions related to their future. A good example of that has been Mahmoud's concern about his uncertain future, knowing that he is not allowed to work as an engineer, while having spent so many years studying that subject (*M27*).
- 2) perceptions of being discriminated against by those legislation. Samed and Mahmoud both viewed the legislative restrictions placed on them as "*racist and discriminatory*" (*S18*). They carried deep negative feelings of resentment against those regulations, even if they were able to understand why they have been issued in the first place (*M27-30*).
- 3) psychological status. While there is a difference between Samed and Mahmoud in terms of their reaction to those constraints, in both cases there was frustration. Samed was so frustrated that he decided to stop trying to find solutions to his situation. Those feelings were so strong that they led at some point to some thoughts related to illegal immigration or returning to Syria (*S18-20*).
- 4) perceptions related to offered educational programmes for refugees. Mahmoud viewed the offered educational programmes as a mere "*waste of money*" (*M31*) for as long as the graduates of those programmes were not able to use their attained knowledge or skills due to laws that constrain them from working in fields other than very low-skilled ones (*M27*).

In short, neglecting the voice, perspective, needs, and aspirations of refugees during the design and implementation of policies and legislations that impact them and their families created an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust that did not help refugees to perceive newly issued regulations or educational offerings as empowering or effective opportunities. On the contrary, leaving the refugees uninformed about policies and programmes, and issuing them in a nonparticipatory process, had negative impacts on refugees' well-being and attitudes.

8.3.3 Patriarchal mindset and traditions.

Amani lived in Irbid, the second largest metropolitan city in Jordan after Amman. Irbid was, as at June 2019, home to 20.8% of the Syrian refugees residing in Jordan (UNHCR, June 2019). Irbid is a conservative community and so it is similar in that sense to the conservative communities from which most of the refugees originate. They come from rural backgrounds where patriarchal traditions constitute very serious rules of the game that can be tremendously challenging for females.

Despite their important contribution to agricultural production, rural women were reported to be among the most economically disadvantaged groups in Syria before the crisis... In 2007, 3.5 million Syrians were classified as rural

poor, and rural women and children suffered most from poverty and its physical and social deprivation. (Buecher & Aniyamuzaala, 2016, pp.12-13)

These deprivations were mostly due to gender-blind policies, discriminatory legislation, traditions, attitudes, and customs that led to a lack of access to decision-making. The freedom and capabilities of Syrian females are mostly constrained by a set of prevailing societal expectations that are more influenced by norms, customs, and traditions than by laws that established equal rights. Culturally speaking the roles and responsibilities of Syrian females continued, even after the crisis, to be largely confined to the home (Hilton, 2017). Those traditions and norms impacted Syrian female refugees' decisions and ability to enrol in formal, as well as, nonformal educational opportunities, whether these are conventional, blended or online. Amani's interview data supported that view and also aligned with the results of a survey conducted in May 2017 that found that of the 1,006 Syrian female respondents, 81% viewed social norms as truly impeding women's success (Hilton, 2017). According to Amani, there are two aspects of those patriarchal traditions that have an impact on Syrian females' freedom to enrol and engage in BL programmes; they are reflected in 1) early and forced marriages and 2) gender segregation.

8.3.3.1 Early and forced marriages.

A report drawing on data from Jordan's court system suggests that child marriage of Syrian refugee girls reached 36% in 2018, indicating a continued upward trend (AlJazeera, 2018). Amani clearly expressed the view that early and forced marriage is very common in her community, especially so after the crisis (**A21**). Early and forced marriages represent a serious impediment on a female's route towards further education in general. This blocking takes diverse forms:

- Mobility restrictions: Interviews undertaken by a UNICEF team with child marriage experts indicated that mobility restrictions have important implications for girls' access to education (UNICEF & ICRW, 2017).
- Shutting married females out: Too often, it also happens that married, pregnant, and parenting girls are prevented from attending school by the 'system', due to a combination of stigma with respect to being married (This stigma is related to the assumption that the girl has engaged in a sexual relationship with her husband), gender norms affecting household responsibilities of married girls, and financial constraints. "Principals normally don't want girls who are married to come back to school, as they are afraid it will 'taint' the other girls with talk of sex" (UNICEF & ICRW, 2017, p. 7).

- Deeply rooted gender inequalities are the reason why Syrian refugee families force their daughters to marry, as they are viewed as an economic burden and sons' education is privileged over daughters' education (UNICEF & ICRW, 2017).

However, what is worth noting here is the intense impact of those deeply rooted patriarchal customs on Syrian females' decisions related to enrolment in a BL programme. Amani, despite being raised by open-minded parents (A20), when provided with a vignette scenario about a lady who has to decide either to continue a BL course she has started or to enter a marriage that has been arranged by her parents, Amani's stance was clear: there can be no compromises when it comes to traditions and customs. One has to follow the "rules (of the game)". Amani views the right action to be obeying and submitting to those 'rules', even if they limit one's options and freedoms (A22). This is clear evidence of the intense and pressing import of patriarchal traditions which transcend parental open-mindedness and strong perceptions of the importance of education (A2). Amani's opinion about how to resolve a situation where traditions conflict with the choice of engaging in BL demonstrates how restrictive and powerful those traditions are. BL is, in that sense, not empowering, i.e., not effectively possible due to restrictive 'rules of the game'.

8.3.3.2 Gender segregation.

Syrian refugee females in Irbid have to face strict gender segregation. According to Amani, she has witnessed families refusing their daughters permission to attend f2f meetings which are part of a BL programme, because those meetings are attended by both genders. Those families would prefer to have their daughters stay at home or forced into a marriage relationship than see them attending mixed-gender meetings in a learning setting (A23).

One might think that this restriction on unmarried females' ability to engage in mixed-gender f2f classes is a good justification for offering more online courses directed to refugee females in Jordan. Unfortunately, on the ground challenges that originate from conservative patriarchal mindsets have rendered even this solution void, as gender segregation extends from the real life to the virtual. Amani illustrated clearly that the internet is perceived by some males in her society as a public terrain that allows for both genders to get to know each other, chat with each other, and is, therefore, perceived to run counter to their belief that the sexes should be segregated. Amani said that there is an attitude in her society that would allow males to stop their female daughters and/or siblings from browsing the internet and using social media (A24).

This is another obvious example of how strong patriarchal traditions and mindsets are within the Syrian refugee community in Jordan and how they impact females' choices and learning options and even their ICT usage. As mentioned before, the clear interference of those patriarchal norms and traditions with females' choices to learn using the internet has limited the benefit and "valuable opportunity" offered by BL and online learning options to a great extent. Like early and forced marriage, the gender segregation tradition represents restrictive rules of the game that render online and the BL options not only not empowering, but even nonaccessible.

8.3.4 Educational policies.

When Samed tried to re-enter the formal education system, after having been out of school for 3 years, he was denied that opportunity. This exclusion is due to what is known as the 3-year rule mentioned in chapter 2. According to the MoE's policy, in order to enrol in Jordanian public schools, a student cannot be 3 years older than the rest of his or her peers in any given grade (MoE, 2016). Samed was just one of thousands who have been barred from entering formal schools due to this rule. He was unable to find a solution to his complicated situation. His documents are back in Syria, where none of his family are left (*S5*); the Embassy refrained from helping him to access the needed documentations (*S7*); the government views him as 'too old' to sit with high schoolers in the same class and is giving him only one option, i.e., to repeat the whole middle school (3 years) and high school (3 years) cycle, which is actually very disempowering as it sets him even further away from his aspirations.

Samed's case is just one example of thousands of other SRY who are unable to provide documentation that certifies the previous learning attainments, talents, capabilities, and skills that they acquired from their previous schooling, work, and life. In Jordan, as well as in other MENA hosting countries, there:

are no coherent systems in place to make the competences and experiential learning of refugees visible, and no mechanisms to validate individual skills and competences based on what they know, can do or demonstrate, irrespective of whether they acquired these competences formally, non-formally or informally. (Singh et al., 2018, p. 18)

The absence of such mechanisms and such recognition procedures has put Samed and thousands of over-aged refugees into a disadvantaged position when trying to find a job, re-enter the education system, or find scholarships to study abroad, which has clearly hindered the development of their capital, their potentials, capabilities, and, ultimately, their empowerment. For Samed, BL programmes that do not ask for formal documentations and do

not have those rules regarding age, i.e., programmes like the one he enrolled in, are accessible options. Most probably, it is this category of the refugee population that benefits the most from those courses, as these are unique, feasible options in an educationally dire context.

8.4 Does Blended Learning Improve Syrian Refugee Youth's Resource Portfolio?

This investigation started with an open mind ready to grasp any and all salient agency-based resources (assets, using Alsop and Heinsohn's terminology) that would arise throughout the cases' conversation. The list of resources outlined by Alsop and Heinsohn (2005)²² and that illustrated in Kleine's choice framework (see Figure 1)²³ was used to check emerging assets during the interviews. After a thorough analysis of all the interviews, it could be concluded that the BL programmes the three cases enrolled in had a clear impact on two specific agency-based resources; psychological and human resources (assets).

8.4.1 The psychological resources.

8.4.1.1 *Self-esteem and confidence.*

Building confidence and self-esteem has always been important, but it is more so when it comes to refugees who have undergone traumatic events. There are diverse theoretical frameworks supporting the necessity for supportive learning environments and their relation to socioemotional factors such as self-esteem, e.g., Bronfenbrenner's (1979)' ecological theory of human development and Vygotsky's (1962) sociocultural approach to understanding learning. According to Rosenberg (1962), self-esteem is defined as "positive or negative attitude toward ... the self" (p. 30, as cited in Booth & Gerard, 2011). There is valid evidence that one's ability level/s may influence depressive symptoms and levels of self-esteem (Booth & Gerard, 2011).

The SKY School programme Samed enrolled in had a very positive influence on minimising Samed's depressive attitudes and enhancing his self-esteem, i.e., his attitudes towards his own self. Samed, who generally expressed his opinions in a rather pessimistic manner, turned into a highly satisfied and cheerful person when he spoke about his role within the programme.

²² Alsop and Heinsohn counted seven resources, which they termed '*asset endowments*': psychological, organisational, informational, material, social, financial, and human assets.

²³ In its choice framework, Kleine's (2009a) list included 10 agency-based resources: educational, psychological, geographical, cultural, health, information, social, financial, material, and natural resources.

This satisfaction was crystal clear through his tone, usage of words, and intensive narrations of specific incidences that reflected pride and feelings of self-worth. The programme provided Samed with an opportunity to practise the interpersonal communication skills, which he had already developed through his work experience, by supporting his peers and by providing effective mentorship. Samed spoke with much pride about how he supported, helped and encouraged his peers, about how they perceived his role to be important in creating a fun atmosphere in the programme, and how he felt when his peers told him how much they have missed his fun character whenever he skipped a f2f meeting (*S24-25*). All that boosted his self-esteem, provided him with a sense of value and pride. He felt tremendously happy when he engaged with others, when he supported them, and when he interacted with them f2f. This might be one of the reasons why he would not find online courses and degrees to be suitable for him. It is clear how important the human interaction during the f2f meetings was and how impactful they have been in enhancing Samed's self-esteem. It is obvious that those f2f meetings, much more than the online engagement with peers and facilitators – something that was very rarely mentioned during the interviews – had an impact on Samed's psychological agency-based resources and provided opportunities for joyful and constructive interaction with fellow refugees.

Self-confidence, on the other hand, is how a person feels about his/her abilities. This is why one's confidence might vary from situation to situation, as one might be more confident undertaking some activities than others (LPC, 2012). The SKY School BL programme Mahmoud enrolled in helped significantly in enhancing his confidence, i.e., his attitude towards his abilities and skills. He was very aware of that fact and spoke eloquently about his current, enhanced, positive perception towards his oral skills. He was able to make that assessment because he possessed a clear memory of his skill level prior to his enrolment in the programme. Prior to enrolling in the course, he would shiver and tremble when having to encounter a stranger and speak to him; he would even have to drink water every couple of minutes to reduce his level of frustration and tension (*M40*). Mahmoud linked the enhancement of his confidence level to speak up, to talk to a stranger, and even stand up on a stage to read a speech, to the engagement in the BL programme which implemented learning approaches based on collaborative and learner-centred techniques. He spoke intensely about the group work assignments he engaged in during the programme and how those helped him to build new social relationships (friendships) and how they supported the development of his oral skills. Yet more observations that display that collaborative, learner-centred learning approaches can be drawn from his narration, i.e., if applied effectively through a competent facilitator, these approaches:

- help to instil a fun learning atmosphere, because they provide opportunities for interaction between peers.
- are paramount for an effective BL experience
- can be (as in the case of Mahmoud) linked to the enhancement of confidence
- support the construction of social connections and relationships
- enable the interaction of peers from very diverse backgrounds, cultures, nationalities and ethnicities.

8.4.1.2 *Acceptance and tolerance.*

According to Fish (2014), “tolerance is a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry” (para. 3). Acceptance, however, goes a step beyond tolerance, because it is “a person's assent to the reality of a situation, recognising a process or condition (often a negative or uncomfortable) without attempting to change it, protest, or exit” (Fish, 2014, para. 6). Hence, while tolerance is used to describe a situation of forbearance or patience, acceptance moves beyond that and describes one of approval (Koshal, 2011). If tolerance means that learners in a learning setting can attend sessions with those who differ from them culturally, ethnically, religiously etc., acceptance means that learners find, view, and perceive colearners who differ from them to be OK, fine, and, to some extent, acceptable.

The BL programmes played a tremendous role in instilling those virtues and were real changers in that aspect. Only if the context of those refugees, and their previous educational and life experiences are explained, can that impact be understood and fully appreciated. All three cases attended public schools, either in Syria or in Jordan. Those schools do not provide an opportunity to engage, interact or intermingle with demographically ‘different’ students, peers or even teachers. Public schools in Syria are attended by those who cannot afford private schools; thus, they are mostly the locals belonging to the lower or lower-middle class. In other words, the demographic identity of students within those schools is homogenous: all Syrians. Even when moving to Jordan, Mahmoud and Amani attended one of those second shift public schools that were designed to be attended by ‘only Syrians’. Again, they were confined to interacting only with students of their own nationality.

The SKY School and Kiron BL programmes, on the other hand, were open to all refugees residing in Jordan. These programmes are attended by a wide range of students from a diverse range of ethnicities, nationalities, backgrounds, and of both genders. HOPES was offered to Syrian refugees and underprivileged Jordanians. Consequently, the BL programmes offered an

opportunity for those cases to intermingle with highly multiculturally diverse learners from both genders. These programmes were Mahmoud's and Amani's first exposure to such a multicultural environment. However, Samed had some previous experience of dealing with people from diverse nationalities and cultures due to his previous work as a waiter.

Mahmoud is a very clear example of how the BL programme has been a game-changer for him. At first, he was very clear that his motivation to enroll was his desire to engage with those who “*differ from him*” (M22-23), to intermingle with “*other people*” (M22-23). In the end, he counted this interaction to be the number one impact and positive influence resulting from enrolling in and attending the programme (M22). He appreciated very much that the SKY School peacebuilding course allowed him to experience the practice of acceptance and “*peaceful interaction*” and, as Mahmoud puts it, “*to live the concept of peace*” (M23).

However, it is again vital to remember that had it not been for the effective and successful collaborative learning approaches based on group work and peer-to-peer interaction, this atmosphere of acceptance would not have been realised. Those approaches were new to the investigated cases, who had attended public schools that implemented mere rote learning, mainly based on memorisation and applied authoritarian instructor-led learning approaches that aim to instil blind obedience and strict discipline. While discussing state schooling and the struggle for moral authority in the Arab world, Levinson and Pollock (2011) found that in Jordan there are day-to-day efforts embedded in the educative processes that aim to monitor and control the behaviour of young people and to shape them in particular ways to be obedient, productive, moral, and successful.

8.4.2 The human resources.

8.4.2.1 English language skills.

Samed and Mahmoud both attended SKY School. Samed had already expended considerable effort through independent self-learning on improving his English prior to his enrolment in the course (S26-28). For him, the BL programme was an effective opportunity to practise learnt skills, to speak, and to interact in English. The programme provided a space for learners to express and communicate their real self using English.

Language is so connected to who we are that it is difficult to separate ourselves from the language we use. We speak what we think or feel and the connection between words and our experience (including actions at times) is instantaneous. So, we need to be mindful that wherever possible the practice that we do needs to honour this connection. (Weiler, 2019)

The BL SKY School programme honoured that connection through its inclusive approach. This is why Samed was able to communicate with his peers freely, openly, and to have fun while using (practising) his English. In other words, the BL programme improved his English in an indirect manner by opening up opportunities for effective language practice. Like Samed, Mahmoud had exerted a lot of independent effort to improve his English and was able to reach an intermediate level (*M35-39*), after which he decided to enrol in a more specialised course on business English. Concurrently, he applied to the SKY School programme. Mahmoud mentioned clearly that both courses impacted his English language level positively, but said that the British Council course, because of its focus on business English, had a greater impact. Mahmoud viewed this improvement in his language skills to be one of the greatest outcomes of attending BL. He was able to value this improvement, because he could link that to easily accessible academic collegial learning resources (*M39*).

Amani had put the least effort into enhancing her English language skills. However, we need to remember that she was also the youngest, just 19 during the interviews, and a recent high school graduate. She engaged in the Kiron English language course in order to improve her English language skills. She assessed this goal as an achieved goal, and actually as her most achieved goal. She was aware of the benefits of developing both her English and ICT skills, as those skill sets would help her to use the internet for further knowledge construction (*A26-27*). Being a passionate person, driven by a deep desire to gain knowledge and being aware that the internet has become a global treasure trove of knowledge, Amani was able to appreciate such a positive development. For this reason, she repetitively mentioned the improvement of English in conjunction to the development of her ICT skills and abilities to use the internet (*A26*).

8.4.2.2 *Employability skills.*

While Samed had already been active in the labour market for 7 years when interviewed, Amani had just graduated from high school and was, therefore, not yet thinking about work and employment. Mahmoud, who had just 1 year to go before graduation, was the case with the most need and urge to develop employability skills²⁴. Mahmoud perceived the fact that he had developed skills that are essential for entering the labour market to have been a very positive outcome from attending the HOPES course, e.g., writing an impressive resume, a

²⁴ Employability skills are the transferable skills needed by an individual to be employable and they include a set of skills in addition to good technical understanding and subject knowledge. Employability depends on knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It also depends on how an individual uses those assets and how they are presented to employers (STEMNET, n.d.).

convincing motivation letter, presentation skills etc. (*M42*). It is important to mention here that within the Arab world, public schools and public universities usually do not work on those skills. However, even if Mahmoud had not mentioned those skills, there is ample evidence from his narrations that he has developed additional skills which fall also under the category of ‘employability skills’. STEMNET (n.d.) listed the top 10 employability skills employers look for during their recruitment processes. The list below indicated how many those skills Mahmoud developed through the two BL programmes he had attended.

Table 8.1 Mahmoud’s Attained Employability Skills Mapped to the Top 10 Skills Outlined by STEMNET.

Employability Skills	Achieved	Evidence
Communication and interpersonal skills	√	Both courses implemented group work assignments that necessitated a lot of communication, discussions, and active engagement with peers.
Problem-solving skills	√	The SKY School approach was based on group assignments and asked attendees to present a final project that would solve a specific ‘peace-related’ problem in their community.
Using your initiative and being self-motivated	√	For the final SKY SCHOOL project, Mahmoud had to propose a project and work on it on his own.
Working under pressure and to deadlines	√	Both courses included weekly assignments that had to be accomplished prior to the next f2f meeting.
Organisational skills	X	
Team working	√	Both courses, but especially the SKY School course, were based on collaborative learning approaches with a lot of group work.
Ability to learn and adapt	√	Mahmoud had to adapt to a new blended/online learning style and to interact with multicultural peers.
Numeracy	X	
Valuing diversity and difference	√	Mahmoud interacted with people from a wide range of cultures, backgrounds, and nationalities.
Negotiation skills	√	Negotiation skills, debating and convincing are all subsets of speaking skills developed as a result of engaging in the SKY School programme.

It might be argued that those employability skills are worthless as long as refugees in Jordan are not allowed to enter the labour market. However, employability skills are useful,

regardless of any surrounding circumstances and irrespective of restrictions to work in the formal sector, because the writing of a resume, a motivation letter or cover letter is needed for other purposes such as applying for scholarships, internships or just to market oneself on professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn) or to build a private business. Problem-solving skills, adaptation, negotiation skills etc. are all vital life skills that are of benefit on a daily basis and positively impact ones' well-being. Mahmoud is planning to study abroad and to proceed with a master's degree in engineering, an endeavour that in itself is very challenging and needs problem-solving skills, negotiation, communication, and the appreciation of diversity.

8.4.2.3 Knowledge and skills related to blended and online learning.

Given the scale and magnitude of the refugee crisis, relying solely on the traditional public education sector, with the MoE being its main actor, proved to be unrealistic. In the three main countries hosting Syrian refugees (Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey) a recent surge in private sector and NGO participation in the education of Syrian refugees can be observed. In those three countries, businesses and private foundations are currently actively involved in many different forms. Menshay and Zakharia (2017) counted 144 NGOs actively engaged in the education of Syrian refugees. Almost half of those NGOs (42%) comprised businesses and private foundations in those three countries. Jordan hosted the majority of these actors (80%), followed by Lebanon and Turkey. The two most prominent forms of engagement were 1) funding of the education section (49%) and 2) development and distribution of ICT-based educational solutions (49%). "Nearly half of private actors involved in Syrian refugee education are supporting some form of educational technology" (Menshay & Zakharia, 2017, p.11). Businesses and private foundations introduced refugees to a variety of technologies such as online digital learning platforms and online courses, tablet and handset distribution including online curriculum, apps with educational content, portable Wi-Fi hubs for use in schools, and gaming technology with educational content (Menshay & Zakharia, 2017).

Mahmoud was the only one with some blended and online learning experience. For both Samed and Amani, their BL courses were their first encounter with an ICT-based learning setting. Having attended BL programmes means that they are now much more knowledgeable about the nature of blended and online learning, its requirements, success factors, and what to expect. It was obvious from the three cases' narrations that information about those learning settings was not very widespread. None of them had heard about BL before personally enrolling in a course. Despite the mushrooming initiatives in Jordan and in the MENA region, BL is still a new educational realm where information is only slowly and gradually being disseminated. Gaining knowledge and developing skills related to ICT-based learning in

general and blended and online learning in particular is prerequisite for benefitting from those increased offerings directed at Syrian refugees.

However, in addition to that and to fully appreciate the development of ICT-based learning skills and knowledge, we need to remember the uncertain position those refugees are in.

Amani herself, despite being a student at college, expressed clearly that she appreciated the chance to learn about other learning options which might be of huge value, if things go wrong, i.e., if she is, for any reason, not able to continue her studies in a conventional college or university (*A17*).

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Overview

This chapter highlights the two main contributions of this research. First, it sheds light on the usefulness of the choice framework when researching marginalised and underserved populations. The conceptual contributions are discussed in detail below. However, it is important to note that there has not been enough implementation of this framework within the realm of forced migration research. This investigation has provided evidence on how the framework was used, was altered, and ultimately amended to fit the purpose and nature of this investigation. It is believed that more application of it would enrich this research terrain.

Second, the chapter aims to provide researchers in the field of education in emergencies with some lessons learnt when conducting research with refugees, especially refugees in the MENA region. While countless articles discuss the ethical dilemmas that can manifest themselves when conducting research with marginalised populations, there are many fewer resources that provide real-life accounts and illustrations in terms of how to resolve those ethically difficult moments.

Additionally, this chapter provides readers, and specifically practitioners and programme managers, with a list of recommendations related to programme design and implementation. Those recommendations, which range from ethical considerations to economic implications and from issues related to programme management to pedagogical aspects, provide a recapitulation of this investigation's findings in relation to BL programme and refugees' empowerment.

9.2 Conclusions

Drawing on the theoretical framework, i.e., the capability approach and the research questions that have guided this inquiry, this study analysed the empowerment of SRY in terms of their enrolment within BL programmes. This investigation first followed a backwards analysis

technique, where the aspirations and goals, i.e., the aspired functionings of the research cases were examined and then moved to an analysis of their BL experiences in order to understand if the courses have been empowering, i.e., narrowed the gap between the cases' current situation and their aspirations.

9.2.1 Blended learning and aspirations.

All three cases expressed aspired functionings related to education, i.e., they all wanted to pursue their education and take it to the next level. All cases shared very positive perceptions towards education, envisioning it to be essential and empowering. However, this investigation found a discrepancy between male and female aspirations. The male cases held more specific aspirations that were attached to a particular field or subject and bound to conventional educational degrees. The female case expressed aspirations that are of a generic nature, i.e., unbound to a specific field or educational mode or type. The difference here might be explained through the diverse gender-based societal expectations that govern the lives of male and female Syrians. Additionally, as observed by previous research, this study found that there was a difference between urban refugees' aspirations and those of camp refugees. Camp refugees aspire mainly to improving their basic skills to find work, while the aspirations of refugees residing in urban settings, as indicated in the research cases, relate more continuing their interrupted education.

9.2.2 Blended learning: A feasible learning opportunity

BL was found to be feasible and accessible to SRY in Jordan. They were offered BL courses for free and associated costs such as the cost of transportation to class were taken care of by programme providers. The programme providers designed the programmes in such a way that they catered to working and studying learners' time constraints, by either scheduling the weekly f2f meetings at weekends or by providing learners with time options during the week. The location of the f2f meetings was accessible. While not all cases were satisfied with the level and quality of the provided facilities within the learning premises, they adapted to that factor. This study offers programme providers an important lesson which is that catering to learners' economic context and accommodating to their time constraints is paramount, while the provision of sufficient or comfortable facilities is of less importance. This investigation also illustrated that none of the cases had any issues regarding accessing information about educational offerings. They all had smartphones and used social media, especially the JRS Facebook page, to gain information. Announcing educational offerings via creditable and

well-browsed social media channels proved to be more efficient than constructing and building searchable databases.

9.2.3 Blended learning: An enjoyable learning opportunity.

The BL programmes contrasted with the instructor-led, authoritarian, and noninclusive schooling the investigated cases had previously experienced. All cases spoke very positively about their programme facilitators, whom they described as supportive, fun, competent, professional, and very open-minded. Moreover, the inclusive approach that respected learners' voice and opinions was also highly appreciated. Additionally, one of the major factors that made the BL experience an enjoyable one was the topic of the course. The topics covered catered either to refugees' passions or to their needs. The three cases were clear that they would not enrol in a course just because it is free or accessible; these cases enrolled because their chosen course/s either matched a passion or a need that they have.

9.2.4 Blended learning and Syrian refugees' preferences.

Conventional educational offerings are the most preferred for two reasons. First, conventional programmes are certified and recognised by national authorities; secondly, the cases viewed human interaction between instructor/learner and learner/learner as crucial and fundamental elements for learning. According to two of the three cases, a learning experience that lacked nonverbal communication in the form of body language, facial expressions, and intonations was perceived as being of less value and less effective. These perceptions explain why BL and online learning are less trusted. However, the relationship between trust and accreditation is a vicious circle: BL and online programmes are currently not accredited, and, therefore, not trusted, while the lack of trust is hindering the taking of further actions towards their accreditation.

9.2.5 Blended learning and the rules of the game.

The male cases expressed frustration related to the restrictive rules that constrain their freedom to work, to travel, and to move. A lot of policies and regulations that impact refugees have been implemented without consulting or engaging with refugees. This lack of consultation has led to a lot of mistrust, suspicion, and frustration. Due to restrictive laws refugees are not allowed to be employed in the formal sector, and in some cases, to attend training programmes. The research cases illustrated that they are unable to make use of

knowledge and skills they have attained, which leads to an impression that the BL programmes are worthless and a waste of money. In order to deliver “empowering” BL programmes, providers need to address those barriers during the design and implementation phase of their courses. The female case, on the other hand, considered traditions driven by a conservative patriarchal mindset to be the main challenge that hinders females in her community from enrolling in, completing, and making the best of available learning opportunities. Those restrictive patriarchal traditions take two forms: early and forced marriages and gender segregation. The former restricts females’ mobility and results in their being shut out from the schooling system; while the later (gender segregation) impedes females from enrolling in BL, and even online courses, as those are seen as terrains where the sexes meet and interact.

9.2.6 Blended learning and Syrian refugees’ resource profile.

The BL programmes proved to have been significant in a number of areas: they enhanced learners’ self-esteem, their confidence in their speaking skills, and helped to instil the virtues of acceptance and tolerance when their learning situation required interaction with learners from diverse and different cultures, backgrounds, and nationalities. In addition, the BL programmes had an impact on learners’ English language skills, their ICT skills, and their employability skills, and they provided learners with valuable knowledge related to this specific type of learning, i.e., BL and online learning, by understanding requirements, expectations, and success factors amongst others.

9.2.7 Blended learning and the empowerment of Syrian refugee youth.

This investigation of the BL experience of three SRY, each of which had its own unique context and multidimensional reality, revealed three very diverse empowerment results. In one case, no direct link could be found between aspirations and the BL programme. The BL programme did not help the case to pursue his aspirations to enter university and to graduate with an undergraduate degree. In another case, it could be said that the programmes the case had attended had some positive outcomes, e.g., enhancement of English language skills and exposure to multicultural peers, all which might help in achieving his future goals of studying abroad. However, the BL experience helped the third learner to meet her more generic aspiration, as she viewed all kinds of education as empowering and all types of learning as being useful and beneficial. The BL courses that Amani took helped her to determine her

future college major, because they provided her with timely and needed knowledge and information, which also led to the conclusion that, in Amani's case, the programme could be seen as empowering her. However, generally speaking, the BL programmes cannot be viewed as having led to a full realisation of the cases' aspirations or aspired functionings, primarily because of the restrictive rules of the game that have a very deep impact on refugees' lives and realities and which, in all cases, necessitate taking further pathways, steps, and actions to achieve their aspirations.

9.3 Contributions

9.3.1 Conceptual contributions.

Using a CA lens, this study examined the BL experience of three SRY to understand if those experiences have been empowering. This investigation demonstrated that the contextual components of the cases' realities are highly interwoven. Each component impacts on another, and the relationship between the BL programme and those components is not in any way linear. For example, the cases' determination and persistence (a psychological asset) to learn English (human asset) independently helped them to enrol in the course (capability, an option, a choice). The course helped them to engage collaboratively with peers (social asset), which, in turn, helped them to develop their groupwork skills, an important employability skill (human asset). However, these skills cannot be utilised as long as the refugees are shut out of the labour market through restrictive rules of the game.

This investigation shows that the opportunity structure/rules of the game played the greatest role in terms of the possibilities to turn (or not) those programmes into real, effective choices and valuable opportunities. The choice framework developed by Dorathea Kleine (Figure 1, chapter 2) and which she used to assess ICT4D initiatives on the empowerment of marginalised populations, was selected as a starting point from which to explore the relationship between the different CA components and BL programmes. The emergent nature of qualitative inquiry, and of this case-study approach, enabled me to understand the intricacies and complexities inherent in the multidimensional context investigated in this research. I began to get insights into nonlinear, two-way relationships and impacts. This research seconds Dahya and Dryden-Peterson's (2016) finding that:

structure and agency – technology as well as educational, social, and cultural resources – not only create conditions for education, but influence and shape culture and society. Technology is not only an important and coconstitutive element of

individual structure and agency; it is also part of a sociotechnical sphere that can change the form and opacity of the ecological boundaries of the education structure (p.16).

Over time, I was able to develop a sharper view of the impact and weight of different factors and elements, and this understanding resulted in the Figure 9.1.

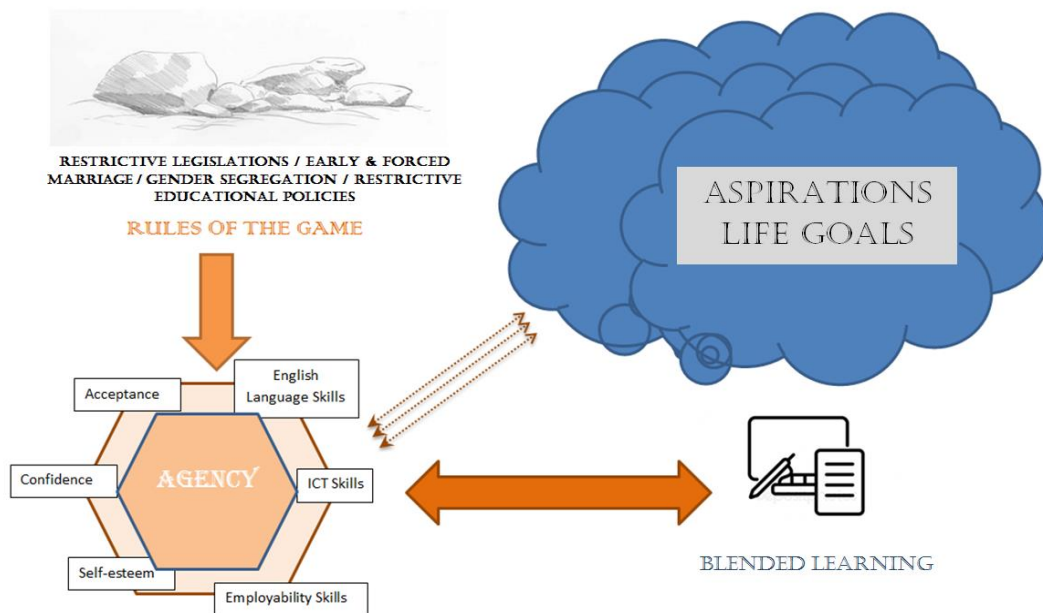


Figure 9.1 The choice framework applied to the context of SRY enrolled in blended learning programmes.

This figure represents these realisations and can be viewed as a proposed framework for future researchers who may consider researching the same terrain. This investigation, although having used the choice framework as its main theoretical framework, amended it slightly to fit the research's nature and goals. Those changes and the rationale behind undertaking them are elaborated below:

- This investigation freed itself from any prescribed lists of agency-based resources and abided by emergent ones (chapters 5 to 8). This investigation consulted the cases to understand their resource set, their importance, and their relationship to BL.
- These portfolio resources are viewed as positive, as well as negative, influencing factors, which may mean they may be enabling or restricting factors towards the achievement of one's empowerment.

- This investigation took its starting point as the aspired functionings and then moved to analysing the contextual elements (surrounding options and choices, resource set, and opportunity structure) that were available, ultimately mapping back to how the cases' initial aspirations had been (or had not been) achieved through the BL course/s.
- This investigation did not concern itself with assessing the degree of empowerment, as it is believed that the picture is so complicated and intricate that a fair and rigorous evaluation of empowerment level is almost impossible.

9.3.2 Contributions to knowledge

9.3.2.1 Contributions to the field of 'Refugee Education'.

Magan and Winter (2017) noticed that “international university students are a widely researched migrant group, yet literature on [students of a refugee background] RBSs in HE is comparably scant” (p. 3). They, therefore, undertook a systematic review of research in that area, aiming to increase understanding of challenges facing RBSs, to inform pedagogy and education more broadly, and to highlight gaps in the literature. Their work informed us about the emerging themes and topics inherent in existing qualitative research that focus on the experiences within higher education of students from a refugee background. Their study was confined to qualitative research published within the last 20 years, in English, in peer reviewed journals, and, more importantly, research that includes views and experiences from the perspective of students. Although their search of the literature initially identified 800 articles, only 10 of these fell within the boundaries of their inclusion criteria. A great number of studies were excluded as they portrayed the experiences of RBSs from the perspectives of their educators, counselors or university administrators. This lack of attention to the perspectives of RBSs themselves raises a red flag and reveals the fact that there is a lack of literature that focuses on presenting students' own 'voice', their own perspective, and that tells their narrative. It is this gap that the current study tries to fill.

This study's contribution lies in its approach to presenting and portraying the 'voice', perspective, and perceptions of refugees. Instead of investigating BL programmes offered to SRY from the perspectives of the programme developers, programme managers or donors, this research centred on the end-beneficiaries' (the refugees) aspirations, experiences, and realities. That research approach was predicated on my belief, first, that without those understandings, educational programmes directed to refugees might be constructed on false assumptions and inaccurate hypotheses, and, secondly, that a good

and clear understanding of end-beneficiaries' perspectives, i.e., those of refugees themselves, would lead to higher probabilities of successful programme implementation. My belief that we have insufficient understanding of the perspectives of refugees is borne out by a similar finding in Tauson and Stannard's (2018) review entitled *EdTech for Learning in Emergencies and Displaced Settings*. Their review, which has recently circulated widely among EiE professionals,

uncovered very limited research that engages with the views, wants, and needs of children and families in emergency settings. What this review has found is that these actors' opinions, attitudes towards technology, and digital literacy levels are all important to successful EdTech usage. Building this understanding should be the first step in developing a clearer understanding of what EdTech is suitable in a given emergency. (p. 59)

Additionally, despite the increasing number of education programmes using ICTs in emergency contexts, "there is scarce research on the impact of interventions implemented for disaster-affected populations" (Burde et al., 2015, p. 59). ICT4EiE is an embryonic subfield of EiE, which might explain the lack of research and robust evidence-based knowledge. This research aims to contribute to this area of knowledge by providing some evidence on blended learning in the context of SRY living in Jordan.

This study's second contribution is its focus on a rather unexplored geographical terrain, i.e., refugee students within the MENA region. The context that refugees in the MENA region find themselves in cannot be compared to that of refugees in any of the developed countries, in terms of the provided services, rights, policies, etc. The bulk of studies and research about refugee students within HE institutions focus on developing on developed countries. For instance, Mangan and Winter (2017) found during their synthesis of the literature that studies conducted in Australia, particularly with African participants, are overrepresented in the literature. Their finding highlights a gap in the research on this topic in other countries. According to Mangan and Winter (2017),

Worldwide, the vast majority of refugees stay in their home region, developing regions hosting 86% of those displaced (UNHCR, 2015a). The research to date focuses on refugees in developed, high-income countries, which may limit the applicability of findings to nations like Pakistan and Lebanon with high levels of refugees. (p. 6)

9.3.2.2 Contributions to research ethics.

Unlike researchers who rely merely on the procedural ethics, I was, thanks to my readings and interaction with researchers in the field, aware of the immense importance of being aware of and fully alerted to the ethical dilemmas that would arise when conducting my research. This investigation was loaded with ethical issues and challenges. Some of those are listed here with the aim of helping researchers who in the future decide to travel the same path.

1- Accessing research participants.

As this study was being conducted, issues arose worldwide related to data protection. While having had promises and months-long communication with a limited number of BL course providers in Jordan which had all assured me that they would provide lists of their BL course alumni, their promises could not be realised after the launch of the “General Data Protection Regulations” (GDPR) on May 25th, 2018. These strict regulations aim to protect personal data by giving individuals control over it. According to these new regulations, additional protection must be given to any kind of data that would reveal a person’s “racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, trade union membership or religious or philosophical beliefs” (Irvine-So, 2018). Being mostly funded by the EU, European course providers in Jordan have to abide by those new regulations, even if the individuals are non-European citizens. Not being able to travel to Jordan complicated the situation further. It took me more than a year to contact some cases. Below is a list of some of the hard lessons learnt during this investigation:

- Do not rely on only a limited set of organisations to provide you with contacts of research participants
- Do not depend or rely on any verbal promises made by organisations
- Start to network and communicate with diverse organisations, practitioners, and researchers very early and do not wait to finish the literature review before doing so.
- Be fully aware of the impact of data protection regulations (international and regional).

2- Informed consent.

I was fully aware that informed consent is closely related to the power disparity between researcher and research participants, especially if the later are marginalised individuals. This tight relationship caused one of the biggest ethical dilemmas. According to Israel and Hay (2006), informed consent is based on two principles: 1) participants’ comprehension of the research and 2) their agreement to voluntarily participate. However, cases that I initially contacted felt imitated and concerned when being asked to sign the consent form.

Marginalised research participants usually question the promise of anonymity, as their names

would be on papers which they do not have control over. However, previous researchers' practices and experiences were my 'lifebelt' when I was being swept down this difficult stream. For this investigation, I resorted to the iterative model proposed by Mackenzie et al. (2007) in combination with oral recorded consent. The first technique ensures that participants do not lack familiarity with research processes and evolving research directions and also that there is development of a shared understanding of what is involved at all stages of the research process. For the later, I followed in the footsteps of Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014), sending out PIS, explaining everything, and only then asking for the participants' consent orally. I, however, added one step, and that was recording that consent "voice".

3- Gatekeeper interventions.

I did not anticipate experiencing any gatekeeper intervention as I understood that concept from my readings. Gatekeeping usually occurs when service providers (food and shelter providers) provide the researcher with research participants' contact details. However, the gatekeeping issue turned out to be one of the toughest ethical moments during this investigation, one that needed quick and firm decisions. A friend of mine, a Jordanian TV reporter, who was, by chance, intending to invite the professor at a university that offers refugee students blended courses to be a guest on her talk show came up with an idea. The reporter proposed that she would go to her prospective guest and ask her to provide me with contact information on students who had been on one of the BL courses in exchange for her being the guest on her talk show; i.e., she made the invitation conditional. I did not agree to that idea at all, because I was too afraid that there would be some sort of coercion and that the students would not be given the chance to decide for themselves whether or not they wanted their details to be shared with me. Additionally, there was a chance that those students would be participating out of a fear that their refusal to participate would have negative consequences. To overcome that possibility, I asked if I could be provided with the contact information for the instructor who had taught the students. I emailed him and provided him with the PIS, asking him to forward it to his students on the BL course and to ask if anyone would be willing to participate in the research. This example points to the necessity of taking decisive actions at times, in order to comply with research ethics and in order to avoid the impact of the asymmetrical power relationship between researcher and researched.

9.4 Recommendations

9.4.1 Recommendations for blended learning programme providers.

Most BL programme providers, especially in the MENA region, promote their programmes by adding the word “empowerment”. However, a lot of elements need to be incorporated in their programme design and delivery to ensure that they provide some kind of empowering learning. Below is a list of those elements or factors as they emerged from this investigation:

1. Incorporating the opportunity structures in programme design, i.e., calculating the impact of legislation, policies, traditions etc. on their programme and programme participants during the design phase;
2. Designing the programme in a participatory fashion to ensure that programme objectives are aligned to end-beneficiaries’ aspirations and goals;
3. Matching offerings of courses to the needs of the labour market and assessing the real situation of what refugees are able to accomplish within their context;
4. Exerting some pressure on national authorities to ensure that the certificates are recognised and the programme is accredited;
5. Offering refugees some opportunities that would make use of the attained skills and knowledge, e.g., offering them a chance to be trainers for upcoming cohorts, implementing a project on the ground etc.;
6. Making sure that any challenging elements that might hinder refugees’ ability to participate, e.g., location, time, facilities etc. are circumvented;
7. Offering the programmes for free and providing stipends to accommodate the economic situation of the refugees;
8. Making sure that refugees are provided with a constructive and learner-centred experience that would benefit them in terms of developing their professional and life skills;
9. Making sure that the platform is mobile-compatible;
10. Incorporating as much video as possible into the developed learning material;
11. Assessing refugees’ needs and interest areas and designing the programmes accordingly; and,
12. Offering females in conservative communities, e.g., Irbid, the option to complete the course fully online.

9.4.2 Recommendations for further research.

The implementation of ICT4E initiatives in crisis and conflict contexts is a new terrain that is clearly booming and ripe with opportunities for expansion. Methods of establishing connections between those programmes and refugees’ empowerment still need to be

established for such initiatives to be fully impactful and as empowering as most of them aim to be. There is still much room for research in this area. Another area that is still mostly overlooked by researchers and practitioners alike is best practices for programme design and implementation that incorporate the peculiarities of crisis and conflict contexts.

This investigation has focused on learning that takes place in a blended format; however, there is a plethora of other innovative modes in crisis and conflict settings that deserve academic attention, e.g., online learning, through tablets, and so on. It can be seen that the use of many of those new modes has been widely disseminated among refugees, despite the wide knowledge gap regarding their effectiveness within those contexts. This investigation has focused on refugees at the tertiary level, as they are the section with the least opportunities related to their education. Only 1% of global refugees are able to access HE (UNHCR, n.d.), i.e., only 195,000 out of the total 7.2 million refugees who complete secondary education have access to HE (Gladwell et al., 2016). Due to the limitations of this research only Syrian refugees were studied, but there are more regions and contexts that need to be understood and investigated.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix I: Consent Form in both languages

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Blended Learning and the Empowerment of Refugees
Name of Researcher: Mona Abdel Fattah Younes
Email: m.abdelfattahahmedyounes@lancaster.ac.uk
Email of Supervisor: m.ostok@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary	
3. I understand that I am participating in a set of interviews and that I am free to withdraw within 1 week after the first the interview has been conducted, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 1 week after the interview my data will be removed.	
4. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher, but that my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.	
5. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	
6. I understand that interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	
7. I agree to have my interviews VIDEO_RECORDED	
8. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
9. I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____ **Date** _____ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University.

استمارة الموافقة

عنوان الدراسة البحثية: تأثير التعليم المدمج على قدرات وكفاءات وحياة اللاجئين

اسم الباحثة: منى عبد الفتاح يونس

وسيلة التواصل مع الباحثة : m.abdelfattahahmedyounes@lancaster.ac.uk

المشرف على البحث: د. مراد أوزتك m.oztok@lancaster.ac.uk

1.	أُقر أنني قرأت الورقة التعريفية الخاصة بالبحث المعنون أعلاه، وبأنني أُتيحت لي الفرصة لإلقاء الأسئلة وأن الإجابات التي حصلت عليها كانت مُرضية.
2.	أقر أنني واعي تماماً أن مشاركتي في الدراسة البحثية هو عمل تطوعي.
3.	أنا واعي أنني سوف أشارك من خلال المقابلات التي سوف تتم معي، وأن لي الخيار الكامل في الانسحاب من المشاركة بعد أسبوع واحد من المقابلة الأولى، وأنني لو انسحبت سوف يتم التخلص من كافة المعلومات التي أدليت بها.
4.	أنا واعي أن المعلومات التي سوف أدلي بها سوف تُستخدم للأغراض البحثية من خلال الدراسة ومن خلال النشر العلمي والمؤتمرات العلمية، ولكن اسمي والمعلومات التعريفية الخاصة بي سوف يتم تجاهلها بحيث لا يتم التعرف عليّ.
5.	أنا واعي أن الباحثة لو وجدت أن هناك خطراً مُحقق بي أو بشخص آخر، ففي هذه الحالة قد تضطر لخرق اتفاقية سرية المعلومات، وستقوم بكل ما بوسعها كي تخبرني قبل القيام بخرق سرية المعلومات.
6.	أنا مدرك أن اسمي لن يظهر في التقارير و المقالات، أو العروض التي سوف يتم من خلالها عرض نتائج البحث ولن يكون هذا إلا بإذن مني.
7.	أنا مدرك أن المقابلات سوف يتم تسجيلها بالصوت، وأن النصوص والمعلومات سوف يتم الحفاظ عليها بشكل آمن.
8.	أنا مدرك أن المعلومات سوف يتم حفظها بحسب القواعد المعمول بها في الجامعة، وذلك لفترة قد تمتد إلى عشرة سنوات بعد انتهاء الدراسة.
9.	أُقر أن الباحثة وفرت المعلومات الخاصة بالخدمات الاستشارية النفسية، والتي يمكن اللجوء إليها لو حدثت وشعرت بالتعب النفسي من جراء المقابلات والمشاركة في البحث.
10.	أنا أوافق في أن أشارك في هذا البحث.

اسم المشارك

التاريخ

توقيع المشارك

- أقر أنا (منى عبد الفتاح يونس) أن المشارك قد أُتيحت له فرصة كاملة لإلقاء الأسئلة حول طبيعة البحث، وقد أُجيب على كافة الأسئلة بأقصى درجة من الصراحة. كما أنه لم يتم الضغط على المشارك بأي صورة من الصور للتوقيع على استمارة الموافقة، وكانت له الحرية الكاملة في اتخاذ قرار المشاركة في الدراسة البحثية.

التوقيع	التاريخ	الباحثة
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يستلم المشارك نسخة موقعة من هذه الاستمارة، أما النسخة الثانية فسوف تبقى مع الباحثة ضمن أوراق البحث.

Appendix II: Participants Information Sheet in both languages

Participant Information Sheet

My name is Mona Younes and I am a PhD student at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study for the fulfilment of my PhD degree. The research is looking into the “Impact of Blended Learning on the Empowerment of Refugees”.

Why have I been invited?

I am inviting you to take part in this research as this will help me to understand how your enrolment in this type of education; i.e., blended education (online +face-to-face) has impacted your empowerment.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you were to decide to take part, this would involve you in a series of online semistructured interviews via Skype, WhatsApp or any other application convenient to you. It is anticipated that each interview will take about 45 minutes and that there will be a set of 3-5 interviews in all during the time span October - November 2018. All interviews will deal with the impact of your enrolment in a blended learning programme on your life, your choices, and your surrounding environment.

Interviews will be sound-recorded, Video recording will take place ONLY upon your consent.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will help managers of educational programmes in the refugee context to understand the impact (whether positive, negative, direct or indirect) of their programmes; however, it will also help academics and researchers to understand the status and conditions of Higher Education in crisis contexts more deeply.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your studies and the way you are assessed on your course/s.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw. If you have taken part in an interview and want to withdraw, you can do so during the first week after the first interview. Again, be assured your information will not be disclosed and your identity will not be identifiable.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any disadvantages to taking part in this research.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interviews, ONLY I, the researcher, (Mona Younes) conducting this study will have access to the data you share with me (data shared with the supervisor will be anonymised).

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g., your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will NOT at any point share it with others. I will anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information and use - by me only- identifiable codes for each participant. All recordings will be destroyed upon finalisation and defending of this research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Data will be used for academic purposes only. These will include my PhD thesis, and some results will be published separately in academic journals. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

Is there any case that would lead the researcher to breach this confidentiality agreement?

IN the very unlikely case, when an informant suggests in the interview that s/he or somebody else might be at risk of harm, the researcher (I) will be obliged to share this information with relevant personnel such as an accredited and trusted psycho-social expert. Information shared will be related ONLY to that harm or risk issue, and not the

whole information. The researcher is obliged to inform you of this breach of confidentiality, if this happens.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact me immediately; below are also the contact details for the research supervisor. If you are unhappy with your participation and would like to communicate with someone from the university who is not directly involved in the research, then please contact: Sheila Walton (Programme Co-ordinator)

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How do I express my willingness to participate in this research?

If you are willing to take part in this research, please express your willingness in a short email and I will be contacting you through that email with follow-ups.

Thank you for considering taking part in this project.

استمارة التعريف بالبحث

أقوم أنا - منى عبد الفتاح يونس - بدراسة دكتوراه من خلال جامعة Lancaster University في المملكة المتحدة، يدور البحث حول تأثير التعليم الإلكتروني على الطلبة اللاجئين.

يهدف البحث إلى رفع الواقع التعليمي للطلبة اللاجئين في الأردن (مرحلة ما بعد الثانوي) من حيث التحديات التي تواجههم لاستكمال المسيرة التعليمية، وتقييم ما إذا كان التعليم الإلكتروني يلعب دوراً في تحسين أوضاعهم المعيشية، وتنمية مهاراتهم الشخصية والمهنية أم لا.

وسائل جمع البيانات تتم من خلال مقابلات مع طلبة لاجئين في الأردن (أي جنسية) عبر تطبيقات شبكة الانترنت المختلفة (سكيب - واتس أب - ماسنجر) أو حتى عبر الهاتف، عدد الطلبة المطوب أن يُشاركوا في البحث تسعة (بحيث تغطي العينة على الأقل ثلاثة من الإناث). يتم تسجيل المقابلات بالصوت فقط.

مواعيد المقابلات يحددها الطلبة وفق ما يناسبهم، وكذلك وسيلة التواصل الإلكترونية الأنسب لهم. تستغرق المقابلة الواحدة بين 45 دقيقة إلى الساعة.

المشاركة في البحث أمر تطوعي بحت، ولكن من قبيل الشكر والتعبير عن الامتنان للطلبة المشاركين سوف أقوم بعمل "جلسة استشارية لكل طالب للمساهمة في تحديد ورسم معالم مسيرته التعليمية، وذلك لما لديّ من خبرة ومعلومات حول الفرص التعليمية المتاحة في كلا الوضعين التقليدي والتعليم عن بُعد.

لن يتم عرض الاسماء الحقيقية للطلبة في الدراسة النهائية، وذلك حفظاً للخصوصية كما سيتم حفظ التسجيلات الصوتية لديّ ولن يطلع عليها أحد.

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Appendix III: Vignettes used during data collection.

Vignette 1:

A refugee from your own home country comes and lives next door. He is a couple of years younger than you. He needs support, help, and advice. You start talking to him. He is asking you about the educational options open to him. What skills will he have to develop to pursue a higher education, as he had only finished primary and middle school in his home country? What are the obstacles and challenges he has to overcome?

1. What will you advise him?
 2. What are the main issues you will focus on during your talk?
 3. What are the main options open to him?
 4. What are the skills he has to develop?
-

Vignette 2:

A friend of yours, who has been attending same BL programme with you, has been selected to provide a group of guests coming from the European Union with a presentation about “My life, as a refugee and the role of education”. Your friend was asked to compile some slides about:

- Economic circumstances
- Social issues
- Cultural issues
- Skills and language
- Impact of education
- Opportunities and options.

Your friend asks you to help him. You discuss with him the content of each slide.

1. What are the main points that you would include under each slide?
 2. Which slide/s do you perceive as being the most important ones?
 3. What will you do to convince the guests to do more for SRY living in Jordan?
-

Vignette 3:

A friend of yours has been doing a lot of volunteer work during the implementation of a course. He helped a lot during the course implementation, helping with facilitation, technical support, and even recruiting new students for the programme. Everyone in the programme knows him and he has a very good reputation. The managers of the blended learning programme ask him to join a meeting that will discuss the plan for delivery of a new course in spring. They send him the main points that will be discussed beforehand. He comes to you and asks you to help him provide the most accurate and impactful answer. The list of questions includes:

1. What needs to be changed to have a more, needs-oriented course?
 2. What needs to be added or deleted to deliver a real competency-based BL programme?
 3. What would make the whole concept of blended learning more attractive to refugees?
 4. What are the main requirements for a good facilitator?
 5. Will you change the technology?
 6. What topics should be covered?
-

Vignette 4:

An average student, from your nationality, is attending a blended learning programme, like the one you attended. He is trying to do his best. He is participating in all discussions, doing his assignments, and asking questions. The facilitator is not taking him as seriously as other students, who are outstanding and more vocal in discussions. He feels really upset and is having thoughts about withdrawing?

1. Should he withdraw?
 2. How should he face his situation?
 3. Is this a case of discrimination? How would you describe the behaviour of this facilitator? How much do you think does discrimination impact one's participation?
 4. Is this facilitator's behaviour a common behaviour? Should it be stopped? If yes, what should be done to stop it?
-

Vignette 5:

A young lady in her early 20s who has been at university in her home country wants to attend a blended learning programme. She searched for one that matches her interest area and found one. She has been working (alone, via self-learning) on her English language during the summer? She applies and gets accepted. Her father is totally against it. He refuses to let her go to the blended programme arguing that 1) it is not so safe to intermingle with the other gender and 2) this BL programme does not lead to a degree or a clear academic path.

- 1- What should she do?
 - 2- Is the stance of the father justified?
 - 3- What happens if she goes and attends the BL programme despite her father's objections?
 - 4- What other choices does she have?
 - 5- How much, do you think, her father's second objection will play a role in her decision?
-

Vignette 6:

A young lady in her early 20s who has been at university in her home country wants to attend a blended learning programme. She searched for one that matches her interest area and found one. She gets to know that her parents are arranging a marriage for her. She does not know what to do? She really would like to pursue her studies. The economic situation of the family is desperate.

- 1- What should she do? What advice will you provide her with?
 - 2- Is this a common case in your context?
 - 3- What do ladies usually do?
 - 4- How much is learning impacted by marriage?
 - 5- What other options does she have?
-

Vignette 7:

A young man of your age gets to know a lady from the host country. They like each other, he decides to marry her. She wants to continue her studies; she has just finished her high school and the first year in a college. He promises her and her family not to prevent her from continuing her studies at the university level. They marry and they are expecting their first baby. She does not know what to do. On the one hand, she wants to continue her studies, and, on the other hand, she is fully aware of the newly conflicting commitments she has.

Questions:

- 1- Should the young man have made such a promise?
 - 2- What should she do? What would you advise her to do?
 - 3- For male research cases: What would you do if you were in the shoes of the young man?
 - 4- For female research cases: What would you do if you were in the shoes of the young lady?
 - 5- How will the families of both newly-weds see the situation?
-

Vignette 8:

An average student, from your nationality, is attending a blended learning programme, like the one you attended. He finds it really hard because of the language; he is also the only one from his cultural background, and he is shy by nature. His father is advising him to start working in the informal sector, maybe in the tailor's shop next door. The tailor needs someone who is young, and no specific skills are needed.

- 1- What would you say to this young man?
 - 2- Is there any way to work while continue studying?
 - 3- When, do you think, this young man should put his family and their needs before his own aspirations and goals?
-

Appendix IV: Baseline questionnaire in both languages.

Please choose the language that you prefer

اختر اللغة التي تناسبك للإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية

Name:	الاسم :
Date of birth:	تاريخ الميلاد:
Place of birth:	مكان الميلاد:
Nationality	الجنسية :
Gender	الجنس:
Date of leaving home country:	تاريخ ترك البلد الأم:
<p>In your home country, where have you been living?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In a city - In a medium-size city - In a rural area - In a desert area 	<p>في بلدك الأم، أين كنت تقطن؟</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - مدينة كبيرة - مدينة متوسطة - منطقة ريفية - منطقة صحراوية
<p>Was Jordan your first host country?</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p> <p>If your answer is “No”, then please identify the country or countries that you lived in prior to settling down in Jordan.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>هل كانت الاردن البلد الأولي للاستقرار بعد الخروج من البلد الأم:</p> <p>نعم _____ لا _____</p> <p>لو كانت الإجابة ب “لا”، فما هي البلد أو البلدان التي تم الاستقرار فيها قبل الوصول للأردن:</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Since when have you been in Jordan?</p>	<p>منذ متى وأنت في الاردن؟</p>
<p>Are you planning to stay and settle in Jordan?</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	<p>هل من المخطط البقاء والاستقرار في الأردن</p> <p>نعم _____ لا _____</p>

<p>If your answer is “No”</p> <p>a) Do you plan to leave Jordan in the near future (a couple of months – a year)? Yes _____ No _____</p> <p>b) What is the other country you are planning to travel to and settle in? _____</p>	<p>لو كانت الإجابة بـ "لا"</p> <p>أ- هل من المخطط الانتقال في المستقبل القريب (عدة أشهر إلى سنة) نعم _____ لا _____</p> <p>ب- ما هي الدولة التي من المخطط الاستقرار النهائي فيها: _____</p>
<p>Who accompanied you during your travel from your home country to the host country?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents - Parents and siblings - The extended family (parents/siblings/aunts/ uncles ...) - Some of my relatives - Some of my friends - I travelled alone. 	<p>مع من كانت رحلة اللجوء إلى الأردن:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - مع الوالدين - مع الوالدين والأخوة. - مع العائلة الممتدة (الوالدين – الأخوة والأعمام والأخوال) - مع صحبة من الاصدقاء - مع بعض الأقارب - بمفردي
<p>With whom do you live in Jordan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents - Parents and siblings - The extended family (parents/siblings/aunts/-uncles ...) - Some of my relatives - Some of my friends - I live on my own. 	<p>مع من تسكن الآن (في الأردن)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - مع الوالدين - مع الوالدين والأخوة - مع العائلة الممتدة (الوالدين – الأخوة والأعمام والأخوال) - مع صحبة من الاصدقاء - مع بعض الأقارب - وحدي
<p>Do you live in Amman?</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p> <p>If the answer is “No”, where do you live? _____</p>	<p>هل تسكن في العاصمة عمان؟</p> <p>نعم _____ لا _____</p> <p>لو كانت الإجابة بـ "لا"</p> <p>أين تقطن؟ _____</p>
<p>Are you working? (any kind of job that provides you with some money)</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	<p>- هل تعمل؟ (أي نوع من الأعمال التي تُدر دخلاً؟)</p> <p>نعم _____ لا _____</p>

<p>If the answer is “yes”, what kind of work is it?</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>- لو كانت الإجابة بـ “نعم”: ما هو العمل الذي تتكسب منه؟</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Are you planning to work in the near future (within this year)?</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	<p>هل تخطط للعمل في المستقبل القريب؟ (خلال السنة القادمة) نعم _____ لا _____</p>
<p>Who is the family’s breadwinner?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My father - My mother - One of my siblings - Myself - We live on donations 	<p>من هو المسؤول الأول عن توفير الموارد للأسرة؟</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - والدي - والدتي - أحد الأخوة - أنا - نعيش على الإعانات.
<p>Is there are big difference (esp. economically) between your life back home and here in Jordan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difference is very big. - There is a big difference. - The life in both countries is similar. - My life in Jordan is much better. 	<p>هل هناك فارق كبير بين ظروف الحياة (بصورة خاصة الاقتصادية) بين بلدك الأم وفي الأردن؟</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - الفارق كبير جداً - هناك فارق كبير - الحياة في البلدين متشابهة - حياتي في الأردن أفضل
<p>How would you rate your adaptation to the new life in Jordan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very difficult - Somehow difficult - It was OK. - Easy - Very easy 	<p>كيف تصف عملية التأقلم على الحياة في الأردن؟</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - صعبة جداً - صعبة بعض الشيء - معقولة - سهلة - سهلة جداً
<p>Was living in Jordan according to what you expected and imagined?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To a big extent - Somehow identical to what I thought - Not identical at all 	<p>هل الحياة في الأردن تتوافق مع تصوراتك قبل الوصول إليها؟</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - تتوافق إلى حد كبير - تتوافق شيء ما - لا تتوافق بالمرّة

Do you own a laptop?	هل تمتلك لاب توب خاص بك؟
Do you own a cell phone?	هل تمتلك هاتف محمول خاص بك؟
Is your cell phone a smart one?	هل الهاتف الذي تملكه هاتفًا ذكيًا؟
When you use the internet, do you use WiFi or 3G?	هل تدخل على الشبكة باستخدام الواي فاي أم باستخدام ال 3G؟
How long do you spend on the internet on a daily basis?	ما هو عدد الساعات التي تقضيها على شبكة الانترنت بصورة يومية؟
Where do you browse the internet? - At home - At an internet café - At friends' homes - At the learning centre	أين تدخل على الشبكة؟ - المنزل - مقاهي الانترنت - عند الأصدقاء - في المركز التعليمي
What are the main activities that you do when being online?	ما هي أهم الأنشطة التي تقوم بها عندما تتصفح الإنترنت؟
How do you rate your ICT skills? - Very good (I do not need any support) - Good - Just OK - Bad - Bad, i.e., I lack the skills that would allow me to use the internet as I wish.	كيف تصف وتقيم مهارات التصفح؟ - جيدة جدا (أجد ما أحتاج إليه دون مساعدة) - جيدة جدا - معقولة - سيئة - سيئة ومعيقة لعمليات البحث و التصفح
What was the last degree you attained before reaching Jordan?	ما هي آخر شهادة دراسية حصلت عليها قبل وصولك إلى الأردن؟

Have you been in a national or international school?	اي نوع من المدارس التحقت بها في بلدك الأم (مدارس حكومية أو لغات – أم مدارس دولية)؟
What was the language of instruction in your home country?	ما هي لغة التدريس التي كانت متداولة في المدرسة التي كنت ملتحق بها؟
Where and how did you learn English?	مهاراتك في اللغة الإنجليزية كيف نمتها وتعلمتها؟
What is your educational goal?	ما هي أهدافك التعليمية؟
What are your general aspirations?	ما هي أهدافك الحياتية بصورة عامة؟
<p>In your opinion, what has been the most important characteristic of the course that you engaged in (please put the following in order, starting with the most important factor):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordability - Flexibility - Alignment with your passion - Being ICT-based 	<p>فيما يخص البرنامج التعليمي المدمج الذي التحقت به، ما هي الأمور التي تعتبر مهمة لعملية المشاركة في البرنامج. رجااء رتب الآتي حسب الأهمية:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - كون البرنامج وفق قدراتي المالية (مقدم مجانا) - مناسبة المكان - الموضوع وتوافقه مع اهتماماتي - سهولة استخدام التكنولوجيا
In order to engage in a BL programme successfully, a lot of personal characteristics and skills are needed. Please arrange those,	للالتحاق ببرنامج للتعليم المدمج وللنجاح فيه هناك العديد من المهارات والكفاءات الضرورية.

<p>according to their importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time management - Communication skills - ICT skills - Study skills 	<p>رجاء قُم بترتيب تلك المهارات حسب أهميتها:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - إدارة الوقت - مهارات التواصل - المهارات التقنية - مهارات التعلم
<p>For a successful delivery of a BL programme, a lot of requirements should be in place. Please arrange them according to their importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable connectivity - Competent facilitators - Technology and suitable equipment - Online learning material 	<p>من أجل تقديم خدمة تعليم مدمج بصورة ناجحة لابد من توفير العديد من الأمور، رجاء قم بترتيب تلك الأمور بحسب أهميتها:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - شبكة انترنت مستقرة - ميسرين ذات كفاءة عالية - تقنيات حديثة ومناسبة - مواد تعليمية مخزنة على شبكة الانترنت
<p>A good facilitator is someone with different attributes and skills. Please order those skills and attributes according to their importance for delivering an efficient BL programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listens to the learners well and gives them a voice - Has a high level of ICT skills - Knows the learning content inside out - Applies collaborative and learner-centred approaches 	<p>يتميز المُيسر (المدرّب) الكفاء بالعديد من المهارات والكفاءات، رجاء قم بترتيب المهارات الآتية بحسب أهميتها لإنجاح برنامج التعليم المدمج:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - يستمع للمتعلمين ويسمح لهم بمساحة لإبداء الآراء - لديه مهارات تقنية عالية - متمكن من المادة التعليمية بصورة عالية. - قادر وماهر في تقديم المادة التعليمية - مستخدماً استراتيجيات التعليم المتمحور حول المتعلم و التعليم التفاعلي.
<p>On a scale of 1-5, please provide the weight for the following aspects that led to your enrolment and successful completion of the BL programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The provision of online learning material - The learner-centred approach - The competency of the facilitators 	<p>برجاء إعطاء الأمور التالية وزناً من (1-5) وذلك حسب أهميتها في مساعدة الطلبة للالتحاق ببرنامج التعليم المدمج وإستكماله بحيث يشير الرقم 5 إلى الأكثر أهمية و 1 إلى الأقل أهمية:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - توفير المادة التعليمية على شبكة الانترنت. - تقديم المادة التعليمية باستخدام استراتيجيات التعليم الذي يكون فيه الطالب هو المحور الرئيس.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The engagement with peers from diverse backgrounds - The f2f meetings and group work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - توفير الميسرين الكفاء . - التفاعل مع الزملاء أصحاب الخلفيات المختلفة. - الجلسات التفاعلية والعمل في فريق
<p>Please order the feasible HE options that are open to you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online learning - BL programmes - Conventional learning (college/university degree programmes) - Studying abroad through a scholarship 	<p>ما هي فرص التعليم العالي (ما بعد الثانوي) المتاحة أمامك، برّجاء قم بترتيبها بحسب توفرها بالنسبة لك:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - التعليم الالكتروني المعتمد كليةً على شبكة الانترنت. - التعليم المدمج - التعليم التقليدي (برامج معتمدة من قبل كليات وجامعات على أرض الواقع) - المنح التعليمية والتعليم خارج الأردن
<p>On a scale from 1-5, please rate the 'feasibility of your options'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online learning - BL programmes - Conventional learning (college/university degree programmes) - Studying abroad through a scholarship 	<p>على مقياس من 1-5، رجاء اعطاء كل من الخيارات الآتية وزناً: (5 الأكثر إتاحة وتوفر ورقم 1 يمثل التعليم الأقل توفرًا):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - التعليم الالكتروني المعتمد كليةً على شبكة الانترنت. - التعليم المدمج - التعليم التقليدي (برامج معتمدة من قبل كليات وجامعات على أرض الواقع). - المنح التعليمية والتعليم خارج الأردن.