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School Integration of Unaccompanied Minors in Portugal: Measures and Practices

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Master in International Studies

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CIES-Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon

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SOCIOLOGIA
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Resumo

Ao longo da História, os seres humanos sempre tiveram tendência a moverem-se por diferentes razões, esperando encontrar um sítio que oferecesse melhores condições de vida. Desta forma, é possível diferenciar dois tipos de migração: a migração voluntária e a migração forçada. O foco desta dissertação é a migração forçada, nomeadamente menores estrangeiros não acompanhados. Um menor estrangeiro não acompanhado é alguém com menos de 18 anos que migra sem os seus pais ou outros representantes legais. Por esta razão, este grupo de jovens é muito vulnerável e enfrentam mais desafios durante o seu processo de migração. Um aspeto importante neste processo é a educação, que tem um papel fundamental nas suas vidas e as próprias escolas podem ser um lugar de apoio para eles. Desta forma, é importante que as escolas implementem medidas e práticas de integração para estes menores. Consequentemente, esta dissertação tem como objetivo identificar que medidas e práticas estão a ser implementadas em meio-escolar para integrar menores estrangeiros não acompanhados em Portugal, incluindo os desafios sentidos pelas escolas neste processo e o que poderá ser melhorado. Para isto, foram feitas entrevistas semiestruturadas em três escolas diferentes e numa casa de acolhimento na área de Lisboa. Durante o processo da análise foi possível determinar algumas conclusões, incluindo a falta de preparação por parte do governo português, que limita as escolas quanto à definição de algumas medidas de integração.

Palavras-chave: Migração forçada; Menores estrangeiros não acompanhados; Integração Escolar; Educação; Portugal

Abstract

Throughout history, human beings have always tended to move for different reasons, hoping to find a place that could provide better living conditions. Consequently, it is possible to distinguish two types of migration: voluntary migration and forced migration. The focus of this dissertation is forced migration, especially unaccompanied minors. An unaccompanied minor is someone under 18 years old who migrates without their parents or other legal guardians. For this reason, this group of young people is very vulnerable and face additional challenges during their migration process. Another important aspect of this process is education, which has a major role in their lives, and schools can be a place of support for them. In this way, it is important that schools implement measures and practices of integration for these minors. Consequently, the goal of this dissertation is to identify which measures and practices are being implemented in the school environment to integrate unaccompanied minors in Portugal, including the challenges felt by schools and what can be improved. For this, semi-structured interviews were conducted in three different schools and in a reception center in Lisbon. During the analysis' process, it was possible to determine some conclusions, including the lack of preparation on the part of the Portuguese government, which limits schools ability to establish some integration measures.

Keywords: Forced Migration; Unaccompanied minors; School integration; Education; Portugal

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Glossary of Acronyms

CEAS – Common European Asylum System

CPCJ – The National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People

CPR – The Portuguese Refugee Council

EU – European Union

IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons

PLA – Português Língua de Acolhimento

PLNM – Português Língua Não Materna

ISS – Institute of Social Security

SEF – The Immigration and Borders Service

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

Forced migration is a phenomenon that has been increasing over time and is a "major political and social issue in many parts of the world" (Castles, 2006, p. 7). According to Castles (2017), forced migration includes refugees and asylum seekers, but also people who were forced to leave their homes due to natural or human-made catastrophes and large-scale development projects. However, refugees and asylum seekers are the most vulnerable people in the migrants' group, since they flee their countries to protect their lives and freedoms (Essomba, 2017).

Within refugee and asylum-seeking people, unaccompanied minors are a particularly vulnerable group because they leave their country without their families, facing additional challenges, including being vulnerable to human trafficking and abuse (Fazel and Stein, 2002). For this reason, they need to have access to protection and care, as demonstrated by Maioli et al. (2021). Since education is one of the most affected fields in forced migration situations and has a major role in children's lives, this area needs special attention in law and policy. However, as stated by Cerna (2019), these children's needs "are not always met by education systems" in host countries, "which can hinder integration potential of these students" (p. 4).

Even though there is not a single or best integration model, there are main elements that can be included in educational policies and measures. According to Cerna (2019), these elements concern the needs of young forced migrants and individual, interpersonal, and school-level factors. Regarding practices, Cerna (2019) suggests flexible learning options, mental health support, and extracurricular activities. In this way, this type of school integration can only be possible if most of these children's needs are addressed (Cerna, 2019).

Since the situation of unaccompanied minors in Portugal is not very well known, the research question of this dissertation is related to how unaccompanied minors are integrated in Portuguese schools, including measures and practices that are being established in the school environment. Even though it is not one of the most relevant countries in terms of receiving forced migrants, Portugal has always shown concern regarding them, especially minors, offering a range of possibilities in education for students in this situation. The goal is to identify which measures and practices are being used in the school environment to integrate unaccompanied minors, including the challenges felt by schools in this process and what can be improved.

The literature on this topic and research related to this theme are also scarce, especially in Portugal. For this reason, this dissertation seeks to contribute to this field, to emphasize the

importance of school integration in unaccompanied minors' lives, and to offer an analysis of the measures and practices implemented to integrate these minors in Portuguese schools.

Regarding structure, this dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter focuses on forced migration movements at a global, European, and Portuguese scale, including the definition of different categories within this phenomenon. The second chapter defines unaccompanied minors, describes how forced migration affects education, and explains the importance of school integration in forced migration situations. The third chapter contextualizes the reception of unaccompanied minors in Portugal and their right to education under Portuguese law. The fourth chapter introduces the research method used, justifies the choice of the interviewees, and describes the types of school programs at each institution. Finally, the fifth chapter analyzes all the interviews, and this analysis is divided into four parts: the needs of unaccompanied minors; challenges in school integration; measures and practices implemented in the schools interviewed; and suggestions to improve this integration. At the end, this dissertation aims at answering the research question that oriented this research: what measures and practices are being implemented in Portuguese schools to integrate unaccompanied minors?

Chapter 1 – Forced Migration in the World

1.1 Population movements on a global scale

Throughout history, human beings have always tended to move for different reasons, hoping to find a place that could provide better life conditions (Santinho, 2016). Consequently, it is possible to distinguish at least two types of migration: voluntary migration and forced migration (Hugo et al., 2018). While the first one is a type of movement in which "the choice and will of the migrants is the overwhelmingly decisive element encouraging people to move", the second one happens when migrants have no choice but to move since they face death in their hometown (Hugo et al., 2018, p. 4). In other words, forced migration includes people who are "forced to leave their homes by violence, persecution, development projects, natural disasters or human-made catastrophes" (Castles, 2006, pp. 7-8).

Even though it is not something new, various authors agree that forced migration has increased significantly in volume, complexity, and importance in recent decades (Castles, 2017; Hugo et al., 2018; Hynie, 2018; OECD, 2019). According to Castles (2006), the main explanation for this increase is related to the political and economic changes that happened since the end of the Cold War, leading to "profound social transformations in less-developed countries" that consequently contributed to violent conflicts (p. 24). Additionally, since the end of the Cold War, the nature of conflicts has also changed, and mass displacement has become a deliberate objective (Castles, 2006; Dryden-Peterson, 2016). As demonstrated by Castles (2006), the number of forced migrants grew from 2.4 million in 1975 to 17.8 million in 1992.

More recently, the 2014-15 forced migrants' movement was unprecedented, especially due to the scale and diversity of the flows within a short time period (Cerna, 2019). As shown by the OECD (2019), the number of forced migrants has increased "from 11.1 million in mid-2013 to 19.9 million in mid-2018", mainly due to the Syrian War and conflicts and humanitarian crises in other countries, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, Sudan, and Central America. These numbers are nowadays "at their highest levels in history" (OECD, 2019), and at the end of 2021 there were 89.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, which "is more than double the 42.7 million people who remained forcibly displaced at the end of 2012 (UNHCR, 2022).

If the 2014-15 forced migrants' movement was mainly caused by the Syrian War, conflicts, and humanitarian crises, these most recent figures from 2021 were the result of similar issues (IOM, 2021). Therefore, the main migration and displacement events in 2021 were related to conflicts (in countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic, Yemen,

the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan), economic and political instability (in countries like Venezuela and Afghanistan), and climate-related disasters in different parts of the world (IOM, 2021).

However, such large numbers of forced migrants on a global scale "present major multinational, national, subnational and community challenges" (Hugo et al., 2018, p. 2). Besides the lack of preparation of most countries to host these people within a short time period, there is also a lack of understanding of the trends, causes, and characteristics of forced migration (Cerna, 2019; Hugo et al., 2018). As a result, governments struggle to establish policy on how to host these people and to provide basic rights, such as access to education and health care, demonstrating that there are "a number of weaknesses in the capacity of host countries to cope with such a large and unforeseen inflow of people in need of protection" (Cerna, 2019, p. 7).

Moreover, Castles (2017) adds that there is currently a crisis in the relationship between developed and developing countries, and forced migration is one factor of this issue. Simultaneously, Castles (2017) also argues that if developed countries are facing a migration crisis, "it is an ideological and political one" (p. 188). First, the numbers of forced migrants are relatively small in developed countries, since most of them stay in developing countries (Castles, 2017; OECD, 2019); second, there is a widespread popular discourse of fear and violence in relation to forced migrants, which influences developed countries' policy regarding migration issues (Castles, 2017; Santinho, 2016).

In other words, governments and people in receiving countries are often reluctant to accept forced migrants, and this reaction can be seen, for example, in the containment measures adopted by European countries, which include border restrictions (Castles, 2017, 2006). Nevertheless, if on the one hand, these restrictions are not the solution to stopping unwanted migrants (Castles, 2017), on the other hand, they do not follow the two main international legal documents governing cross-border movements: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Firstly, the UDHR was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948 and contains 30 articles concerning rights and freedoms, forming the basis for international human rights law. Regarding forced migrants, this document recognizes that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person" in Article 3 and "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" in Article 14 (United Nations, 1948). Secondly, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol defined the framework for international refugee protection, setting a universal refugee definition and establishing the rights of refugees and the legal obligations of states to protect them (Oliveira, 2022).

1.2 The categories of forced migration

As stated by Castles (2017), forced migration includes different legal and political categories, and all of them "involve people who have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere" (p. 173). However, these categories cannot be summarized only into the word 'refugees': first, this category is very limited in this context; second, most forced migrants depart for reasons that are not recognized by international law; and third, conceptualization in this case is essential to effectively measure and analyze this population (Castles, 2017; Hugo et al., 2018). In this way, and according to Castles (2017), forced migration can be characterized by six different categories of migrants.

The first category is refugees, and it was officially defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, in which Article 1 states that a refugee is someone living outside the country of his or her nationality and cannot return due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (United Nations General Assembly, 1951). Moreover, Cerna (2019) adds that a refugee is a person who has successfully applied for asylum and has refugee protection. Therefore, this group of people is better in comparison to other forced migrants since "they have a clear legal status and enjoy the protection of a powerful institution: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees" (Castles, 2017, p. 174).

The second category concerns asylum-seekers, and these are people who have moved across international borders to seek protection but whose claims for refugee status are pending (Castles, 2017; Cerna, 2019). Since determination procedures and appeals can take many years, "asylum-seekers sometimes live in a drawn-out situation of uncertainty and inactivity" (Castles, 2006, p. 9). In addition to this, just a minority of asylum-seekers are accepted as refugees (Cerna, 2019; Amnesty International, 2019), especially because the media and governments do not see them as "real victims of persecution, but simply economic migrants[1] in disguise" (Castles, 2017, p. 175). The ones who cannot obtain refugee status have to leave the country where they have arrived (Cerna, 2019).

The third category is related to internally displaced persons (IDPs), and they are defined as someone who forcibly moves inside their own country due to armed conflict, natural or human-made catastrophes, and situations of generalized violence (Amnesty International,

[1] An economic migrant is a person who chooses to leave his or her country of residence only for financial or economic reasons, and, due to this, they cannot receive international protection since they are not fleeing because of persecution (Amnesty International, 2019).

2019). Even though there are more IDPs than refugees, there is not an international legal instrument or institution to specifically protect them, and since they do not cross international borders, they are a responsibility of their own government, which is the same institution that has persecuted and displaced them (Castles, 2017,2006).

Finally, Castles (2017) refers three more final forms of forced migration: the development displaces, who are forced to move due to large-scale development projects (such as, for example, airports or dams) and "for whom there is no protective regime" (p.176); the environmental and disaster displaces, which includes people that forcibly moved due to climate change disasters (such as land degradation or desertification), natural disasters (like earthquakes or landslides), and man-made disasters (including radioactivity and industrial accidents); the people-trafficking and smuggling, which "is the trafficking of people across international borders" and this is a widespread practice, being "a product of the increasingly restrictive immigration policies of rich countries" (p. 177).

1.3 Forced migration in the European Union (EU)

The EU is one of the main destinations for international migrants due to different political, social, and economic factors such as political stability, public order, and economic prosperity (Gruszczak, 2017). These factors not only attract economic migrants but also forced migrants, who are victims of violence, oppression, armed conflicts, extreme poverty, hunger, or inhuman exploitation and come from various regions of the world, including the Middle East, South Asia, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, or sub-Saharan Africa (Gruszczak, 2017). It was in the second decade of the 21st century that the EU witnessed these unstable developments[2] in the regions mentioned before, and 1.3 million migrants applied for asylum in 2015, which was an unprecedented number of applications (Gruszczak, 2017; Oliveira, 2022).

The number of applications has been decreasing since 2017, and, more recently, there were 535,255 applications in 2021, which is equivalent to 0.1% of the EU population (Eurostat, 2022; Oliveira, 2022). Additionally, most of the asylum applications were from Syrian (98 310), Afghan (83 510) and Iraqi (25 965) citizens, and "the largest number of applications were lodged in Germany (148 235), France (103 810) and Spain (62 065)" (Eurostat, 2022). Moreover, these inflows are not new, and, for instance, 672 000 migrants applied for asylum in 1992, most of them coming from the former Yugoslavia (Oliveira, 2022).

[2] Gruszczak (2017) mentions the Arab Spring in 2011, NATO's intervention in Libya, the intensification of the civil war in Syria, the fast expansion of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the enduring internal conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the known instability in the Horn of Africa.

However, if in the past this type of movement was not considered to be unbearable, today it is described in the European political debate as a crisis (Archibugi et al., 2022). In addition to this, the European policies spread the idea that the EU is being "invaded" by these people and that not all of them are "real refugees or asylum-seekers" (Santinho, 2016, p. 19). Ferreira (2016) adds that this situation reflects the disagreements between EU Member States, the lack of European solidarity, and the EU's inability to find a solution to deal with migration flows. In the end, the EU remains unsuccessful in the creation of a common immigration and asylum policy, which also questions the EU's defense of human rights (Ferreira, 2016; Oliveira, 2022).

Today, the asylum system in the EU follows human rights laws and international refugee laws, including the UDHR, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and its 1967 Protocol (Maani, 2018; Oliveira, 2022). One of the first documents established by the EU to regulate this system was the Dublin Convention, which was signed in 1990 and came into force in 1997 (Oliveira, 2022). This document focuses on determining which Member State "is responsible for processing the asylum-seeker's application" and, in this way, declares that the Member State "which the asylum seeker first enters is responsible for registering the application" (Maani, 2018, p. 97). Since this process can take too much time, the convention equally allows asylum-seekers to stay in the Member State they first enter until the end of the determination (Maani, 2018).

The Dublin Convention was initially seen as an efficient solution to ease tensions between Member States regarding refugees, but nowadays it "appears to be unfairly burdening smaller countries, specifically those with fewer resources" (Maani, 2018, p. 98). As a result, some Member States fear for their national interests and state sovereignty and cooperate less on this issue (Maani, 2018). According to Maani (2018), it is also argued that this convention should be repealed since it imposes border controls between Member States, which goes against the Schengen Agreement.

In this way, the EU has been trying to develop a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) since the implementation of the Dublin Convention, aiming to involve all Member States in the reception of refugees (Oliveira, 2022). It was not until May 2015 that the European Commission presented the European Agenda on Migration, which was a consequence of the migrant boat sinking in April 2015 that killed around 700 people in the Mediterranean Sea[3] (Archibugi et al., 2022; Ferreira, 2016). Besides defining a range of urgent policy measures to

[3] The Mediterranean Sea is the deadliest migration route in the world, making it one of the main challenges in the EU's migration management (Ferreira, 2016).

deal with this issue and giving solutions in the medium and long term, this Agenda mainly aims at defining a common strategy to manage these migration flows (Ferreira, 2016; Oliveira, 2022).

The European Agenda on Migration focuses mainly on four pillars: the reduction of incentives for irregular migration; the improvement of border management by securing external borders and saving lives; the development of a common asylum policy; and the establishment of a new policy on legal migration (European Commission, 2015). Furthermore, concerning foreign policies, the EU additionally established various agreements with some third countries of transit, including Turkey, Morocco, and Libya, with the purpose of reducing these migration flows (Archibugi et al., 2022). For instance, the EU-Turkey agreement was signed in March 2016, aiming at ending the irregular migration flows from Turkey to Greece and improving the reception conditions for refugees in Turkey (Archibugi et al., 2022).

1.4 Forced migrants in Portugal

Concerning forced migration, Portugal is not one of the main destinations for refugees and asylum-seekers, both on a global and European scale (Oliveira, 2022; Santinho, 2013; Sousa et al., 2021). There are various reasons for this, including the considerable distance from Portugal to the center of Europe; the lack of direct flights between the native countries of forced migrants and Portugal; the lack of family and social networks developed in this country; and the general idea that "Portugal is a poor country and, for that reason, is not attractive in terms of job opportunities" (Santinho, 2016, p. 280). Besides its small number, this group of people in the Portuguese territory is very diverse, especially regarding origin, language, religion, career, social class, gender, and age (Santinho, 2013). It is these factors that also contribute to the lack of political and academic debate about their reality and daily difficulties in this country (Santinho, 2013).

Despite this, Portugal was one of the first countries to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Dublin Convention, assuming the responsibility to receive refugees and asylum-seekers in its territory (Oliveira, 2022). More recently, Portugal was one of the European countries that demonstrated more solidarity towards forced migrants in 2015, participating in the relocation of asylum-seekers from other Member States (especially from Greece and Italy) and in the refugee resettlement programs, which are coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and concern refugees that are still outside the EU (Oliveira, 2022). In 2021, as a consequence of the incidents that occurred in Afghanistan, Portugal equally participated in the humanitarian admission program for Afghans (Oliveira, 2022).

Regarding the Portuguese legislation, the rights and duties of asylum-seekers and refugees are guaranteed, providing a more positive integration that includes permission to work, access to education, and access to the National Health Service under the same conditions as the Portuguese people (Santinho, 2013). As stated in Article 15 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic – Seventh Revision (2005), "all foreigners and stateless persons who find themselves or who reside in Portugal enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same duties as Portuguese citizens". Moreover, Portugal established the "Lei do Asilo" (Asylum Law), which involves Law nº 27/2008 of June 30th and Law nº 26/2014 of May 5th. This Asylum Law determines the conditions and procedures that grant asylum or subsidiary protection, distinguishing who is an asylum-seeker and who is a refugee.

Apart from the resettled refugees (who already arrive in Portugal with refugee status), forced migrants are subjected to a long process to be officially recognized as refugees or to have subsidiary protection (Oliveira, 2022; Santinho, 2016). According to Oliveira (2022), this process has four different stages: the first stage concerns the application for international protection, which should be presented to the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) at the earliest opportunity; the second one covers the admissibility of the process; the third one is the instruction phase, which lasts between six and nine months, and a residence permit is issued, valid for six months and renewable; and finally, the fourth stage is when the refugee status or the subsidiary protection[4] is granted.

As demonstrated by the most recent data available, in 2021 there were 1,537 applications for international protection in Portugal, which was an increase of 53.4% compared with the previous year, when there were 1,002 applications recorded (SEF, 2022). From the 1,537 applications, 68.4% were presented by men, with most of them being in the age group between 19 and 39 years old (SEF, 2022). In terms of origin, according to SEF (2022), most of the asylum-seekers came from Asia (867) and Africa (567), more specifically from Afghanistan (665), Morocco (118), and India (82)[5]. It is also reported that in 2021, SEF granted 228 refugee status and 78 subsidiary protections (SEF, 2022).

[4] Subsidiary protection is a type of status given to someone who cannot have refugee status but is in danger if he or she returns to their country of origin (Oliveira, 2022).

[5] In this report by SEF (2022), it is also stated that 350 of the asylum-seekers came from other countries, but they are not specified.

Chapter 2 – Education and Unaccompanied Minors

2.1 Who are unaccompanied minors?

Children and youth in forced migration situations represent more than 50% of the world's displaced population (Fazel and Stein, 2002; IOM, 2011; Roberto and Moleiro, 2021; Santinho, 2016). Within this group, there are certain individuals who face an increased situation of vulnerability, which is the case of unaccompanied minors (Kanics et al., 2010; OECD, 2019). According to the OECD (2019), an unaccompanied minor is defined as someone under 18 years old who migrates without their parents or other legal guardians. Maioli et al. (2021) also follow this definition and add that the number of unaccompanied minors on a global scale is increasing. Consequently, this situation is becoming a serious global challenge, especially due to "war, political strife and instability, natural disasters, mass population displacement, and extreme poverty" (Carlson et al., 2012, p. 1).

However, this issue is not new, and minors have crossed borders alone for centuries and for different reasons (Kanics et al., 2010). Similar to adults, unaccompanied minors flee their homes due to armed conflict, severe poverty, persecution, sexual exploitation, religious or cultural traditions, and the death of relatives (Halvorsen, 2002; Santinho, 2016). By contrast, these minors differ from adults and from other young migrants in their vulnerable situation, having additional challenges and facing greater risk of harm to their health and integrity (Cerna, 2019; Maioli et al., 2021; Menjívar and Perreira, 2019).

The lack of protection provided by a family can have short-term and long-term health consequences (Maioli et al., 2021). Unaccompanied minors experience traumatic events and travel alone in unsafe and stressful conditions, relying on smugglers or other individuals in the same situation as theirs (Menjívar and Perreira, 2019). Due to this, they can suffer from mental health problems related to "psychosocial difficulty, behavioral problems, negative role modelling and substance abuse" (OECD, 2019). Fazel and Stein (2002) are more specific and demonstrate that these minors are mainly diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. This situation not only threatens their integration prospects but can also affect their emotional, moral, and cognitive development, increasing delinquency (Fazel and Stein, 2002; OECD, 2019). Additionally, some minors can have other health problems, such as malnutrition, dehydration, or infectious diseases acquired before or during their journey (Carlson et al., 2012).

Moreover, unaccompanied minors are more vulnerable to human trafficking, abuse, child labor, and exploitation (Fazel and Stein, 2002; Kanics et al., 2010; Maioli et al., 2021; OECD,

2019). As stated by Maioli et al. (2021), travel route restrictions and border enforcement result in "unaccompanied minors relying on smugglers for their journey or migrating alone", contributing to highly unsafe travel (p. 1). In addition to this, these minors are more likely to move illegally and often travel with false documents or with no papers at all, increasing the risk of suffering from all the dangers mentioned before (Fazel and Stein, 2002; Kanics et al., 2010).

Another important factor that can contribute to their vulnerable situation is the post-migration experience (Menjívar and Perreira, 2019). According to Menjívar and Perreira (2019), when unaccompanied minors arrive at their destinations, they face various obstacles that raise their stress levels, including detention and court proceedings to decide if they are qualified for international protection or other national-specific laws. When it comes to education and schools, unaccompanied minors "need to adjust to a new education system and a new school culture", which can be different from those in their home countries (Cerna, 2019, p. 25). In addition to this adaptation, unaccompanied minors can also experience bullying and discrimination in schools, exacerbating mental health problems and school failure (Fangen, 2006; Mateus, 2019; Samara et al., 2019).

Regarding international law, unaccompanied minors are entitled to international protection under different international treaties, including those related to human rights law, refugee law, and humanitarian law (IOM, 2011; Maioli et al., 2021). All of these international legal instruments "establish a wide spectrum of responsibilities of states towards unaccompanied minors (…) on their territory", but their application in each country's domestic law can vary (Maioli et al., 2021, p. 7). The main document governing the rights of these minors is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, established in 1989 and currently the most ratified human rights treaty in history[6] (Maioli et al., 2021).

Besides officially defining who is a child[7], this Convention additionally states in Article 22 that every unaccompanied minor should "receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance" (United Nations, 1989). In other words, every country that has signed this Convention has to "develop national legislation, establish administrative structures, carry out research and data compilation, and provide comprehensive training" (IOM, 2011, p. 48). Despite this, data on these minors is scarce and lacks fundamental information such as age,

[6] Apart from the United States, this Convention has been ratified by every member state of the UN (Maioli et al., 2021).

[7] According to Article 1 of this Convention, "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (United Nations, 1989).

gender, and origin, limiting policy development and the implementation of targeted support services (Cerna, 2019).

These minors can only succeed and have good long-term outcomes if they have access to appropriate care and protection (Maioli et al., 2021). As suggested by Halvorsen (2002), one of the first actions towards these minors should be to trace their families "in order to establish contact and explore the long-term possibility for family reunification" (p. 35). Another urgent action should be the provision of a guardian and school enrollment so these minors' rights and interests can be safeguarded (Halvorsen, 2002; OECD, 2019). This guidance from an early stage can also improve the integration process by supporting unaccompanied minors in learning a new language and customs, adjusting to a new culture, qualifying for further education, and stabilizing mental health (Carlson et al., 2012; OECD, 2019).

Another crucial aspect is the initial reception period, in which it is important to take individual needs into account (OECD, 2019). Even though there is no universal model, the OECD (2019) refers to some suggestions that should be followed to improve the minors' experience in this phase: detention should be avoided since it can have a negative impact on the psychological and physical well-being of these minors; processing times should be accelerated so minors spend the least time possible in temporary reception facilities and integration can begin; and, finally, a variety of care arrangements should be available and should be provided based on an assessment of the minors' needs and circumstances.

2.2 When education faces forced migration

For most youth, education is fundamental and "one of the most valuable socializing activities" (Wilkinson, 2002, p. 173). For young forced migrants, education also has a major role in their lives, and schools are a place where they can find support, especially in terms of mental health problems, social exclusion, and poor educational outcomes (Block et al., 2014). In other words, schools are places that can promote "successful settlement outcomes and social inclusion" for these forced migrants (Block et al., 2014, p. 1338). However, different authors agree that these minors face numerous challenges at the educational level, which demonstrates how forced migration seriously affects education (Block et al., 2014; Cerna, 2019; Essomba, 2017; OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2018; UNHCR, 2021).

When compared with economic migrants, forced migrants have no other choice but to interrupt their schooling and flee their homes "without being able to bring evidence of their credentials, qualifications, and diplomas" (Essomba, 2017, p. 211). Simultaneously, they can also suffer from trauma, and this issue is not always taken into account since they are treated as

economic migrants and most teachers in the host country are not trained to deal with this situation (Essomba, 2017). In addition to this, and as referred to by Essomba (2017), forced migrants experience numerous changes and shifts related to their homes in the host country while in the transition between being asylum seekers and having refugee status, which affects progress in education as well.

In the case of unaccompanied minors, they face additional challenges, such as dealing with age-related restrictions (Cerna, 2019). In other words, some countries have this type of restriction, which hampers their enrollment in schools since most of them arrive when they are 16 or 17 years old (Cerna, 2019). At this age, students in host countries are almost completing compulsory education, but unaccompanied minors usually spend a long period crossing borders or staying in refugee camps, which delays their education path (Cerna, 2019). Consequently, these minors do not have enough time to learn the host country's language and new content before they do "the tests that determine eligibility for further education" (OECD, 2019).

As demonstrated by the UNHCR (2022), at all levels, forced migrants' enrolment is lower than that of natives or economic migrants, especially in secondary education. In secondary education, young forced migrants "are at greatest risk of being left behind" and, consequently, face huge risks concerning financial prospects, their independence, and health outcomes (UNHCR, 2021, p. 6). Instead of experiencing a developmental stage of their lives that influences their adult identity, these students are missing the opportunity to grow and develop their skills (UNHCR, 2021).

In this way, countries need to recognize these minors' right to education in law and develop this right in practice (UNESCO, 2018). To put it another way, forced migrants' education "depends on the laws, policies, and practices in place in each national context" (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 135). Regarding the right to education, this right is guaranteed in different human rights treaties, including the UDHR[8] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child[9] (McCowan, 2010; UNESCO, 2018). In terms of the forced migrants' right to education, it is guaranteed in the 1951 Refugee Convention, more specifically in Article 22, which not only declares this right but also states that these migrants should have the same opportunities as nationals in education (United Nations, 1951).

[8] Article 26 states that "everyone has the right to education" (United Nations, 1948).
[9] Article 28 states that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education" (United Nations, 1989).

2.3 The importance of school integration

Even though there is not an official definition of integration in academic research due to its complexity, it is widely agreed that successful integration happens when an immigrant has equal access to opportunities and resources as natives, participates in society, and feels safe (Hynie, 2018; Welply, 2021). This success is strongly determined by policies, which should also take into account the vulnerable circumstances[10] in which these forced migrants arrive (Hynie, 2018). Additionally, the whole integration process can influence the relationship established between forced migrants and host countries (Sousa et al., 2021).

Another concept that is closely connected with integration is inclusion. According to Welply (2021), while integration refers to "the role of institutional structures in promoting social cohesion", inclusion focuses "on removing barriers" so everyone can have access to equal opportunities, including education for all children (p. 32). Similar to integration, there is still no consensus around the definition of inclusion (Welply, 2021). However, both concepts have become important in policy at national and international levels (Welply, 2021).

One of the main factors that influences the success of integration is "the performance of educational systems" (Alba and Holdaway, 2013, p. 2). The integration of forced migrants in education systems not only improves their academic outcomes but also stimulates their social and emotional development (Cerna, 2019; Fazel and Stein, 2002; OECD, 2019). In addition to this, schools are also the first place where forced migrants establish a relationship with native students and where the host culture is introduced and learned (Ager and Strang, 2008; Wilkinson, 2002). In other words, school integration can have a major impact on the education, learning, and future outcomes of young forced migrants (Block et al., 2014; Cerna, 2019).

Schools should also take into consideration that forced migrants will respond differently to their new environment, and this depends on individual and contextual factors such as their origin, ethnicity, race, culture, religion, and background before and during migration (Cerna, 2019). Moreover, not only do these young people "need more time to adjust to the new education system", but they also have to deal with other issues, such as trauma (OECD, 2019). Due to this, school integration for forced migrants can be more complex and difficult than for economic migrants (OECD, 2019).

According to Cerna (2019), "there is no single or best integration model", but school integration can be more effective if forced migrants make some adjustments to integrate and if

[10] As stated by Sousa et al. (2021), besides having to adapt to a new society and culture, forced migrants have to deal with trauma and stress, which can strongly affect their mental health.

the host society makes some changes to receive these young people at the same time (p. 23). Despite this, this author suggests a holistic model for the school integration of forced migrants that "depicts the relationship between needs, factors, policies, and educational integration" (p. 33). This school integration of forced migrants can be possible if most of "their learning, social, and emotional needs are addressed" (Cerna, 2019, p. 33).

Concerning needs, according to Cerna (2019), young forced migrants have different "learning, social, and emotional needs that have to be addressed before integration can be successful" (p. 24). As stated by this author, these needs are related to education, communication, safety, identity, belonging, and loss and trauma. All these needs are simultaneously influenced by factors that influence the policies and practices for school integration (Cerna, 2019).

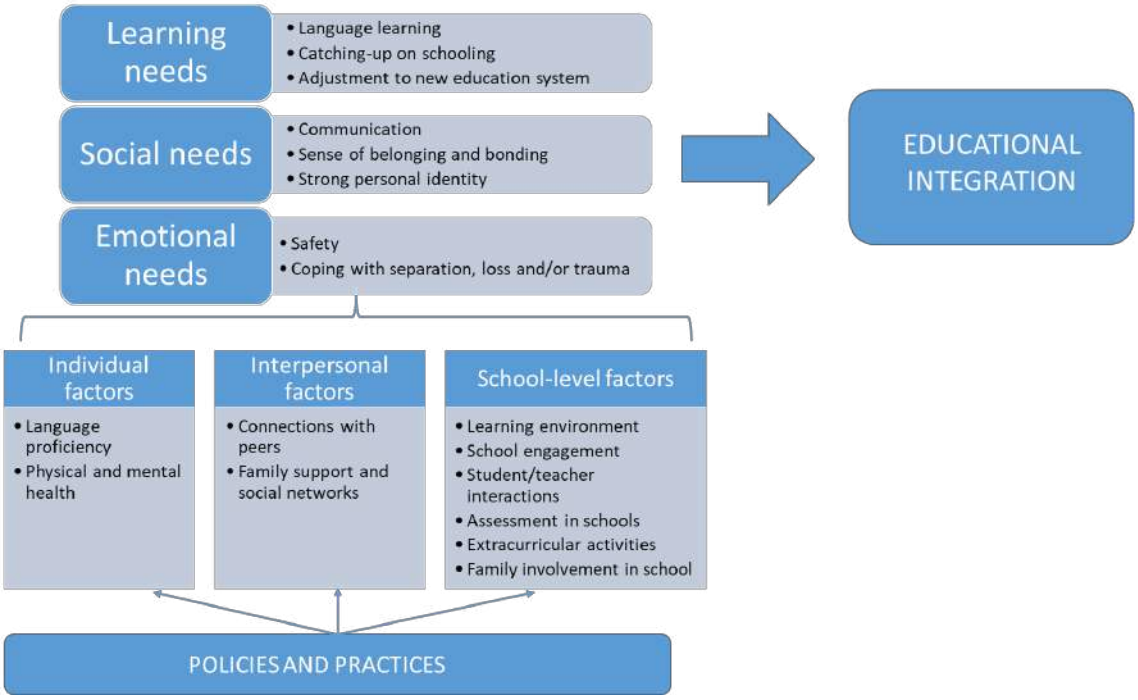
Regarding education, these young people do not want to feel they are behind in comparison to their peers, and, because of this, they have the need to adjust to a new education system and the need to overcome interrupted schooling (Cerna, 2019). In terms of communication, this author states that forced migrants not only need to learn the host country's language to succeed in school, but they also need to develop their mother tongue. Additionally, they also have the need to communicate with others, which can be difficult at the beginning. These needs concerning communication are related to identity and belonging. This author also stated that these minors have the need to feel a sense of belonging and the need to develop their character, which can be constructed by "combining the culture of the home with the culture of the host society" (p. 26).

Concerning safety, forced migrants have the need to feel safe in their new countries, especially because many of them have experienced war and conflict, as stated by Cerna (2019). In this way, schools can be a safe space where they can meet new people and find learning opportunities. At the same time, these students need to cope with loss and trauma, especially unaccompanied minors who were separated from their parents. This author states that these young migrants may suffer from mental health problems that "affect their lives and their chances of integrating into host societies" (p. 26).

As mentioned before, all these needs are influenced by factors. As described by Cerna (2019), these factors can be divided into three categories: individual factors, interpersonal factors, and school-level factors. The first category includes "language proficiency, mother tongue proficiency, and physical and mental health" (p. 27). The second category involves "connections with peers as well as family and social support" (p. 28). Finally, the third category consists of learning "environment, teacher-student interactions, school engagement, assessment

at school-level, extra-curricular activities, and parental involvement in school community" (p. 29).

Figure 2.1: The holistic model for educational integration suggested by Cerna (2019)



Most educational policies towards forced migrants tend to focus on access to education and mental health (Cerna, 2019). However, and as stated by Cerna (2019), it is crucial that these policies address all the referred needs through this holistic model, which can vary depending on the specific needs of the students in each classroom, school, and education system. Consequently, and following the statements of this author, to build a holistic model and to prepare an individualized plan for learning and development, schools need to evaluate language, skills and well-being needs of forced migrants. Furthermore, this author presents some practices that can be implemented to improve school integration, including flexible learning options, particular language classes, teacher training, mental health support, and extra-curricular activities.

On the other hand, there are different barriers to effective school integration. Firstly, the lack of data regarding students in forced migration situations restricts the creation and implementation of policies (Cerna, 2019). Secondly, most forced migrants do not have documentation, and this "makes inclusion in national education systems more difficult" (UNESCO, 2018, p. 67). Thirdly, these minors do not have enough knowledge of the language of instruction, which affects their ability to learn and communicate since most classes are taught

in the host language (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Silva and Gonçalves, 2011; UNESCO, 2018). Fourth, these students may also experience bullying and discrimination from natives in the school environment (Fangen, 2006; Mateus, 2019; Samara et al., 2019).

Chapter 3 – The Portuguese Context

3.1 The reception of unaccompanied minors in Portugal

Even though the situation of unaccompanied minors in Portugal is not very known, the number of these forced migrants has been rising in the Portuguese territory (Oliveira, 2022; Roberto and Moleiro, 2021; Rosa, 2015). According to the Portuguese "Lei do Asilo" (Asylum Law), unaccompanied minors are people under 18 years old who arrive in Portugal without their parents or legal guardians. Additionally, due to their situation, these minors are identified as people who are at risk (Law nº 147/99 of September 1st; Roberto and Moleiro, 2021). This means that under "Lei de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens em Perigo" (Children and Youths at Risk Protection Law) or Law nº 147/99 of September 1st, these minors are protected and supported with additional measures, including the support of independent living[11]. These additional measures end when these minors are 18 years old or, if requested, when they are 21 years old (Law nº 147/99 of September 1st).

Most of the unaccompanied minors in Portugal are asylum-seekers, and their asylum application is similar to a normal one (SEF, 2008). The only big difference is related to how these minors are received and integrated into Portuguese society (SEF, 2008). As demonstrated by Roberto and Moleiro (2021), there are four main institutions involved in this whole process: SEF; the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR); the Family and Juvenile Court; and the National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People (CPCJ)[12].

When an unaccompanied minor submits an asylum application, SEF receives it and starts the procedure (Oliveira, 2022). At the same time, this institution communicates this situation immediately to CPR and starts another procedure with the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find family members of the minor (Oliveira, 2022). In the instruction phase, unaccompanied minors cannot stay in a detention facility, and CPR is the organization that ensures housing and food for them (Oliveira, 2022). Besides this, CPR is also responsible for organizing a life plan for the minors, which includes psychosocial support, access to the National Health Service, Portuguese lessons, and access to the education system or vocational training (Oliveira, 2022).

[11] This measure consists of financial support and psychosocial care for minors aged over 15 years old (Law nº 147/99 of September 1st).

[12] This institution mainly promotes children and young people's rights, ensuring their safety, education, health, and development (SEF, 2008).

In this process, SEF also communicates this situation to the Family and Juvenile Court, which designates CPR as the legal guardian of these unaccompanied minors and applies measures of protection and promotion of rights (SEF, 2008). Additionally, SEF can resort to medical expertise to determine the age of unaccompanied minors, and this age assessment includes wrist and dental X-rays (SEF, 2008).

In addition to these spontaneous asylum applications, Portugal has been receiving unaccompanied minors from Greece under the voluntary relocation scheme (Oliveira, 2022). This scheme was presented in 2020, when it was estimated that there were approximately 5 000 unaccompanied minors in Greece (Oliveira, 2022). When these minors arrive in Portugal, they are also protected and supported by the "Lei de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens em Perigo" (Children and Youths at Risk Protection Law) (Oliveira, 2022). Moreover, they are accommodated in specialized reception centers that have technical and educational teams specifically trained for this project (Oliveira, 2022).

Due to these two situations, Oliveira (2022) states that the analysis of unaccompanied minors in Portugal has to be divided into two groups: the ones who spontaneously submit an asylum application and are protected by CPR; and the ones who come from Greece under the voluntary relocation scheme and are protected by the Institute of Social Security (ISS).

Regarding the most recent data available, SEF (2022) reported 127 unaccompanied minors in 2021, and most of them came from Afghanistan (59), Pakistan (23), and Bangladesh (14). In this report, it is not detailed in which circumstances these minors arrived in Portugal, and it is not specified what their gender and age were. However, following data collected by Eurostat, Oliveira (2022) adds that these minors were in the age group between 14 and 15 years old.

On the other hand, according to information provided by CPR, this organization received 58 unaccompanied minors in 2022. From this number, 54 were boys and 4 were girls, all of them in the age group between 14 and 18 years old. In terms of origin, they came from 19 different countries, but the most representative ones are the Republic of the Gambia (12), the Republic of Guinea (8), and Pakistan (6). Furthermore, most of these minors are still living in Lisbon, except four who were relocated to Bragança (2), Viseu, and Évora. Additionally, CPR explained that 17% of the 58 minors stated that they had never been to school; some of those who stated they had been to school did not know how to read or write because they went to Koranic schools.

3.2 Unaccompanied minors and education in Portugal

According to Article 73 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic – Seventh Revision (2005), everyone has the right to education. Following the Constitution, the Portuguese government established Law nº 54/2018 of July 6th, which focuses on inclusive education for everyone. Even though this law was not established specifically for unaccompanied minors, it provides a group of measures that contribute to the school integration of these minors in Portugal, including adaptation of the curriculum, academic guidance, psychologic support, and tutorial assistance.

Focusing on unaccompanied minors, Article 53 of "Lei do Asilo" (Asylum Law) states that these minors have access to the education system under the same conditions as nationals. In addition to this, Order nº 2044/2022 of February 16th establishes specific measures regarding Portuguese learning support. This support in schools is called Portuguese as a second language (PL2) – Português Língua Não Materna (PLNM), and this subject can be taught in primary and secondary education.

Moreover, the Portuguese government published a welcomed guide, which can be used as a supporting tool for schools and teachers on how to welcome and include these minors (Direção-Geral da Educação and Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional, 2020a). In this guide, there are some recommendations, such as familiarization with the school environment, access to information regarding education opportunities in the Portuguese education system, and the development of relationships with Portuguese native speakers of the same age group.

Concerning the way unaccompanied minors are placed in a year of schooling, DGE (2022) states that if a minor "has documents providing educational or professional qualifications", the placement in the education system "is made following the granting of equivalence to the years of schooling completed in the country of origin". On the other hand, when a minor does not have any document related to their educational qualifications, "the age and the corresponding year of schooling/education cycle should be taken as references" (DGE, 2022). Additionally, if unaccompanied minors arrive in the middle of the school year, they have the possibility to not have classes in the school environment in the first month and to be integrated gradually in schools during that month (Direção-Geral da Educação e Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional, 2020b).

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Research method

For this dissertation, the method selected to collect and analyze information was semi-structured interviews. This type of interview is a common method used in qualitative research and, as stated by Leech (2002), "can provide detail, depth, and an insider's perspective" (p. 665). Consequently, scripts were prepared for the interviews, and there were close-ended and open-ended questions, which were established according to the holistic model for school integration suggested by Cerna (2019)[13] and the information needed to answer the research questions. In this way, participants could also be free to share their personal experience and point of view in dealing with unaccompanied minors, including the measures taken in the school environment to integrate them. As a result, interviews followed different directions depending on the answers given, and new questions were asked due to this.

In addition to this, different scripts were written depending on the profile of the interviewee. In this case, there was one script for the directors of the schools (see Annex B), one for the teachers (see Annex C), and one for the psychologists (see Annex D). For the reception center, three scripts were prepared, including one for the psychologist, one for the social educator, and one for the social worker (see Annexes E, F, and G). Despite this, the scripts were very similar, and the difference between them is related to specific questions. Moreover, all the scripts were divided into sections: characterization of the unaccompanied minors and how they were received in the schools/reception center; integration measures; integration challenges; evaluation of the integration process; relationship between schools, students, and reception centers/host families; recommendations or suggestions.

In this process, 13 people were interviewed. and the interviews happened between April and June 2023 in Lisbon. All interviews were done in person and transcribed, so future analysis could be easily done according to specific topics. For the transcriptions, most of the interviews were recorded (with prior permission); other participants did not want to be recorded, and notes had to be taken instead. Additionally, all interviewees signed an informed consent form after the interview (see Annex A) and the names of the institutions were changed for privacy reasons.

[13] Which was explained previously in Chapter 2 – Education and Unaccompanied Minors.

4.2 The choice of the participants

One of the first steps taken on this research was to obtain data related to unaccompanied minors in Portugal, including gender, age, and current hometowns. Since I wanted to know how school integration works and which measures are being implemented in the school environment, the main goal was to define the Portuguese city where most unaccompanied minors live, specifying where most of them are also studying. For this, emails were sent to different institutions, including CPR, that suggested eight schools in Lisbon.

After that, I also contacted Projeto Ponte[14] and UNICEF Portugal. Both organizations contributed to this investigation by suggesting more schools and contextualizing the situation of unaccompanied minors in Portugal. For instance, instead of only focusing on secondary education, I started to take into consideration all school levels. According to information given by UNICEF Portugal, unaccompanied minors have different education paths, and most of them are not immediately integrated into secondary education since they are missing other school levels.

The next step was to contact the schools suggested. I called nine schools (all of them in Lisbon) and interviewed three of them. Some schools did not want to participate in this research, and others wanted, but it was necessary to wait for permissions, and this would take some time. Despite this, it was possible to interview different people from the three schools that accepted to participate in the research. In each school, I started this process by interviewing the director of the school, who could suggest the most relevant colleagues to interview, taking into account the theme of the dissertation. Consequently, it was possible to interview teachers and psychologists who were in contact with unaccompanied minors and were aware of the integration measures.

To complement these interviews, I decided to interview a reception center in Lisbon since this institution could give a perspective on the school integration of these minors in Portugal. This reception center mainly receives unaccompanied minors, and this institution has accepted to participate in the research. Therefore, I interviewed the psychologist, the social educator, and the social worker, especially because most of their work focuses on the education of their unaccompanied minors.

[14] Projeto Ponte is a Portuguese organization that supports the inclusion of unaccompanied minors in Portuguese society through different activities related to education.

4.3 The different educational paths of the schools interviewed

After the interviews, it was possible to identify some differences between the three schools interviewed for this research. Simultaneously, it was possible to notice that the experience with unaccompanied minors differs from school to school, mainly due to how many students are received and how long these schools have been receiving these young people. Moreover, all the participants demonstrated sensitivity and awareness towards the theme of this research.

4.3.1 The Green School

In this school, it was only possible to interview the director of the school. According to him, this school has a long experience with unaccompanied minors and has started to receive these students mainly since the 2014-15 forced migrants' movement. As stated by the director of the school, this school has been participating in various projects to receive and integrate these minors. Additionally, there are more male unaccompanied minors than females and since this school only has secondary education, all of them are placed at this school level.

This school also has two types of educational paths: mainstream education, which includes all the science and humanities courses; and vocational education, which focuses mainly on sports, mechanics, and multimedia. Moreover, this school equally offers specialized education in music and the arts. The director of the school stated that most unaccompanied minors pursue vocational education.

4.3.2 The Red School

After interviewing the director of the red school, he suggested me to interview the psychologist and a teacher (both of them accepted). According to the director of this school, the experience with unaccompanied minors is more recent, and the school started to receive these minors in 2022, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the time of the interviews, this school only had four unaccompanied minors. Just like the Green School, the Red School also has more male unaccompanied minors than females, and all of them are placed in secondary education.

Similarly to the Green School, this school also offers two types of educational paths: science-humanities courses and one vocational course, which is related to sports. One particular aspect of this school is that the school year is not divided into three school terms but two, which influences the process of integration for these minors.

4.3.3 The Yellow School

In comparison with the other two schools, this school has a different educational approach. In other words, unaccompanied minors are not placed in science-humanities or vocational courses but in the Qualifica Program. In this way, and as stated by the coordinator of this program, these minors can complete their educational qualifications by being integrated into EFA courses (Education and Training for Adults), which encompass different areas of competence, such as Culture, Language and Communication; Math, Science and Technology; Digital Skills; and Citizenship and Employability. In addition to this, these students are placed at a certain level depending on their previous educational qualifications. For instance, level B1 gives the equivalency of fourth grade, and level B3 gives the equivalency of ninth grade. At the end of an EFA course, students have a professional certificate.

In this school, it was not only possible to interview the coordinator and the psychologist simultaneously, but also four teachers who accepted to participate in this research. Additionally, all the minors in this school are unaccompanied minors, and most of them are boys, which follows the tendency of the other schools. Another characteristic of these students is that most of them are 16/17 years old and have two or three years of education.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Analysis of the Interviews

5.1 The needs of unaccompanied minors

As mentioned before, Cerna (2019) demonstrates that school integration for forced migrants can be possible if all their needs are addressed. However, Cerna (2019) also states that these needs can change from minor to minor. Due to this, one of the main goals of this qualitative research is to describe what the needs of unaccompanied minors in Portugal are and which ones are most referred to by the interviewees. Furthermore, all schools and the reception center described the same needs, and there were no differences in this description.

According to most interviewees, one of the main needs that these minors have is the need to learn Portuguese, since language can be an obstacle to their integration. According to the psychologist at the Yellow School, there are unaccompanied minors "motivated to learn, especially to learn our language". By analyzing the interviews, it is possible to identify two main reasons for this need. On the one hand, they want to start working so they can send money to their families, but to find a job in Portugal, they need to know how to speak Portuguese:

> "Everyone wants to work, and everyone thinks about their family. (…) They want to help their family. So, if they want to help their family, they need a job to earn money; and to earn money, they need to know the language" (Teacher of Yellow School).

On the other hand, speaking Portuguese helps them communicate with other students, especially native ones:

> "We have minors who learn Portuguese a little faster, and that makes it easier. At least that's the idea we have because they can talk to their classmates" (Social Worker of the Blue Reception Center).

Another need that is often mentioned is related to mental health. The psychologists of the schools and the psychologist of the reception center stated that most of the unaccompanied minors suffer from mental health problems such as trauma, depression, and anxiety. According to these psychologists, these problems derived mainly from what they have experienced in their home countries and in their journey to Portugal. Moreover, the psychologists added that they feel behind in comparison with other students, miss their families, and feel the duty to send money to their families so they can somehow help them:

> "[Regarding one of the students] was a bit sad. But it was a sadness at not being able to keep up with the content and the barriers he had in understanding the lessons" (Psychologist of the Red School).

> "To paint a general picture, there are depressed minors here. There is a certain break with family ties because their families are far away, and this implies some issues related to anxiety and sending money back to their countries of origin. (…) There are substance abuse problems here too. We also have a minor with self-injurious behavior here. We have some minors here who have some difficulty in their social integration" (Psychologist of the Blue Reception Center).

These mental health problems are also noticed by the teachers from the different schools. For instance, the director of the Green School mentioned that there was a minor who would crawl under his desk every time he saw an airplane. In this way, the unaccompanied minors from the schools interviewed need to cope with their mental health problems and need psychological support.

According to the interviewees, these minors also have the need to communicate with others and the need to feel a sense of belonging, especially because they do not know anyone when they arrive in Portugal. As stated by a teacher at the Yellow School, they do not feel heard and feel that they are alone because they do not have friends. This is also agreed upon by the social worker at the reception center:

> "This new kid can't speak Portuguese in the first week and ends up not being able to interact with his classmates. The classmates eventually stop talking to him, and he becomes a bit invisible. It's what some of them feel" (Social Worker of the Blue Reception Center).

Furthermore, all schools agreed that these minors try to find people from the same countries as theirs since they can share similar experiences and points of view, finding refuge in their culture. For instance, the director of the Green School was one interviewee who largely mentioned this issue and stated that these minors feel proud when their culture is represented in a school event. The social educator of the reception center reinforces this argument by stating that "they usually look for a similar person, i.e., someone of the same nationality".

Regarding education, all schools reported that there are two types of unaccompanied minors: the ones that are interested in studying and want to finish their education path; and the

ones that do not want to study but to find a job. According to the interviewees, the first group of unaccompanied minors arrive in Portugal with the purpose of studying, and consequently, they have the need to overcome interrupted schooling or the need to have the opportunity to study because they could not in their countries:

> "[Regarding some students] they are very persistent, and you can see that they have a lot of drive to learn and that they really study for it" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

> "There are some [students] who go and take advantage of the opportunity" (Psychologist of the Blue Reception Center).

On the other hand, interviewees agreed that there are minors who usually come because they want to work and have the need to send money to their families, which is a goal for them. Since they have to go to school, they normally just want to finish their studies to start working and want to learn about matters related to the labor market. In this situation, some interviewees added that this perception is also a consequence of their culture, which downgrades education:

> "There are also minors from certain countries who value education less. Then, eventually, there is the need to start working" (Psychologist of the Red School).

> "It's not that they devalue school; it's just that there are other higher values that arise at that moment, and they can't balance the two" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

> "There are other minors who, for them, it's not so much a priority [education], and they want to earn money because they need to send it back to their families. That is, they each have their own initiative and culture" (Social Worker of the Blue Reception Center).

In addition to all these needs, interviewees mentioned that unaccompanied minors have the need to lie about their real age and the need to have papers legalizing their situation, which is something common in every school except Red School (none of the interviewees mentioned this issue). For the first need, the director of the Green School explained that this can be a defense mechanism to protect themselves because they know that they lose some rights when they reach adulthood. For the second need, teachers of the Yellow School stated that there are minors that feel frustrated because they still do not have papers after a certain time of being

here, and there are some minors that just want papers to go to another country where they have family members:

> "This boy has no papers, that is, no stamps; he has nothing. (…) He got here last year, in August, and he said to me, 'It is going to be a year since I've been here, and I still don't have any papers. I'm illegal'. This is his biggest frustration" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

> "Most of them get here and just want to get papers to leave. Many of them have family members in other countries, such as Germany or France, and they want to leave as soon as possible" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

5.2 Measures and practices implemented in schools

This qualitative research also aims at describing what measures and practices are being implemented in the interviewed schools to ensure the school integration of unaccompanied minors. This part of the analysis compares the work of each school and how the Blue Reception Center cooperates in this work. Some of the measures and practices implemented are specified in the Portuguese legislation, but there are other activities that were established by the schools themselves. It is also possible to notice in the interviews that part of the school integration is based on improvisation since there is nothing officially planned and schools are testing which practices have better outcomes.

5.2.1 The reception of unaccompanied minors and their placement in a class

Concerning the reception of unaccompanied minors, the schools interviewed have similar approaches. In the Green School and in the Yellow School, the first step is the initial evaluation to place these minors in a class. As stated by the director of the Green School, these minors are evaluated by the psychologist of the school before being placed in a class, and this evaluation helps understand what the minor wants to study. The same happens in the Yellow School, where students are integrated into a class after a guidance process performed by the school psychologist. However, in the Red School, there was a discrepancy: while the director of the school stated that these minors are evaluated when they arrive to understand what goals they have, the psychologist declared that this evaluation is not made, and these students are placed where there is space available:

> "These students are then monitored. They are assessed when they come in at the very beginning of the year" (Director of the Red School).

> "Basically, they come late and join whichever classes have a vacancy, so there is not much choice" (Psychologist of the Red School).

In this placement, there are two factors that influence this process: age and level of education. While the director of the Green School stated that the minors are placed according to their age because the school wants them to communicate with students in the same age group, the coordinator of the Yellow School declared that these minors are placed according to their level of education, even if they do not have papers:

> "They are placed in classes according to their age. (…) The age factor is taken into account because then they will often have to interact with groups of young people who are in the same age group, and we think that integration can be more realistic" (Director of the Green School).

> "[The placement] depends on their educational level, or if they come with no education at all, we integrate them into level one, which is equivalent to the elementary school/primary cycle, but for adults" (Coordinator of the Yellow School).

The Red School, on the other hand, takes into account both factors, but their integration in a class depends on the time of the school year they arrive, as stated by the director: if they arrive in the beginning, they have more personalized support; if they arrive later, they either do some special tests to pass to the next year or they do not and have an adaptation period until the end of the school year, in which they have time to learn Portuguese and can participate in school projects that are being developed.

5.2.2 School curriculum and Portuguese classes

In terms of school curriculum, all three schools adapt it for unaccompanied minors. This adaptation is the same in the Green School and in the Red School since both directors stated that these minors have the possibility at the beginning to not have all the subjects and to have a shorter timetable in comparison with the ones of other students. Since the Yellow School has a different school curriculum from the other schools (as described in the previous chapter), most of their work is based on improvisation and adaptation, as declared by the coordinator.

Additionally, the teachers from this school stated that the program is changed daily so it can be adapted to the needs of these minors:

> "Things are not thought out in advance; they happen according to their needs as well. I can't say that I follow the class plan to the letter because I don't. There is a class plan that we have to minimally achieve, but then each teacher adapts it according to the student's needs. I adapt my class plan a lot" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

Moreover, all schools focus on Portuguese learning in their school curricula for these minors. Except for the Red School, which only has PLNM classes available, the other two schools provide two different programs: the PLNM and the Português Língua de Acolhimento (PLA)[15]. In the case of the PLA, it was explained that this program can be attended by students over 16 years old, and they communicate with older people who also speak their native language. Besides this, the coordinator of the Yellow School added that this school cooperates with other institutions so these students can have tutoring to learn Portuguese and can learn this language as quickly as possible:

> "We also have partners that give us a reinforcement of Portuguese language hours with the mentoring. That is, we have some external entities with whom we have made protocols and that also provide us support in this. There are volunteers who help speed up language learning" (Coordinator of the Yellow School).

Along with this support for Portuguese learning, all schools interviewed use English as a communication language, especially in the beginning. Even though all schools referred to this, teachers in the Yellow School developed more this issue and explained that they speak Portuguese, English, and, if possible, another language. They also added that students have to try to speak Portuguese too, even if they have to use the Internet to search for a word or an expression. In cases where these minors do not speak English, teachers show them pictures or ask other students to translate the information, and these solutions were something that all schools had in common.

[15] While PLNM is targeted at minors, PLA focuses on adults.

5.2.3 Psychological support

Except in the case of the Yellow School, the schools interviewed have a psychology service available for these minors. On the one hand, the director of the Green School stated that this service has experience dealing with these students and that this type of support is constant; on the other hand, the psychologist of the Red School confirmed that these minors have different types of psychological support, including vocational guidance, support in integration by trying to understand if there are needs to be answered, and vocational reorientation. Furthermore, this psychologist added that if the minors do not speak English, she is available to work with a translator from the reception center and to use online translation tools.

Despite having a psychologist that supports the integration of unaccompanied minors in the school, the coordinator of the Yellow School states that this psychological support belongs mainly to the reception centers:

> "In terms of psychological issues, our psychologist gives some support in this area, but it's more the reception centers themselves that carry out this work" (Coordinator of the Yellow School).

5.2.4 Other integration practices

One common practice in the three schools is the organization of intercultural events, and, according to the interviewees, these events can involve food projects, dance demonstrations, or presentations of cultural organizations from the minors' home countries. In this way, unaccompanied minors can share their culture with the school community. For instance, the professor of the Red School said that there is an intercultural week, and all the participants of the Yellow School mentioned an intercultural dinner that was being prepared at the time of the interviews:

> "Now we are going to do a community sharing, an intercultural dinner, where they will cook typical dishes from their countries and share them here with the community" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

In addition to these events, each school has specific and different integration practices. In the case of the Green School, the director stated that the school defines some students as tutors to guide these minors at school. This practice is also used in the Red School, which is also implementing a reception program not only for unaccompanied minors but for all the

international students. This program was explained in detail by all the participants of the Red School, and they explained that it can be adapted to the characteristics of each student and established a multidisciplinary team that involves one psychologist, two students from the student association, two language teachers, and one PLNM teacher.

Moreover, some participants in the Yellow School mentioned that visits to museums can also be important because these minors can learn about Portuguese history and culture. According to them, these students like these visits and feel welcomed. Another specific practice that was only mentioned by the Red School was related to religion. As the professor of this school stated, they changed the school schedule of an unaccompanied minor so he could go to the mosque without missing classes:

> "We also changed his [one unaccompanied minor] timetable so that he could go to the mosque without missing classes" (Professor of the Red School).

5.2.5 Perspective of the Blue Reception Center

Along with these measures and practices implemented in schools, the Blue Reception Center cooperates with schools by also contributing to the integration of unaccompanied minors. According to the social worker, one of the first things this reception center does is find out what these minors want to study and what schools are available to receive them. She also added that if there are schools prepared to receive these minors because they are familiar with these situations, there are other schools that are not available to receive them because they cannot adapt the curriculum or do not have PLNM classes:

> "A meeting is arranged to understand what they want to study, depending on their existing education level. We want to continue where they stopped. We see what course or area they want to follow and what schools are available to receive them. This is because they arrive throughout the year, or sometimes even at the end of the school year. In other words, this also depends on the availability of the schools" (Social Worker of the Blue Reception Center).

> "There are schools that are, in fact, already prepared and have welcomed a lot of refugee students. There are others that are impeccable and can have just that one refugee in a class but make an effort to adapt the curriculum. However, there are schools that say that at that moment they do not have the possibility to make this adaptation or that they are not able to teach PLNM classes" (Social Worker of the Blue Reception Center).

In addition to this, the social educator of this reception center also stated that the minors who are integrated into alternative education paths are usually the ones who have better school integration due to the approach of the teachers and the classmates who are in the same situation as theirs:

> "Since we have had minors here in very different situations in terms of education, I also feel that those who have been integrated into alternative pathways end up being with minors in the same situations as them. So, it's a more cohesive group, and the teacher's approach is also different. These minors end up being more integrated" (Social Educator of the Blue Reception Center).

According to the participants, this reception center also supports unaccompanied minors with Portuguese classes, which are taught by another Portuguese organization. Besides this, the interviewees confirmed that communication with schools happens regularly and usually goes well. This communication is mainly based on the students' behavior and their integration process.

5.3 Challenges in the school integration of unaccompanied minors

Another main goal of this qualitative research is to understand what types of challenges exist in the school integration of unaccompanied minors and how they affect this integration. As the interviews illustrate, there are challenges that affect both minors and schools, including teachers. In this research, the interviews conducted in the Blue Reception Center confirm all the challenges felt in the education field and that some of these challenges also exist within this institution.

The most prominent challenge referred to in the interviews is the language barrier, and this affects not only the school integration of unaccompanied minors but also how teachers communicate with them. According to some interviewees, most of these minors do not speak Portuguese, but they still have lessons in this language, which hampers their progress in school. This issue worsens when minors also do not speak English but only Arabic because nobody can communicate with them. Consequently, most of the communication happens by using images and hand gestures, which hinders the understanding of the message:

> "Another challenge is the language barrier, but, in these situations, English comes to the rescue, and classes are taught in both Portuguese and English. [When there is no English]

> either we are fortunate enough to have another student who was already acting as a tutor and masters the language of the minor in question and a little Portuguese, so that we understand each other; or else the minor is on his or her own because humanly it is more complicated and more complex. We end using signs and images" (Director of the Green School).

On the other side, as stated by the psychologist of the Blue Reception Center, "teachers feel lost", especially when these students cannot speak English. The interviews demonstrated that when these minors speak English, it is this language that helps reduce the consequences of the language barrier, and the classes can be taught both in Portuguese and in English. Despite this, teachers feel that it is still a challenge working with these minors: one of them asked "How do I explain philosophy to students who don't speak Portuguese?"; other stated that sometimes he feels "tired from translating". In other words, teachers feel that communication with minors who do not speak English is not the best and that sometimes they cannot communicate properly with everyone because of this barrier.

One challenge that is also frequently mentioned in the interviews concerns the mental health of unaccompanied minors. As mentioned before, these minors can face different mental health problems that affect their integration. Firstly, the director of the Green School and one teacher from the Yellow School agree that it is hard for these minors to trust people and their teachers:

> "There are always these phenomena of minors who come from the war traumatized, and it is always difficult to tell them that they are in a pacific country. We can write a lot of things and say a lot of things, but they, because of what they have already experienced, actually have a lot of traumas" (Director of the Green School).

> "[The importance of education] demystifying this is what is difficult because this is always an asset, and we have to make them believe again that education is important. And sometimes, that is not easy. They are already so demoralized and so unhappy" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

Secondly, interviewees mentioned that it is hard for these minors to follow the integration process because they have to worry about different things simultaneously: the family in their home countries; adapting to a new country and culture; obtaining refugee status; trying to find a job to send money to their families; and going to school every day. Thirdly, teachers of the

Yellow School mentioned that there are students who do not believe in themselves, want to give up, and change their perspective about education due to these issues:

> "There are students who even have a lot of learning skills, seem to be well integrated, and seem to like school, but then, as a result of a psychological disorder, they abandon these behaviors and are the opposite" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

The interviewees of the Blue Reception Center confirmed that one of the biggest challenges in the integration of these minors is their mental health. In addition to this, and according to these participants, these minors are not ready to listen, to trust and to learn if their mental health problems affect their daily life. However, another challenge referred within this issue is to find psychological support because this type of service in the public health system has a long waiting list. In other words, and as stated by the psychologist of this reception center, this institution has to find psychologists in the public health system to assist these minors, but it is almost impossible, even if the situation demands an immediate solution:

> "For example, we had a minor here with self-harming behavior, and it was quite a serious and disturbing issue for us. We went to the hospital's emergency services several times, but the situation was not solved. We had to be the ones to find strategies, and it was hard. (…) It is difficult to get them into psychological treatment. There are no psychologists. The free services have very long waiting lists" (Psychologist of the Blue Reception Center).

By analyzing the interviews, it is also possible to identify some challenges that mainly affect schools and their teachers, such as the lack of resources, the variety of students in one class, the lack of training, and the problem of culture shock. Regarding the first challenge, interviewees complained about the limitations they have in integrating these minors when they want to do more to help them. These limitations exist due to the lack of financial support, the lack of people to exclusively monitor these minors (including teachers), and the lack of educational materials, including schoolbooks produced specifically for these students and a school curriculum planned for this situation:

> "The problem with this is how much money the country wants to spend on this reception. So if we don't actually have any more money, schools are very limited in terms of what they can do. It all comes back to the funds available" (Director of the Green School).

> "The school is always struggling with the issue of crediting the hours. Then, in addition to having teachers who are available or not, it is also necessary for the teacher who is available to have the profile to carry out this type of task" (Teacher of the Red School).

> "We don't have textbooks either. There are a lot of textbooks, but they aren't designed for these students. (…) They [the government] forget that these students do not know the language, and many do not know the letters. We won't talk about the alphabet, but about the letters" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

Concerning the variety of students in one class, the interviewees described that this group of students is very heterogeneous, which can be a challenge in the teaching process. Teachers have a school curriculum to follow, but they deal with students who have different capacities and specific needs. For the teachers in the Yellow School, this situation is a major problem because in the same class they have students that have never been to school and students that already have some knowledge. According to these teachers, when dealing with these conditions, they experience difficulties adapting the learning contents to each student:

> "Students are always being integrated into the same class, and that's one of the biggest problems we have: is that students arrive and are integrated into that class. So, I started with this class in September, and these students, from September until now, have already managed to acquire some skills that this student, who has arrived now, will not be able to learn in such a short time. So you see that gap in the class, and it's a big gap" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

Additionally, participants also complained that this issue becomes more challenging when new students arrive in the middle of the school year and are placed in a class that has students that arrived at the beginning. In this situation, new students can hardly follow the rest of the class because teachers cannot support everyone simultaneously.

The challenge related to the lack of training is felt in every school that participated in this investigation. According to the directors and the coordinator of the schools, they cannot guarantee teachers with specialized training to deal with these students due to two main reasons: firstly, teachers are always moving from one school to another during their professional career; secondly, not only is there a lack of teachers with the necessary skills to deal with unaccompanied minors, but also the training is not available during the whole school year, especially in the beginning:

> "At school, we are going through very complex times because many of these teachers are constantly in mobility (…). We will definitely not always have people with specific training to deal with these cases. It is not guaranteed" (Director of the Green School).

> "There is the question of training, which we will have to start having" (Director of the Red School).

> "We are having some training now, but not at the time when it would be most needed, which would be at the beginning when the teachers start to have contact with these classes" (Coordinator of the Yellow School).

Finally, another challenge that was mentioned in the interviews is the culture shock between teachers and students. As stated by the participants, unaccompanied minors come from countries with very different habits, beliefs, principles, and values when compared with the ones Portuguese people are used to. On the one hand, not every teacher is willing to deal with these differences, and the psychologist of the Blue Reception Center explained that this happens mostly when an unaccompanied minor is integrated into a class with Portuguese students. On the other side, as illustrated by the participants in the reception center, these students face a school culture that they do not have in their home countries, and it can be hard for them to understand some rules and practices, including the importance of going to school regularly and respecting the timetable. According to the reception center, it is this institution that prepares these minors for this new school culture:

> "I would say that the main difficulty is complying with the rules of coexistence or standards of conduct. For example, they find it odd that they can't wear a hat in class or go to class in slippers, or even that they want to go to the toilet and have to ask the teacher for permission. These are rules of conduct that we've already learned here in Europe, and Europeans are familiar with them, but that's not how it works for them" (Social Educator of the Blue Reception Center).

5.4 Suggestions for the school integration of unaccompanied minors

The final goal of this qualitative research is to describe the main suggestions made by the interviewees concerning the school integration of unaccompanied minors. By analyzing the interviews, there were some specific recommendations depending on the school, and there were

other recommendations mentioned by every institution, including the Blue Reception Center. In this final part of the analysis, the focus is on these more general suggestions.

One generally mentioned suggestion is related to the legislation and how there is anything planned for unaccompanied minors in terms of education. According to the interviewees, the government should plan a more personalized answer for these minors and establish a program exclusively directed at them. As mentioned by some teachers, if there was a plan just for these minors, the school integration could be better:

> "As long as there is a plan, integration will happen as naturally as possible" (Director of the Red School).

> "For the time being, there's nothing prepared for them in advance (…). The government has nothing specifically planned for these kids. (…) So, what could be changed? Something specific would have to be designed for these kids" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

In addition to this, there are some things in the legislation that cannot be applied due to a lack of resources. Even though most of the interviewees stated that the legislation covers these minors and is inclusive, they also agreed that some laws do not anticipate practical situations. For instance, not every teacher is prepared to deal with unaccompanied minors, and schools do not have the autonomy to choose the professionals with the best profile to work on these circumstances. In this way, interviewees declared that schools should have more autonomy, so these minors are received by professionals available to support them in the best way:

> "In terms of external support from the government, there should be more means to grant more autonomy to the school, so that it can even allocate teachers who can work with these students and who can support them. In most cases, this is what is at fault. The legislation exists; it is inclusive and covers a wide range of situations. In legislative terms, I don't think there's any need for changes. However, there are a number of situations that the existing legislation provides for – and rightly so – but then schools have no way of enforcing them" (Teacher of the Red School).

Linked with this, interviewees suggested that these professionals should have specific training for this job. As stated by the participants, most of these people are not prepared to deal with unaccompanied minors, and the lack of training can affect their school integration.

Additionally, the teachers stated that there should be training in terms of languages, taking into account that not every minor can speak Portuguese or English.

Concerning the language issue, the schools and the reception center agreed that these minors need more Portuguese classes. In other words, and as suggested by the participants, there should be reinforcement of PLNM classes when unaccompanied minors arrive, so they are more prepared to learn other subjects. Simultaneously, the Blue Reception Center said that there should be more schools with PLNM classes available:

> "It should be possible for them to take only Portuguese lessons initially and then attend the remaining classes. The system sometimes works a little in reverse, and there have been many schools where PLNM doesn't even exist" (Social Educator of the Blue Reception Center).

In addition to this language issue, the director of the Green School mentioned that the college admission exams could have the option to be done in English. According to him, this can be unfair to unaccompanied minors, and "it is not the best idea to ask a student to master a language to the point of taking a national examination in three years".

Finally, it was also agreed that psychological support for unaccompanied minors should be a priority. For this, the interviewees suggested that there should be more resources available for mental health support. According to them, if these students had the opportunity to overcome some of their issues with the help of a professional, their school integration and consequently their results could be better:

> "These minors arrive with, as a rule, a very difficult background. They go through the travel route, moving away or losing their family. So, there are a lot of issues here that should be tackled before they can be available to learn" (Social Educator of the Blue Reception Center).

Conclusion

It is known that forced migration has increased in recent years, mainly due to wars, conflicts, humanitarian crises, economic and political instability, and climate-related disasters. For instance, the 2014-15 forced migrants' movement was unprecedented, and at the end of 2021, there were 89.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, as reported by UNHCR (2022). This type of people's movement presents various challenges, including the struggle to establish policy on how to receive forced migrants, which is also a consequence of the lack of preparation in most countries within a short period of time (Cerna, 2019).

In this context, children and youth represent more than half of the forced migrants, and unaccompanied minors are one of the most vulnerable groups since they face additional challenges, including the lack of protection provided by a family and more risks during their travel. Therefore, they need to have access to care and protection when arriving in a host country, which positively contributes to their integration process (Maioli et al., 2021). Another important aspect of this integration process is education, and schools play a major role in their lives.

Even though there is not a definitive integration model, Cerna (2019) suggested a holistic model that could make school integration more effective. In other words, if young forced migrants need to make some adjustments to integrate, the host society also needs to make some changes to receive these minors. According to this author, this means that school integration can be effective if the needs of forced migrants are addressed in educational policies. In addition to this, this holistic model can be changed depending on specific needs, schools, and education systems.

Regarding unaccompanied minors in Portugal, their situation is not very known, and most of them are asylum-seekers. However, they have the right to education, and there are some measures that contribute to their school integration, including Portuguese learning support, adaptation of the curriculum, tutorial assistance, and psychologic support. Furthermore, they are placed in a year of schooling depending on if they have documents that prove their educational qualifications or not. If they have, they are placed in the year equivalent to the year completed in their native country; if not, they are placed according to their age.

The goal of this research was to describe the types of measures that are being taken in the school environment to integrate unaccompanied minors in Portugal, including the challenges of this integration. Since Lisbon is the Portuguese city where most of the unaccompanied minors are, 13 people from three different schools and one reception center in this area were interviewed. To answer the research questions, the interviews were semi-structured,

approaching different topics and being based on the holistic model for school integration suggested by Cerna (2019).

The analysis of the interviews was divided into four sections. The first one was the needs of unaccompanied minors, and the answers were very similar, mentioning the need to learn Portuguese, the need to have psychological support, and the need to feel a sense of belonging. The second section concerned measures and practices implemented, which involved not only those specified in the Portuguese legislation but also those that were established by the schools themselves. The third part of the analysis focused on the challenges felt by the interviewees regarding this type of school integration, and the most prominent ones were language barriers and the mental health of unaccompanied minors. Finally, the fourth section was suggestions made by the interviewees to improve the school integration of these minors, and here the answers were very personal since each school and each teacher face various challenges. Additionally, the reception center complemented all the interviews by giving an external perspective on this type of integration.

With these interviews, it was possible to notice that most of the measures and practices established in schools are mainly based on the improvisation and goodwill of the people who deal with these minors. Since there is nothing officially and specifically made for these students, schools depend on their professionals' knowledge to integrate them in the best way possible within existing possibilities. Furthermore, the EFA courses are one of the possibilities that are being tested and in which unaccompanied minors can finish their education in the fastest way possible, having a professional certificate at the end of the course. Nevertheless, these courses have to be more adapted for these minors, having a school curriculum specifically made for them:

> "We have a big heart when it comes to welcoming them, but then we forget the little details" (Teacher of the Yellow School).

However, there was a limitation in this research: due to a lack of data, it was not possible to know the impact of these integration measures on the education path of the unaccompanied minors. In other words, it could not be confirmed if these measures have a positive outcome regarding educational attainment and which type of education is better for these minors: mainstream education or vocational education? As demonstrated by Cerna (2019), this lack of data restricts policy development, including the implementation of policies. In this way, it is

important that this type of data is collected and taken into account in future studies, especially to establish policies that face the challenges explored in this research.

As a consequence, the schools interviewed are limited in establishing some measures due to a lack of preparation on the part of the government. For instance, some interviewees claimed that their schools receive unaccompanied minors, but nothing is planned for them. There is a program, but they state that it is not for these minors, and the same happens with school textbooks. On the other hand, the reception center mentioned that these minors do not have enough psychological support (in some cases, it is nonexistent), which should be a priority since a minor can only succeed in school if he or she is available for that. This lack of preparation would be an important area to investigate in the future, especially to understand why the Portuguese government does not prepare in advance the necessary resources and psychological support when it offers to receive forced migrants, including unaccompanied minors.

Finally, it will be necessary to carry out a bigger study to involve more schools, not only from Lisbon but also from other areas, including the interior of Portugal. It would be interesting to confirm if all schools have the same issues regarding the integration of unaccompanied minors and to identify other types of measures. To enrich this type of study, it would also be necessary to have access to data regarding the educational attainment and/or school failure of unaccompanied minors in Portuguese schools. Additionally, it would be important to interview unaccompanied minors and take into consideration their perspective on school integration in Portugal, which was not possible to clarify in this research. In this way, it could contribute to deciding what would be the best solutions for the school integration of unaccompanied minors in Portugal.

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Annexes

Annex A – Informed Consent

The present study is part of a master's dissertation taking place at **ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa**. This study concerns measures and practices related to school integration of unaccompanied minors in Portugal and aims to analyze what types of measures and practices are being established in Portuguese schools to integrate these minors.

The study is carried out by Ana Filipa Esteves (afres@iscte-iul.pt), who you can contact in case you want to clarify a doubt, share a comment, or cancel your participation in this study.

Your participation, which will be highly appreciated, involves answering the questions of the interview, which can last about 40 minutes. Your answers will contribute to the definition of measures and practices established in Portuguese schools to integrate unaccompanied minors.

Participation in this study is strictly **voluntary**: you can choose to participate or not to participate. If you choose to participate, you can stop your participation at any time without having to provide any justification. Besides being voluntary, participation is also **anonymous** and **confidential**. At any point of the study, you will be identified.

Based on this information, please indicate if you accept to participate in this study:

I ACCEPT ☐ I DO NOT ACCEPT ☐

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Annex B – Script for the Directors of the Schools

Characterization of the unaccompanied minors and their reception at the school

1. Does this school receive unaccompanied minors? Since when?

1.1. For a specific reason (for example, was it a suggestion of the Ministry of Education? Did the school offer to receive these minors?)?

2. How is the reception of unaccompanied minors at this school?

2.1. Who receives them when they arrive? Who are the professionals involved in this reception?

3. Are there any specific types of support for the integration of these minors?

4. Are there differences in reception between these minors (unaccompanied minors) and other minors with a migrant background (whether economic immigrants or accompanied refugees)?

5. How is the enrollment process for these students?

6. In the case of the students at this school, how are these minors placed in a school year?

7. How many of these minors are currently enrolled in this school?

8. Are most of them boys or girls?

9. On average, how old are they?

10. In which school year are they?

11. How long have they been studying at this school?

Integration measures

1. In this school, do you also do any kind of activities or projects to integrate these minors (for example, encouraging contact with native students or encouraging participation in school sports)?

1.1. Who organizes these activities or projects?

2. Do you develop other type of integration measures?

3. Is the school curriculum adapted to these minors?

4. Do these measures appear in a law or government recommendation? Or were they created by the school?

5. Are these measures adapted to the specificities of each student (for example, taking into account origin, language, or trauma)?

6. Do the teachers dealing with these students have any specific training?

Integration challenges

1. Are there challenges in the integration of these minors?

1.1. Can these challenges affect these minors' educational path?

2. What are the main needs of these students?

2.1. Does this school answer these needs?

2.2. In your opinion, do you think that there could be a better answer from the school?

3. In terms of the school and its professionals, are there needs?

4. Is there any institution or organization that supports the school and its professionals in this process?

Evaluation of the integration process

1. How has the school success of these students been?

1.1. Do you think it could improve with more support?

2. Do you feel that these students are motivated to develop their knowledge and complete their educational path successfully?

3. Have there been any cases of school dropouts? If yes, what do you think are the reasons for that?

4. Is there any kind of evaluation of these minors' progress (regarding not only their academic performance but also their integration)?

5. Do these evaluation mechanisms involve the minors themselves?

Relationship between the school, the student, and the reception center/host family

1. These minors are placed in reception centers and host families. How is the coordination between the school and these institutions?

2. Do you get any feedback from these institutions?

Recommendations or suggestions

1. What do you think could be improved in these minors' integration?

2. In your opinion, what other professionals from this school should I also interview for this research?

Annex C – Script for the Teachers of the Schools

Characterization of the unaccompanied minors and their reception in the class

1. Does your class have unaccompanied minors? If yes, how many?

2. How is the reception of these minors in the class?

3. Are there any differences in terms of school curriculum between these minors and other students from the same class?

4. How do the classmates react to the presence of these minors? Is there any type of discrimination?

4.1. In your opinion, do other students try to create a relationship with these minors?

Integration measures

1. Are projects or activities developed in the class in order to integrate these students?

1.1. Who suggested these projects or activities?

2. Did you have specific training related to the integration of unaccompanied minors?

3. How is the communication between you and your colleagues from this school regarding these minors, especially their evolution and integration?

Integration challenges

1. Are there challenges in the integration of these minors into the class?

1.1. Can these challenges affect their educational path?

1.1. How does a teacher deal with these challenges?

Evaluation of the Integration Process

1. How has the school success of these students been?

1.1. How could this school success be improved?

2. Do you feel that these students are motivated to develop their knowledge and complete their educational path successfully?

3. Do you feel that these students feel discouraged? If yes, what can be the reasons for this?

Relationship between the teacher, the student, and the reception center/host family

1. These minors are placed in reception centers and host families. How is the communication between you and these institutions?

Recommendations or suggestions

1. In your opinion, how could this school improve the integration of these minors?

Annex D – Script for the Psychologists of the Schools

Monitoring and evaluation of unaccompanied minors

1. What type of support do these minors have at this school?
2. What is your role in this support and monitoring?
2.1. How often is this follow-up done?
3. What is the impact of this support on these minors?
4. How long has this support been in place?
4.1. Did it suffer any changes over time?
5. Did you have specific training to monitor these minors?
6. Does this monitoring start when these minors are enrolled in this school?
7. Is there any type of evaluation before these minors are placed in a class?
8. When they do not speak English, how is this monitoring done?
9. Is the monitoring requested by the minors themselves or imposed?
10. Do you talk with other professionals from this school about issues related to these minors?
11. During the monitoring, do you talk with the reception centers/host families of these minors?

Characterization of the unaccompanied minors

1. Right now, how many unaccompanied minors are receiving this type of support?
2. What can you tell us about the mental health of these minors?
3. What are the main issues they present (for example, trauma, homesickness, sadness, anxiety, or cultural shock)?
4. In your opinion, what are the main needs of these minors?

Educational path

1. What kind of educational path have these minors had? Are these cases of school failure or dropout?
2. What does it seem to affect their educational path?
3. What kind of relationship do these students have with the school?
4. Do you feel that these students are motivated to develop their knowledge and complete their educational path successfully? Or are there more feelings of demotivation and dropout?

Integration

1. In your opinion, how do these minors feel about reception and integration at this school?

1.1. Are there cases of discrimination?

2. In your opinion, how do these minors feel about reception and integration in Portugal?

Recommendations or suggestions

1. In your opinion, how could this school improve the integration of these minors?

Annex E – Script for the Psychologist of the Reception Center

Characterization of the unaccompanied minors and their reception in the reception center

1. How do you welcome these minors into this reception center?
2. What is your role in this reception?
3. At the moment, how many minors in this reception center are receiving this kind of psychological support?
4. How often is this support provided?
5. What can you tell us about the mental health of these minors?
6. What are the main issues of these minors (for example, trauma, homesickness, sadness, anxiety, or cultural shock)?
7. What is the reaction of other minors when you receive a new one?
8. In your opinion, are these minors satisfied with this reception?

Integration in schools

1. In your opinion, how do you think these minors feel about the reception and the integration in schools?
2. Are you aware of situations of discrimination, both on the part of teachers and on the part of other students?

Educational path

1. What kind of educational path have these minors had?
2. What seems to affect this educational path the most?
3. What kind of relationship do these minors have with school?
4. Do you feel that these students are motivated to develop their knowledge and complete their educational path successfully?

4.1. Do you feel that there are feelings of demotivation and dropping out?

Relationship between the psychologist at the reception center and the schools

1. How is the communication between you and the school?
2. Do you share information regarding the evaluation and evolution of these minors?

Recommendations or suggestions

1. In your opinion, how could schools improve the integration of these minors?

Annex F – Script for the Social Educator of the Reception Center

Characterization of the unaccompanied minors and their reception in the reception center

1. At the moment, how many unaccompanied minors are living in this reception center?
2. How do you welcome these minors into this reception center?
3. What is your role in this reception process?
4. What is the reaction of other minors when you receive a new one?
5. In your opinion, are these minors satisfied with this reception?

Integration in schools

1. In your opinion, how do you think these minors feel about the reception and the integration in schools?
2. Are you aware of situations of discrimination, both on the part of teachers and on the part of other students?
3. Are there challenges in the integration of these minors into schools?

3.1. Can these challenges affect their school integration?

3.2. In your opinion, are schools adapting integration measures to overcome these challenges?

4. In your opinion, how do these minors feel about reception and integration in Portugal?

Educational path

1. What kind of educational path have these minors had?
2. What seems to affect this educational path the most?
3. What kind of relationship do these minors have with school?
4. Do you feel that these students are motivated to develop their knowledge and complete their educational path successfully?

4.1. Do you feel that there are feelings of demotivation and dropping out?

Relationship between the reception center and schools

1. How is the communication between the reception center and schools?
2. Do you share information regarding the evaluation, the evolution, and the integration of these minors?

Recommendations or suggestions

1. In your opinion, how could schools improve the integration of these minors?

Annex G – Script for the Social Worker of the Reception Center

Characterization of the unaccompanied minors and their reception in the reception center

1. At the moment, how many unaccompanied minors are living in this reception center?
2. How do you welcome these minors into this reception center?
3. What is your role in this reception process?
4. What is the reaction of other minors when you receive a new one?
5. In your opinion, are these minors satisfied with this reception?

Integration in schools

1. In your opinion, how do you think these minors feel about the reception and the integration in schools?
2. Are you aware of situations of discrimination, both on the part of teachers and on the part of other students?
3. Are there challenges in the integration of these minors into schools?
3.1. Can these challenges affect their school integration?
3.2. In your opinion, are schools adapting integration measures to overcome these challenges?
4. In your opinion, how do these minors feel about reception and integration in Portugal?

Educational path

1. What kind of educational path have these minors had?
2. What seems to affect this educational path the most?
3. What kind of relationship do these minors have with school?
4. Do you feel that these students are motivated to develop their knowledge and complete their educational path successfully?
4.1. Do you feel that there are feelings of demotivation and dropping out?

Relationship between the reception center and schools

1. How is the communication between the reception center and the school?
2. Do you share information regarding the evaluation, the evolution, and the integration of these minors?

Recommendations or suggestions

1. In your opinion, how could schools improve the integration of these minors?