

Chapter 5

Dropout Ethnic Minority Young People

Abstract The case studies of six ethnic minority young people who had dropped out of their schooling are presented. Three were Nepalese, two were Pakistani and one was Bangladeshi. None of them were born in Hong Kong. Four moved to Hong Kong from their home country during their primary schooling and two when they were at secondary school. Four of the participants were interviewed twice and two were once to ascertain their background information and family, their schooling, and life experiences in Hong Kong. Two of the young people were also observed in their workplaces. Their interviews are presented under themes. Common themes presented are reasons for dropping out of school, job satisfaction and future plans. Reasons are related to learning Chinese, over-age, racism, poor academic achievement, behavioural problem, harassment, employment, illness, dropout history in the family, parental factors, school factors, and peer and community factors. The case studies are further explored in a cross case analysis in Chap. 9.

The previous chapter examined the extent of ‘out of school’ ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong as depicted in various statistical sources. This chapter will be concerned with identifying the reasons for six ethnic minority young people dropping out of Hong Kong schools and portraying their ‘out of school’ life thus answering in part the second and third questions posed for the research reported in this book.

This chapter draws on case studies with six ethnic minority young people who completely dropped out of Hong Kong schools. The purpose is to understand the reasons for their dropping out and what they were doing ‘out of school’. There are seven sections in this chapter. Sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 present the experiences of Maneesha Rai, Morshed Uddin, Aruna Thapa, Veem Pun, Tanvir Ahmed, and Azad Rabbani respectively. In each case study we provide background information of participants, their family, schooling, and life experiences in Hong Kong. We also present in detail the reasons for their dropping out and portray their ‘out of school’ life since dropping out. While their case study provided a vivid picture of their previous school life as well as current ‘out of school’ life several themes were created from their accounts that explain why they dropped out. Most of the participants were interviewed twice except Tanvir and Morshed who were interviewed once only. Additionally, Aruna and Veem were observed once at their workplaces. For Tanvir and Morshed, the case study data are also augmented respec-

tively by Tanvir's father's interview data and the interview data of teachers, Principal and ethnic minority education support programme staff of Morshed's last school, Hei-mong secondary school. We have identified key themes that are presented in the individual case studies. A brief summary of the identified key themes across the case studies is discussed at the Sect. 5.7. These case studies provide part of the data for the cross case analysis presented in Chap. 9.

5.1 Maneesha Rai

Maneesha, 21 years old, is a dropout student from a secondary school in Hong Kong. The first author of this book came to know Maneesha through one of the Nepalese community leaders whom he first met at his voluntary work place 'Ethnic Voice', a bi-lingual weekly newspaper run by ethnic minority community in Hong Kong. The research topic was shared with him and help was sought in order to gain access to students who had dropped out. Eventually this resulted in the meeting Maneesha and the conduct of the interview. As it turned out Maneesha was the niece of this Nepalese community leader and she was helping out her uncle and her father as an office assistant in their joint venture international phone card business. Two interviews were carried out with Maneesha, first one in October 2012 face to face and second one in January 2013 over the telephone. Each interview lasted for about 2 h.

5.1.1 Maneesha's Background, School and Life Experiences in Hong Kong

Maneesha is a Nepalese born girl living in Hong Kong for the last 10 years. At the first meeting she said how she was living with her grand-parents in Nepal before she moved to Hong Kong in the middle of 2002, but during the second interview she corrected that she was actually living in a private hostel in Nepal and only lived with grand-parents during the holiday. Her father was a Gurkha in the British Army transferred to Hong Kong in 1997. After retirement, he decided to stay in Hong Kong and started an international phone card business. Her mother also moved to Hong Kong with him at the same time. Academically, Maneesha's father was a secondary school graduate from Nepal and her mother had never been to any school. While Maneesha's father was also providing some sort of immigration consultancy service from the same office with her uncle in addition to their international phone card business, her mother had always been a housewife. In fact in the second meeting Maneesha shared that her mother was seriously ill, the right side of the body had been completely paralyzed for the last 14 years. After sharing this news, she kept silent for some time.

Although her parents were visiting her in Nepal at least once in a year between 1997 and 2002, Maneesha had been ‘very happy’ when she moved to Hong Kong in 2002 as she had reunited with her parents. Maneesha completed her Form Two at schools in Nepal. After coming to Hong Kong, she started again her school from Form Two at a designated secondary school in the 2002–2003 academic year. But she had only been able to continue until Form Five and then dropped out of school in 2006. Since then she had mainly worked for several restaurants and bars, both on a full time and part time basis.

5.1.1.1 Maneesha’s Multicultural Secondary Class

Maneesha was apparently pleased with her schooling experiences in Hong Kong as she was continuously mentioning that it was loads of fun with her school friends. She was in the international section of the school where they had very few Chinese students. The school also had a ‘Chinese only’ section for Chinese students. There were about 50 students in her class mainly from different South Asian communities including Nepal, Pakistan, India along with four or five Chinese students. This is very much a common feature of the designated schools in Hong Kong, being multicultural but with very few local Chinese students. Although it was an international section she hardly made friendships with other ethnic students as they were always getting along with their same language speaking peers. She called her other classmates from other ethnicities ‘hi/hello friends’. It shows that school’s way of managing diversity was very important for her schooling experiences, as she commented:

It was always great fun in the school. Although my close friends are all Nepalese, I also passed many good times with (my) ‘hi/hello friends’. We used to sing Bollywood songs in chorus during the break time and lot of discussions around (Bollywood) movies. We talked in Hindi most of the times... (Maneesha Rai, dropout student, 1st Interview, 22 October 2012)

5.1.1.2 Learning Chinese Language

Maneesha was taught Chinese for only 1 year. She could not exactly remember what Form it was but was confused with Form Three or Form Four. She confessed that she didn’t learn anything from her Chinese class. She mentioned the reasons were mainly their teacher who always wrote something on board and asked them to write down. She never had a chance of practicing speaking in her class. Even her Chinese classmates were always communicating with her in English. She chose French instead of Chinese for her Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). When asked how other ethnic minority classmates were doing in Chinese, she answered, “more or less same”.

5.1.1.3 Academic Achievement

In the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), until 2011 the first public examination for all Hong Kong students at the end of 5 years of secondary schooling, Maneesha failed in mathematics and science and then she did not sit for the examination again. She eventually dropped out. She also mentioned that she didn't do well in both subjects in her Form Three and Four. Even though she had failed in both subjects in consecutive 2 years she was promoted to the next Form as per Hong Kong schooling system, whilst it was a different system in Nepal where students are not normally promoted to next class until they pass all subjects in respective classes. Unfortunately, she was not given any extra or additional support for any of these subjects by any of her teachers in Hong Kong school. It clearly shows that her academic failure in two major subjects appeared long before her dropping out but it did not seem to be a matter of concern for the school.

5.1.1.4 Differences in Schooling Culture

Maneesha found her Hong Kong school completely different from the schools in Nepal. Here she was 'very free'; teachers did not bother much with what she was doing. The word 'very free' also meant to her not being scolded by teachers for not doing homework in time. Although she was enjoying these features of Hong Kong schools she also mentioned that it was one of the reasons for her not doing well in school and finally dropping out. She emphasized the point that she was originally from another type of schooling environment where she was always monitored by her teachers regarding her study and behaviors in school. If anything was going wrong teachers took notice of it and followed up. But in her Hong Kong school she did not feel that kind of attention from any of her teachers. She commented:

I was very regular in school as I loved it. But I really never had any attention from any teacher; even if I couldn't complete my homework, I found (them) not to scold me. In Nepal, it was other way round. If I missed homework any day, I was scolded by teachers and sometimes they reported to my guardians. (Maneesha Rai, dropout student, 1st Interview, 22 October 2012)

Another area she mentioned was that in Hong Kong students do not obey teachers; this is completely different from her experience of schools in Nepal. In South Asian culture teachers are highly valued in the society and students generally show their highest level of respect for their teachers.

5.1.1.5 Peer and Community Factors

It seems the dropout phenomenon was very serious in Maneesha's class. She mentioned that about 20 % of her classmates had been able to pass Form Five and continued to Form Six. It does mean that about 40 out of 50 of her classmates dropped out after Form Five. She was still in contact with some of them who were mostly working in restaurants or bars.

Asking Maneesha about whether any of her family members or relatives encouraged her to go back to school after dropping out, she mentioned that her family always wanted her to be back in school again. In fact her parents had always been very supportive to her education both in Nepal and Hong Kong regardless of her mother's long disability. But she stopped going to school when she failed in Form Five. She rather chose to start working in restaurants and bars. This is a common scenario for many Nepalese young people when they dropped out of schools.

5.1.1.6 Racism Outside School

Maneesha encountered racism in her life in Hong Kong. One of her experiences:

when we entered in the Chinese shops they never respond to us...although they say 'hello' to the Chinese customers they say nothing to us. Even I asked them about prices or other things many times, they just ignored me and then I came out. In many clothing shops I experienced this many many times... (Maneesha Rai, dropout student, 1st Interview, 22 October 2012)

5.1.1.7 Racism Inside School

Maneesha also mentioned some different behaviors of her teachers in school compared to their behaviors towards Chinese students:

In detention rooms teachers were stricter on the international students. When Chinese students were arguing with the teachers in detention room they normally overlooked it or pretended they didn't hear it. But in case of other students like me arguing with teachers in detention room caused extended detention. And they were rude towards us. (Maneesha Rai, dropout student, 1st Interview, 22 October 2012)

5.1.1.8 Dropout History in the Family

Maneesha's elder brother who moved with her at the same time to Hong Kong is also a dropout from a Hong Kong school. He went to the same school as Maneesha. He started there from Secondary Four but stayed there for only 2 years. He dropped out at Secondary Five and did not continue his study. Maneesha mentioned that it was mainly because his result was not good. Finally he obtained a security service job.

5.1.2 Maneesha's 'Out of School' Life

Maneesha did not have any job at the time of our second interview because she was going to Nepal for a 3 month holiday. She had worked in an Indian restaurant for some days after we had our first interview. At the beginning it was a part-time job, so she was also continuing her other job at her father's office where we had the first

interview. But after doing it some days she took her restaurant job as full time. Eventually, she had to stop coming to her father's office.

She was a waitress at the restaurant. Her working time was from 11 am to 11 pm. In between she got 3 h break from 4 pm to 7 pm. Her typical day started from waking up at 9 am in the morning and then freshening up herself, taking breakfast and going to work. The restaurant was located in Tsim Tsa Shui, she arrived there before 11 am and continued work until 3 pm. Then she had her 3 h long break when she used to take lunch mostly from outside and passed time with some of the colleagues from the restaurant roaming here and there. She again started work from 7 pm to 11 pm. Then she went back home, took dinner and went to bed. At their home they distributed their cooking duty among all family members except her mother. So, she also had to cook on rotation. But because of the job she was not cooking so much in those days. She had 1 day off on Wednesday when she mainly passed time with her Nepali boyfriend and sometimes with other friends.

5.1.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Maneesha quite liked her job:

Every job has its good and bad side. The two owners of the restaurant are Nepalese and Indian and other staff are all Nepalese. So it was fun working there as we were all speaking same languages. And it was also a good learning for me the waiter's job....sometimes it was very rush in the restaurant, it was really hard work then. Of course timing was another factor that it was taking so long time every day. (Maneesha Rai, dropout student, 2nd interview, 14 January 2013)

She was paid 8000 HKD per month. Overall, she mentioned that the job satisfaction was 'ok'. However, she left the job before going to Nepal for a relatively long time. She was going there mainly for holidays, and to see her friends and relatives. This was the second time she went back to Nepal since she had moved to Hong Kong.

5.1.2.2 Future Plan

As a future plan Maneesha said that she would not really want to continue any more with a restaurant job. When she was back from Nepal she would continue her fashion designing course (she said she had been doing a diploma since 2010) and would do a job in that area. However, she did not sound very optimistic as she mentioned it was really difficult to get a good job in Hong Kong now-a-days without knowing better Chinese.

5.2 Morshed Uddin

Support was sought from Ms. Eva Kau, the ethnic minority education support programme staff of Hei-mong secondary school to interview one ethnic minority student who dropped out of the school recently. She identified Morshed Uddin, aged

21. Ms. Kau deserves special gratitude for supporting us by bringing Morshed back into school for the interview. Although it was not easy for Ms. Kau but her continuous communication with him made it possible. Morshed is a Pakistani born Hong Kong boy. In 2011, Morshed enrolled at Hei-mong school in Form One and dropped out of the school in the following year after the completion of Form One.

One face to face interview was conducted with Morshed in January 2013 that lasted for about 2 h. In addition, interviews with Principal Mr. Tung Yuen, ethnic minority education support programme staff Ms. Eva Kau, Chinese language teacher Ms. Wing Chow, science teacher Mr. Matthew Chan at Hei-mong school were also carried out where part of the interviews focused on understanding Morshed's dropout case from their perspectives.

5.2.1 Morshed's Background, School and Life Experiences in Hong Kong

Morshed was born in 1990 in a small city in Pakistan and went to a school there up to Primary Two. His father came in Hong Kong in 1990 for a job but Morshed could not remember what job it was. His mother joined his father in Hong Kong after a couple of years leaving him and his one elder brother and sister to his uncle and aunty in Pakistan. Morshed with his elder brother and sister moved to Hong Kong in 1997. Morshed also had two younger brothers who were born in Hong Kong. Morshed's father completed Form Four in Pakistan but his mother had never been to any school. After doing his first job for 5 years, Morshed's father moved to a driving job in 1995. His mother was a house-wife. Morshed's elder brother went to a Hong Kong school from Primary Four until Form Two. His elder sister was studying at Form Four and his other two younger brothers were studying at Form Two and Primary Six. His elder sister and one younger brother topped in their classes.

5.2.1.1 Morshed's Low Education Aspiration

After moving to Hong Kong in early 1997, Morshed started going to a designated primary school at Primary Two. There were about 40 students in their class, they were all mainly from south Asian ethnic backgrounds i.e. Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese. He stayed in that school only for 6 months and moved to a Chinese medium primary school as he said he wanted to learn Chinese better and he was too lazy to learn English.

In his new school there were 37 students in his class, of them 4 were Pakistani and the rest were Chinese. He remembered that he did not have much contact with the Chinese classmates as many of them were scared of him because of his tall figure. He completed his Primary Six from the primary school. Then he got a place in Hei-mong school at Form One in 2011–2012 academic year. But he continued only for 1 year there. He appeared in the final examination of Form One and he said not

to ask about his result. Perhaps he was ashamed of his poor result. He was 'kicked out' of Hei-mong School. Finally, he dropped out as he did not apply to any new school or to Hei-mong School again. He commented:

I would have to repeat Form One again. It would be boring in the same class again. My classmates will be all younger to me. I am also lazy to continue my study....I thought to start working where I can earn money. I did not look for any other school. I started to work. (Morshed Uddin, dropout student, interview, 16 January 2013)

5.2.1.2 Over-Age

Ms. Chow, the Chinese language teacher, made a point that many ethnic minority students were mainly over aged compared to their peers which was also the case for Morshed. Many of them actually came in Hong Kong at some point in late primary early secondary school. When schools interviewed them the students generally could not show the appropriate academic ability to admit them at the same grade corresponding to their age-groups. In most of the cases Ms. Chow saw even their English skill was not up to the mark. She stressed that the problem started with the un-matched peer age-groups in the classrooms. She also mentioned that Morshed was significantly over-age compared to his classmates.

Due to this, ethnic minority students faced problems in getting along with peers in their classrooms. It drove them to make friendships with either students from the senior classes of their same ages or other young people from outside schools. Many of them actually had friends from triad groups or gangs outside school, and they were more inclined to these friends outside of the school world.

In Morshed's case, the effect of over-age was so prominent that he was worrying that he would have to start from Form One with even younger students if he were to go back to school again.

5.2.1.3 His Poor Academic Result and Behavioral Problem

In asking Morshed about his results in primary school he replied that he was always passing in Chinese and English but he failed in the rest of the subjects. In Hei-mong school Morshed's academic result was very poor, he only scored 31.14 % at the final examination where the school's requirement for progressing to the next Form is more than or equal to 50 %. Morshed only passed in Chinese and English language subjects, the rest of the subjects he failed. Moreover, he had the lowest score grade E for his behavior.

There were three major things documented in his yellow book regarding his behavioral problems: smoking, missing studying materials, failure to hand over the homework. Ms. Kau, the ethnic minority education support programme leader, mentioned that there were many other conduct problems that they normally did not record onto the yellow book rather they notified his parents. Morshed also had 7 days unauthorized absences and 7 days delay in that one academic year. This means he was not very regular and punctual in attending classes.

According to his science teacher Mr. Chan, he was not catching up most of the things in his science classes. Morshed only scored 20–30 % in the quizzes or tests where average score was 40 % in the section. Regarding his behavioral problems, Mr. Chan mentioned that Morshed was not giving attention to his lecture at all. He was sleeping on his desk most of the times. Sometimes he discovered Morshed doing some of the punishment work given by other teachers, those typical punishment included writing something repeated times. Sometimes when Morshed's behavioral problem was out of control, such as talking a lot to other students or making noises, then Mr. Chan gave him some further punishment such as standing at the back of the classroom.

5.2.1.4 Morshed's Involvement with Gangs

The impression Principal Mr. Yuen had about Morshed is he was the tallest and strongest boy in the class. He was very active in the way he interacted with others. He was the 'big brother' in the class. Many students used to call him 'dai lou' (大佬), the colloquial Chinese term for 'big brother' that is more like a 'big guy' than a family relation. The term is also sometimes used for triad bosses. Mr. Yuen mentioned that Morshed's attitude was like the actual meaning of a '大佬' and Morshed enjoyed it very much.

It was clear from others' account as well as Morshed's own that he was instrumental in a gang. Morshed said that he had been involved in a gang for the last 3 years. This was the biggest gang in Hong Kong headed by a Chinese person. He remembered he fought for the gang more than 20 times. Every time he fought he was paid about HKD. He mentioned, however, that he stopped had fighting recently. Lately, he only went to meet the leader when Morshed needed him, maybe once in 2 or 3 months. When asked, Morshed refused to name the gang.

5.2.1.5 Dropout History in the Family

Morshed's elder brother went to Hong Kong school from Primary Four but dropped out after Form Two. Morshed said that his brother was 'kicked out' of the school because of academic results. Since then his brother had been working in a restaurant.

5.2.1.6 Racism

In terms of racist or different behavior, Morshed never faced any in his school. But he faced some while walking on the street. Chinese people passed many foul words to him several times without any reason. He shared one example, once when he went into a Chinese shop they started saying bad words to him. They did not think that he would understand Chinese. He became very angry with them and broke into

their shop during the night. When asked whether they reported to the police, he replied “perhaps, but they did not have any proof that I broke into the shop”. He added proudly that he never left any proof of his work.

5.2.1.7 Morshed’s Effort in Making Himself Being Accepted

Ms. Kau, the ethnic minority education support programme leader commented:

Morshed was always first in helping other people, like if someone needed to make a move of the chair or table he always extended his hand if he was around there. He liked to help other people without any benefit like when he was in school he was doing some part time job helping his uncle but without any payment...he always likes to make friends, speaking to friends. Even now-a-days when he comes to school many students from different classes come to talk to him. (Ms. Eva Kau, the ethnic minority education support programme staff, interview, 29 November 2012)

Ms. Kau’s account clearly shows that Morshed put some significant effort to be well adapted and accepted in the wider school life. In addition, both teachers Ms. Chow and Mr. Chan also highly appreciated Morshed’s helping attitudes.

5.2.2 Morshed’s ‘Out of School’ Life

After dropping out of the Hei-mong School in August 2012 Morshed started a full time job. In fact he was doing that job on part-time basis from the beginning of Form One. He coined the job ‘following truck’. He explained that he was actually helping in a truck for delivering goods. He used to sit in the truck beside the driver. It would usually take 45 min to an hour to go from one place to another with goods. When the truck arrived at the destination place then his job began. He had to carry boxes of goods of mainly towels from the truck to warehouse. Each box weighted about 25–30 kg. He carried on average 200–300 boxes every day. His work went from 8 am to 6 pm, in between he had an hour’s lunch break. He was working for 6 days in week, he did not have any fixed day off, he could take any day off he wanted in the week.

5.2.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Morshed was being paid for 11,000 HKD per month, with overtime he was also earning on average 1,000 HKD more. In addition, he was paid for his breakfast, lunch and sometime dinner by his company. His boss and the driver both were Chinese. Morshed was living in public housing with all seven family members together near to his work place. He usually walked in every morning from his home to work. He commented:

The job is really good. I can earn so much money and I can contribute to the family.... sometimes I do not like the job because it is really hard work. Then I think about school,

study. But I think if I come to the school again I will do nothing but sleep. It is better to work and earn money. (Morshed Uddin, dropout student, interview, 16 January 2013)

Asked whether he was looking to change his job, he replied negatively.

5.2.2.2 Future Plan

In addition, when asking him what his plan after 5 years, he replied ‘don’t know’. Concerning the possibility of going back to any study again, he said that he was thinking about getting admitted into Integrated Vocational Development Centre (IVDC) for some technical courses. He was also thinking about coming back to Hei-mong school again. But he had not thought about the timeline yet, when he would go to IVDC or to Hei-mong school again. He mentioned that he would need to talk to his father first about this.

5.3 Aruna Thapa

Aruna Thapa, a 22 years old girl of Nepalese ethnicity, dropped out of Hong Kong school after Form Five. The first author of this book came to know her through one of her friends Shakira whom he met first time in a research forum at a university in Hong Kong. Shakira, a Pakistani girl, was working for a Hong Kong University in one of their ethnic minority education research projects. While we started looking for identifying participants for our research the first author wrote to Shakira seeking her help. Shakira then introduced him to Aruna through e-mail. The first author wrote to Aruna directly, talked over the phone and had the first meeting in October 2012.

Two interviews were conducted with Aruna. Each interview lasted for about 2 h. She was also observed once in her workplace for about an hour. The observation was conducted in late November 2012 after the two interviews. Aruna was one of two participants who were observed at work. Her boss, a doctor, deserves our special gratitude as he allowed the first author in to his clinic to conduct an observation session with Aruna.

5.3.1 Aruna’s Background, School and Life Experiences in Hong Kong

Aruna Thapa moved to Hong Kong in 2000 when she was about 10 years old. She was born in Nepal and studied there until the middle of Primary Four. Her mother, being a daughter of an ex Gurkha Army person, came in Hong Kong in 1995. Her mother was actually born in Hong Kong when her grandfather was working in the Gurkha Army. Then her mother went back to Nepal when she was only 1 year old

and again came back to settle in Hong Kong in 1995. Her grandfather had retired by that time and chose to go back to his small village in Nepal. Aruna's mother was a Grade Eight completer in Nepal. Since she had been in Hong Kong she worked in different jobs including dish washing and elderly homes. Her mother was working for an elderly home during the time of our interview.

Aruna's father was a secondary school completer in Nepal who joined her mother in Hong Kong in 1996. Since then he had worked in construction services. He didn't work for 4–5 years in between because of his some physical illness. From 2011 he started working again in construction. Aruna had a younger brother doing 'A' level. They were all living together in a rented flat in a district mainly populated by south Asian ethnic minorities. Between 1995 and 2000, Aruna and her younger brother were living with their grandparents in Nepal. They visited Hong Kong several times before they fully moved in October 2000.

5.3.1.1 Aruna's Schooling

Although Aruna didn't complete her Primary Four in Nepal she started in a Hong Kong primary school straight from Primary Five. The school was run by Nepalese people having mainly Nepalese students. She said that about 95 % of the students were Nepalese. She was taught in English there. She mentioned that the school closed operation 2 or 3 years back due to the lack of financial resources.

After completing her primary she had a place in a designated secondary school in Form One. In her early years in secondary school she was in one of the international sections that she remembered as 'Section A' where all the students were from different ethnicities other than Chinese including Nepalese, Indian, Pakistani and Filipinos. There were also another three sections namely 'B', 'C' and 'D'. While 'Section B' was also an international section 'Section C' included both international and Chinese students and 'Section D' for Chinese students only.

Aruna got along very well with her friends in school. She mentioned that they were truly international in their friend circles having people from different ethnicities. Unfortunately, she did not have chance to make friendship with any Chinese student as she didn't find one in her early years in high school. As such she didn't have any Chinese students in her class until Form Three. In Form Four and Form Five, however, their section was joined by five Chinese students from other sections. At that time she was also meeting other Chinese students from other sections during some common courses lectures. Although she had some Chinese classmates in Form Four and Form Five it was too late to make close friendship with them.

It seemed Aruna really liked her school, especially passing time with friends in school. When asked her about any significant memories from her school life, she remembered happily:

in our Form Four and Five we used to have after school class. Our school was finished at 3.30 pm then we had our after school class from 3.30 to 4.30 pm. After that we used to stay there until 8.00 pm almost every day. Sometimes we were working, drawing; sometimes we were just having fun with friends....You know getting along with parents in house was

sometime very difficult. So, we loved that time to be in the school with friends. I can still remember those days... (Aruna Thapa, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 19 November 2012)

In 2006–2007 academic year, Aruna passed Form Five in school examination but was not successful in HKCEE. She failed in Biology and Chemistry. She was then very shocked after seeing her result as she never failed in any subject in school exams. She blamed no one but herself for not doing well in HKCEE. Although she passed all subjects in her Form Five school exam and never failed in high school in other Forms, she mentioned that she felt high pressure and a kind of anxiety over the HKCEE. She also added that the time-gap between Form Five school examination and HKCEE was very little.

5.3.1.2 Aruna's High Educational Aspiration and Continued Effort

While Aruna was trying to recover from the shock after failing at HKCEE she was also considering what she could do in this condition. She was thinking about three alternatives, i.e. retaking HKCEE from the same school, looking for another school in Hong Kong, going to the United Kingdom and starting again there from Form Five. But none of her considerations worked out as she went for a completely different option which was going to Nepal to do 'A' levels in the middle of 2008. She also managed an admission to a UK school. However, due to financial hardship that would have had on her parents she decided not to move there. One of the reasons she mentioned for choosing to move to Nepal was her cousin who was also her friend so that they would be able to study together. She also loved the idea of staying in Nepal and exploring it more.

In Nepal she started again from Form Five. She sat for 'A' level examination twice there, first time she succeeded in two subjects Environmental Management and general paper but second time she did not succeed with her attempt at passing in Biology, Chemistry and Physics because of her sickness. After living in Nepal for 2.5 years she again returned to Hong Kong in late 2011. Since then she has been working.

It seemed that Aruna had high educational aspirations and put some real effort accordingly to achieve it. Unfortunately, none of them worked out. She nevertheless was continuing her effort. She had a plan to attempt for 'A' level again for the rest of the subjects and then further pursuing her dream to be a nurse. She was well aware that she could not study in Hong Kong universities without having a qualification in Chinese.

5.3.1.3 Her Chinese and School's Language Policy

In primary level Aruna learnt Chinese for 2 years at Primary Five and Six. But she mentioned that it was very basic. She could communicate basics in Chinese but she did not learn it very well in school. She was taught Chinese from Form One to Three, and again she mentioned that it was very basic. During her Form Four and Form Five she was not taught Chinese, and she took French for Form Five. Her account:

Chinese lessons both in primary and high schools were very basic, I didn't learn them well. At the same time, I was not also giving much attention to it. I thought like Chinese would not be very relevant for my future life, so, I was not much worried about it...lately I understood the importance of Chinese for our life in Hong Kong, but it was too late then. (Aruna Thapa, dropout student, 1st Interview, 27 October 2012)

She was asked again in the second interview about the reasons for not giving the HKCEE another try in Hong Kong and choosing to go to Nepal. She replied that she was not good at Chinese and even if she would have passed in HKCEE at the next try it would have been very difficult for her to get a place in Form Six because of Chinese language requirement.

In Aruna's case we can see her failure in HKCEE was a major problem but her lack of skill in Chinese was a major hindrance for pursuing any future academic or job career in Hong Kong. It was also the failure of the school policy in Chinese language education that did not offer her a better Chinese language experience. It had been 'very basic' from Primary Five to Form Three and there was no compulsory Chinese language course at Form Four and Five or a formal qualification in Chinese language that the next progression route required.

5.3.1.4 Peer Factors

Aruna mentioned that in her Form One section they were about 40 students and every year they were losing students. As a result, they ended up being only 22 students in Form Five. But she could not tell what happened to her all missing classmates whether they dropped out or moved to another school. She remembered several of them. They were not doing well in examinations and stopped coming to school. Either they had started working then or had gone back to their home countries. She was still in contact with some of them.

5.3.1.5 Dropout History in the Family

In our first interview Aruna said that her younger brother was doing 'A' level in Nepal. When asked during the second interview more about him, a surprise came out that her brother was also a dropout from the Hong Kong secondary school. He started his school in Hong Kong from Primary Two but continued until only Form Three. Aruna said that he was not doing well in school as well as he was troublesome, fighting with other students. After Form Three he completely stopped going to school. For 1 year he did not go to school. Her parents then decided to send him back to Nepal where he started going to school again and passed secondary school certificate. After that he was doing his 'A' level in Nepal. He usually came to visit them over the holidays.

5.3.1.6 Racism

Aruna encountered very little racial behavior in her life in Hong Kong. She asserted:

I don't know, probably I look like a little bit Chinese, that is why I didn't experience much racial behavior in Hong Kong. But I heard many sad stories from my friends. I just can feel a different look of both known and unknown Chinese people when I wear our traditional dress.But I can still remember one instance that we witnessed in our school. There was a volleyball match between our international section and Chinese section. We clearly noticed that Chinese referee was favoring unreasonably Chinese section in his decisions. As a result our section lost to Chinese section. At that time we were very upset about that. (Aruna Thapa, dropout student, 1st Interview, 27 October 2012)

5.3.2 Aruna's 'Out of School' Life

After returning to Hong Kong in late 2011 Aruna started working for some restaurants including a pasta house on full time and part time basis. Recently she changed to a new job in a private clinic as an assistant to the Doctor. She actually started this job from the middle of the September 2012. When patients came to see Doctor her work started by recording patients' particulars such as ID card information at the beginning and giving entry to a software system, measuring blood pressure, height, weight checking etc. Then she passed this information to the Doctor. She helped patients with the medicine, sometimes also with the injections. Receiving Doctor's fees from the patients and cleaning the place were also part of her job responsibility.

In a typical day, Aruna normally woke up early in the morning at 7.30 am and started to get ready for her work. Most of the times she cooked her breakfast and sometime her mother also helped her. She starts from her place for work between 8.00 and 8.15 am. She arrived in her office between 9.30 and 9.40 am. She continues at work until 1 pm. From 1.00 to 4.00 pm she had a big lunch break when she sometimes preferred to go to her Aunt's place at Wan Chai or sometime went to see some friends in Hung Hom or sometime just staying at office. Most of the times she brought her lunch from home and sometimes she had her lunch at her Aunt's place. Her work started again from 4.00 pm and continued until 8.00 pm or sometime a little bit later. She returned to her home by 9.30–10.00 pm. She took her dinner and went to bed by 11.00–11.30 pm. She had only Sunday off when she normally was up late, did some cleaning and laundry work, sometime went to see some of her young cousins in the afternoon who were living close to her place, came back to home at the evening, cooked for her family then took dinner and went to sleep.

5.3.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Aruna said that she was the only person working there as an assistant to help the doctor. Sometimes, when there were too many patients she really had a hard time. It was also apparent when she was observed at work. At one point she was dealing with three patients simultaneously. Aruna was pushing an injection on the right arm

of one man. Then she measured his blood pressure and temperature and reported to the doctor. Then Aruna did all these same things for another two ladies immediately. In the middle she went several times to the medicine areas to bring the right injections for them. It was really busy time for her. Aruna later said that sometimes it was so busy that she even could not enter the patients' information while they waited.

It was also the case that doctor told the first author that Aruna was the only person working there in the absence of his head nurse who recently gave birth to a baby boy, therefore, she was mainly on leave only coming 1/2 days to work in a week. Aruna also confirmed this information later and mentioned that even if head nurse was not coming every day she was providing a lot of support from home especially when they were running out of any medicine in calling to the medicine company.

In terms of benefits, Aruna said that she was still on 3 months kind of intern period, after that Doctor would be finalizing her benefits package. But during the time of the interview she was being paid for about HKD 6,500 per month and 1 day off per week. When asked about whether she was happy with her current job she replied:

It is ok. Sometimes I don't like some bossy behaviors of the doctor and I am working their alone. But there are also some other good motivations like this experience will count for my dream to be a nurse. Thinking both positive and negative sides, I think I am alright. (Aruna Thapa, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 19 November 2012)

One of the things happened accidentally that made Aruna's doctor boss unhappy and the first author witnessed this during the observation. While she was measuring blood pressure of a patient, the doctor cautioned her not to fix up the blood pressure machine at the centre of the arms as it was not giving good result in that position. After one or two tries Aruna could not position the machine in the right place. The doctor became angry and asked her in a loud voice why she was not following his instruction. Aruna looked at the first author immediately but he pretended that he did not hear anything and was busy with some other thing. After another couple of tries she finally did it correctly.

5.3.2.2 Future Plan

Aruna was again planning to sit for 'A' levels and continuing her dream to be a nurse. She was well aware, however, that she could not have a place in Hong Kong universities as she did not have a qualification in Chinese. She was also hoping that she would have a place in a UK University. Not surprisingly, she was worried about the cost of education in UK but also thought that it would be great if she could go there as her cousin was also planning to study there.

5.4 Veem Pun

Veem Pun, a 19 years old Nepalese boy, dropped out of a secondary school in Hong Kong after Form Four. The first author of this book came to know him through one of his Nepalese friends who was once Veem's secondary school teacher. At one

weekend of November 2012 first author's friend introduced Veem to him. Veem looked well-dressed with a very mild voice, perhaps the presence of his previous teacher made him a little bit more conscious. Veem, first author and his friend went to a Chinese restaurant to have lunch and kept talking on some general things about life in Hong Kong. At some point in the restaurant first author's friend shared the research topic with Veem and suggested he become a participant of the research. After some further explanation, Veem agreed to participate in the study.

Two interviews were conducted with Veem in November 2012. Each interview lasted for about 2 h. In addition, he was observed once at work in February 2013 for an hour. He was one of the two participants who agreed to allow us to observe him at work.

5.4.1 Veem's Background, School and Life Experiences in Hong Kong

Veem was born in Nepal and completed his grade nine from schools there before moving to Hong Kong fully in August 2007. Previously he came in Hong Kong once in December 2006 when he stayed for couple of weeks to apply for his ID card. His father had been living in Hong Kong for a long time. Veem could not remember clearly when his father first came in Hong Kong but he thought he was only 3 or 4 years old then. He could not even remember very much about his childhood with his father. During the second interview we jointly worked out that it was probably in the year 1995/1996 when his father first moved to Hong Kong as a migrant. Veem could also not also recall what his father's first job in Hong Kong was but he mentioned that since Veem came in Hong Kong in 2007 he knew that his father was working in security service which he later changed to work as a carpenter. His father was a grade ten completer in Nepal.

Veem's father was joined by his mother in Hong Kong during 2003 when Veem was 10 years old. Veem's mother only completed grade III in Nepal and since she came to Hong Kong she had been working in a catering service. Veem was living then with his elder brothers and sisters in Nepal after his mother moved to Hong Kong.

Veem had five brothers and three sisters including one step-brother and one step-sister. In our first interview Veem said that his two brothers and one sister moved to Hong Kong at the same time in 2007 with him but in our second interview he clarified that actually his sister moved with him in 2007 and his two brothers moved in around 2009/2010. One of the brothers, a college graduate from Nepal, was working as a bar supervisor in Hong Kong. Another brother, a secondary school graduate from Nepal, was working in construction. His sister, who was working in spa, was also a school graduate from Nepal. None of them studied in Hong Kong after moving here. His sister had done some course on spa before starting work. After living in Yuen Long for a long time, they were now all living together in a rented flat in Jordan.

Veem's step-mother, step-brother and step-sister all were living in Nepal. While his step-brother was living with Veem's own brothers and sister, his step mother and sister were living there separately. Veem mentioned that his own brother and sister often go and see his step-mother and step-sister and they also sometime come to see his own brother and sister.

5.4.1.1 Veem's Schooling

Although Veem finished grade IX in Nepal, he had to start from Form Three again in Hong Kong. He started his high school at a designated secondary school in the 2007–2008 academic year. He was placed in 'Section A' which was the international section. He remembered that there were 33 students in their section where about half of them were either Pakistani or Nepalese, along with one Thai, one Indian and one Chinese. But his only Chinese classmate left for another school in Form Four. The school had three other sections in their Form for Chinese students only whom Veem rarely met in either in playground or at different out of school activities.

Veem characterized himself 'a little bit naughty' during his school life in Hong Kong. He shared a story from his school life:

It was my first month in Hong Kong school in Form Three. I had a fight with one of my Nepalese classmates, actually I punched him and the boy was bleeding. Then both of us were suspended for two days from school. The other boy called some of his community senior boys to take revenge against me. When I faced those hired senior boys, the leader of them declared that I am his cousin and if anyone wants to hit me he is going to hit them back. I didn't know that my cousin was kind of a school boys' gang leader but I felt so happy to see him there. I could still remember the other boy's face turning pale. Anyway, later he (other boy) became my very good friend. (Veem Pun, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 25 November 2012)

Veem laughed a lot after sharing this story, the first author also joined him.

5.4.1.2 His Academic Achievement

When asked about Veem's Form Three result he answered he did 'ok' and he further explained that he failed in Chinese, and Liberal Studies. He also did not pass in 'Chinese', 'business, accounting and financial studies' in Form Four. He was not much sure about the latter subject name as in another occasion he referred that subject as 'business and entrepreneurship'. After completing his final examination in Form Four he decided not to continue school anymore. He was not expecting good result. Therefore, he did not even go to school to pick up his results. He mentioned that his parents left it up to him at that time to make a decision about his school whether he should continue or not. He ultimately dropped out of school in the middle of 2009 and since then he had been working full time in a club.

Although he claimed at the first interview that he was doing very well in school while he was in Nepal, in the second interview he actually admitted that he was not good at science and failed in that subject twice in a row in grade VIII and grade IX. He explained that is why he took history instead of science in Form Three and Four in Hong Kong.

5.4.1.3 Veem's Struggle in Chinese

In school, Veem was mainly taught in English, and he also had a Chinese language subject. Not surprisingly like many other ethnic minority students he was also facing difficulties in Chinese. He commented:

At first I was very curious to learn Chinese, but when I found it difficult to learn I lost all my interest. Then I was not paying much attention and sometimes sleeping in the class.... I found it always different Chinese writing and speaking and difficult. The written form of Chinese doesn't follow the speaking form and they are completely different. I was writing something but I was speaking something different. I found it very difficult to learn even after I tried several times. (Veem Pun, dropout student, 1st Interview, 18 November 2012)

He actually identified his struggle in Chinese as a reason for leaving school.

5.4.1.4 Issues in Teaching

In terms of Veem's failure in 'Business, Accounting and Financial Studies' Veem accused his teacher of not teaching well:

Our teacher wasn't that good. He was not speaking good English and it was very difficult to follow him. He was speaking so fast, in spite of our repetitive request he never stopped speaking fast. Many of my classmates also faced same problems in understanding him. When he finished his teaching he kept sitting on his chair. And we were allowed to make fun with our friends. So, we were not bothering much later what he was teaching, just was waiting when he finishes. (Veem Pun, dropout student, 1st Interview, 18 November 2012)

It seemed teaching was a real issue in the school. Veem also mentioned that his Chinese language teacher was not easy to follow. When Veem went to him to share his difficulties, the teacher gave him only advice for concentrating more. Nevertheless, Veem appreciated his Chinese subject teacher's supportive nature especially for listening to him on several occasions.

5.4.1.5 Differences in Schooling Culture

One of the issues emerging repeatedly from the interview was the differences in schooling culture especially in teaching between Nepal and Hong Kong and how these impacted on Veem's school failure. He mentioned that the teaching was so different in Hong Kong from Nepal. Teachers were more focused on their teaching in Hong Kong and seemed to concentrate less on students. He also referred their

over-use of multimedia in classroom as ‘very boring’ that took away liveliness of the classroom. In contrast, he explained his Nepalese experience that teachers were so caring about him. If he was not doing well or concentrating, his teachers used to scold him or give punishment or beat him. But here in Hong Kong he found that teachers did not care at all whether he was doing well or not. He commented:

In Nepal, although teachers punished me while I failed to submit homework or did not do well in examination, I could still remember their care for me. There were some teachers who always kept telling me the value of doing better in examination. They talked to me personally and helped me if I could not understand anything. I understand they did these so that I could do well in study...In Hong Kong school, no one cared for me in the school. I can't remember any of my teachers ever asked me anything related to how I am doing in school, and whether I face any difficulties in my study. In the class they were always busy showing us slides using multimedia projector, which was the only thing they cared for, but no care for us... (Veem Pun, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 25 November 2012)

In addition, Veem also mentioned that he was never contacted by his school to find out why he was not coming to the school. He had never received any letter from the school since he stopped going there. He was also never approached by any NGO or social welfare organization to support him continuing his study.

5.4.1.6 Employment

From the middle of 2008 Veem was working part-time in a club in Central District of Hong Kong. As soon as he dropped out of school in middle of 2009 he started working there full time. From Veem's perspective this was another reason for not going to school as he commented:

I saw so many seniors around me, they were good at study but at some point they left school and joined in work like bar, construction, waiter etc...I was not good at study. If people like them are ended up doing this kind of job what can I do staying in school. If I can't do well in education there is no hope for me in school... three or four of my classmates also stopped going to school from my section at the same time after Form Four. They all have started working. (Veem Pun, dropout student, 1st Interview, 18 November 2012)

It was clear that Veem was not happy with his school life and found it boring and challenging. And he had the option of part time work where he could earn money and spend. Since he was working he could compare it with his school life. He considered his work life was much attractive and thought that if he would leave school he could work full time and earn more money. Finally, he took the decision not to continue school and started working full time.

5.4.1.7 Racism

Veem did not face any racist behavior in his life in Hong Kong. But he mentioned that he heard from many of his Nepalese friends that they had encountered racism. Most of it was the use of foul words by some Chinese people directed at Veem and his friends while walking on the street.

5.4.2 Veem's 'Out of School' Life

The club where Veem was working was located in Central where there are many clubs and bars. He was called bartender in his job. He worked there 6 days a week having only Sunday off. While the first author went to observe him at work during the Chinese New Year holiday in 2013 Veem introduced his two cousins who were also working in the club, one of them was bouncer supervisor and another was floor supervisor. Veem explained that the owner and all the people working in the club were Nepalese. This was one of the reasons why he was working there. Veem was very kind, treating the first author there to a beer. Although the first author wanted to pay the bill Veem said that since the first author went to see him in the club it must be Veem who should be paying. Veem also added it was private party time so drinks were half priced anyway.

His main responsibility was mixing drinks and serving it to the customers. During the observation he was seen doing this several times. Asking customers what drinks they wanted, he prepared drinks for them accordingly and served them. They paid him money, he moved to the cash point to keep it. He came back with the receipt and change. Sometimes he found customers waiting to receive changes, sometimes they already moved to another place. In that case, Veem was seen keeping the change in a box. When asked him whether it was common tips box, he replied positively. By the end of the club time it would be distributed evenly among all staff.

A typical day for Veem was somewhat different from other people as he was working in a club. The club normally had two shifts i.e. opening shift and closing shift. If he had to work in opening shift he normally woke up around 1.00 pm and the first thing he did after waking up was surf internet. Then he washed himself and took breakfast. Sometimes he cooked his own breakfast sometimes his sister cooked for him. He needed to arrive at the club by around 2.45 pm. From 3.00 pm the club opened and he had to work until 10.00 pm. He was back home by 11.00 pm and took dinner. Normally his mother cooked dinner for him. If he had to do a closing shift he started working from 5.00 pm and continued until 12.00 am or 1.00 am. Whatever shift he was working in he never went to bed before 4.00 am or 5.00 am early in the morning. Between his dinner and sleeping time he normally watched movie or surfed the internet. He had Sunday off when he typically went out for dinner or shopping sometimes with his brothers and sister, sometimes with his girlfriend or sometimes with some of his friends. Veem had been in a relationship for the last 2 years with a Nepalese girl studying in Form Six.

5.4.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Veem liked his club job very much and seemed he was happy. He asserted:

It's fun. I got to see many pretty girls. Sometimes people behaving very wild with their girls, sometimes people get very wild after many drinks. I also see many people got angry.

Sometimes I also got to meet many good people there and later we have become friends and hang out together. (Veem Pun, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 25 November 2012)

Veem was earning about 11,000 HKD per month, and he was also getting tips of about HKD 5,000 per month. He expressed his satisfaction with the amount he was being paid for. Apart from Sunday off he was entitled for 7 days annual leave.

The only thing Veem mentioned he did not like about his work was that sometimes there was a very big crowd and therefore a very busy time especially over the weekend and holidays. The first author also witnessed this during the observation. Although when the first author entered the club he did not notice many customers, by the end of his observation it was nearly mid-night and the bar was filling with customers. Veem was rarely getting time to come and talk to him. When the first author left the club he noticed that there was a long queue outside the main entrance and the bouncer was looking at people in the queue and letting people go in one by one.

5.4.2.2 Future Plan

Veem confessed that the decision he made 3 years back to stop going to school was not a good one. He realized later the value of completing school. He wished he could go back to school again. Since there was already a 3 year gap, therefore, he mentioned that it would be very difficult for him to start again.

Nevertheless, Veem had a dream of opening his own club in the next 10 years. He planned to work in his current club for another 2 or 3 years and he hoped that afterwards he would be promoted as a club supervisor. But he would not want to work in his current club as supervisor rather would be switching to a new club. He mentioned that he wanted to learn all the necessary things for running a club before opening his own club. He expressed his concerns, however, about the amount of money he would need to save in order to open a club in 10 years.

5.5 Tanvir Ahmed

Tanvir Ahmed, a Bangladeshi boy aged 22, dropped out of a Hong Kong school after Form Four. The first author of this book first saw Tanvir in his second day in Hong Kong in the middle of 2011. He had come all the way from Tai Po to see one of his friends in Chungking Mansion. As he was coming out from the Middle Road exit of East Tsim Sha Tsui MTR, his friend called and said to wait in front of the Sheraton where one of his staff will meet him and accompany him to his friend's office. That person was Tanvir whom the first author immediately came to know. In their short walk from Sheraton to Chungking Mansion the first author saw him speaking with people very fluently at least in four languages i.e. Bangla, Hindi, Chinese and English. Tanvir was working then in a China based mobile handset company as sales assistant. The first author had been coming to that office once a

month to see his friend and this is how he learnt that Tanvir was a dropout. Eventually Tanvir left that job in late 2011 and the interview took place in late 2012.

Although the first author knew Tanvir long before we started identifying the participants for this research he probably had the most difficulties accessing him. It was mainly due to Tanvir's extremely busy schedule for one of his jobs at the airport. With the help of a Bangladeshi community leader, however, the interview took place in late November 2012 for about 2 h. An interview was also conducted with his Father Mr. Najrul Islam in March 2013 lasting for about 1.5 h. Tanvir's mother was also present when his father was being interviewed. The interview data with Mr. Islam is also incorporated in this section to present Tanvir's case.

5.5.1 Tanvir's Background, School and Life Experiences in Hong Kong

Although Tanvir said that his father came to Hong Kong in 1992, his father Mr. Islam clarified that he actually moved to Hong Kong first in 1991 on a visitor's visa. He managed his Hong Kong identity card in 1992 and continued to live in Hong Kong for the last 22 years. In this long period he worked for different companies and different shops at many places in Hong Kong including Bangladesh Airlines office. Currently Mr. Islam was working in a factory as a worker but he did not mention the type of factory. In terms of Mr. Islam's academic qualification he had completed grade VI back in Bangladesh.

Tanvir was only 2 years old and living with his mother in Bangladesh when his father moved to Hong Kong in 1991. Tanvir and his mother first came in Hong Kong in 1995 and stayed for about 1 year. They went back to Bangladesh and finally moved to Hong Kong in 2000. Tanvir's mother finished several primary grades in Bangladesh. She had always been a housewife. Tanvir had a younger brother who moved to Hong Kong from Bangladesh 6–7 years after Tanvir and his mother.

5.5.1.1 His Schooling

Before Tanvir came to Hong Kong for the first time in 1995 he was going to a Kindergarten in Bangladesh, but in his 1 year stay in Hong Kong he did not attend any school. He was taught Chinese at home, however, by one of his father's Chinese friend. He was also taught other subjects by one of his uncle's Filipino girlfriends at home. When he went back to Bangladesh after 1 year he started going to school right from grade III in 1997 and continued until beginning of grade VI in 2000.

After finally moving to Hong Kong in 2000 he did not go to any school for the first year. Again at that time he was taught by his father's friend and Uncle's girl friend at home. From 2001 September he started going to a designated primary school at Primary Six. He said he had about 40 classmates in his class in an interna-

tional section. He took Urdu instead of Chinese as a second language subject in Primary Six.

After finishing primary, he had a place for Form One in a designated secondary school. The school usually had three international sections and one Chinese section in each Form. Tanvir was in an international section; the ethnic composition of his section was 10 Filipino, 18/19 Pakistani, 2/3 Nepalese, 8/9 Indian, 1 Bangladeshi, and 2 Chinese students. Tanvir used to meet other Chinese classmates from other sections in Chinese class only. In his secondary school he was taught French and Chinese where he took French as a second language subject and Chinese as an additional language subject.

When telling his dropout story Tanvir mentioned:

I did well throughout my secondary schools until Form Five and including HKCEE. After passing HKCEE I applied for a Form Six place in some schools but I did not get any except one school. But tuition fee was about 60000 HKD per year which was beyond my parent's affordability, so, I could not make it. And that was the end of my school in Hong Kong. Then I started working from early 2009 and since then I have changed many jobs... (Tanvir Ahmed, dropout student, interview, 24 November 2012)

While the above excerpt clearly shows Tanvir's account of his dropout after Form Five, he actually dropped out after Form Four. Tanvir's father revealed this. When the first author shared with Mr. Islam what Tanvir said about his dropping out, he replied that perhaps Tanvir told a lie out of shame. Mr. Islam mentioned that everyone in the Bangladeshi community in Hong Kong knew him as a good and helpful person, so if he were facing some financial difficulty in supporting Tanvir's education they would have helped him and he would have also sought for financial support from them. Mr. Islam also shared the story of his nephew who he had been supporting back in Bangladesh by sending 2,000 HKD equivalent Bangladeshi Taka every month for more than 10 years. His nephew was successfully doing a good job in Bangladesh after his graduation. In response to our repeating query about Tanvir's dropout grade Mr. Islam again confirmed that Tanvir did not continue his school after Form Four in spite of his and his wife's repetitive requests.

5.5.1.2 Harassment

Tanvir's experiences in both primary and secondary schools were not good at all in Hong Kong. He was a little over weight in terms of his physical structure and still was during the interview and for that he was always teased by his classmates. The sad experience Tanvir mentioned:

It was very painful experience. No one was mixing with me in the class; they were like always bullying me. I was sitting alone in last bench, no one sat with me throughout my school life. There were also different gangs of Pakistani boys and Filipino girls who many times physically assaulted me. And Chinese students in Chinese classes were passing me very bad words like: "mother fucker", "idiot" etc. I was really kind of lost in those days. (Tanvir Ahmed, dropout student, interview, 24 November 2012)

It seemed Tanvir was treated badly sometimes by his teachers as well. In one occasion, in Form One he was initially selected as class captain but later his teacher allowed one of the other classmates to perform that role informally but Tanvir was still the class captain on paper. His teacher told him ‘you are good for nothing; the other student can do better than you’, as Tanvir mentioned. Naturally, he became very shocked by this behavior of his teacher. Tanvir also mentioned that in later years in school he encountered many other differential behaviors by many of his teachers. Tanvir was also treated differently by the Principal of the school in one occasion. One Indian student once fought with Tanvir, and then Tanvir went to Principal with a complaint. Unfortunately, Tanvir was finally accused by the Principal and was warned that he would have to leave school if he were again found doing the same. Tanvir was so shocked with this unfair mediator role of his Principal that he directly challenged the Principal to check his previous conduct in school because he was bold that his conduct record was very clean. Tanvir was really dissatisfied with all these bad experiences in school. This had also impacted his family’s not very strong opposition for his decision of not continuing school after Form Four, as he commented:

It’s true that my parents wanted me to continue school but they were also very much aware of my sufferings in schools by my classmates. I was also like so fed up with all my experiences that I was feeling relaxed thinking that I don’t have to go to school anymore. (Tanvir Ahmed, dropout student, interview, 24 November 2012)

When Mr. Islam was asked whether Tanvir mentioned any problem that he was facing in school from his friends, Mr. Islam replied that in Form Three Tanvir told him several times that some of his classmates were disturbing him and sometimes they were making false complaints to teachers against him. Therefore, Tanvir wanted to change his school. But Mr. Islam gathered information from other students who knew Tanvir. He heard from them that in most of the cases Tanvir was the guilty one. Thus Mr. Islam did not consider Tanvir’s request seriously. Rather Mr. Islam sought support from one of the Pakistani teachers who was their family friend; the teacher once came home and convinced Tanvir not to change the school.

5.5.1.3 Parental Factors

Mr. Islam claimed that he provided adequate support for Tanvir’s education. In terms of supporting him with private tutors, in many occasions when Tanvir demanded he keep one Filipino teacher and two Bangladeshi teachers. When Tanvir stopped going to school Mr. Islam offered him again private tutors for the support to his study but Tanvir did not listen to him. Mr. Islam also mentioned that he actually should have been careful in buying Tanvir a computer as he shared one interesting observation about the study of Tanvir that had profound impact on Tanvir for not being successful in school, as Mr. Islam stated:

I bought him a computer for his study in his early secondary school. It was not a good decision. Computer is not always good. I am not much educated so I never knew what he was

always doing in computer. I always found him in front of computer. Sometimes he told me he was chatting with his friend for study. Later I came to know from other people that they could open many pages at the same time in computer and do many things. But when I asked him he was always showing me something related to his study either programs or many other things which I never understood. But now I understand that he lied, and was not doing anything related to study rather chatted with friends or played games or did some other unnecessary things. Computer was really problematic. (Mr. Najrul Islam, Tanvir's father, interview, 25 March 2013)

In terms of Mr. Islam's direct involvement with the school he said that school was always calling parents for participating in many programs and for 'other reasons' but because of his busy work attachment he had not been able to attend on most of the occasions. When asked further what sort of 'other reasons' the school called him, he replied that in secondary school there were sometimes complaints about Iqram for his naughty behavior or he was not attending classes etc. In the mediation with Mr. Islam and teachers those issues were often solved. Tanvir's teachers always told Mr. Islam that his result was not so bad in the school. Actually he had been doing well when he was in Bangladesh, but after coming in Hong Kong perhaps he could not cope up with the school, therefore, he could not finish his school. Since Tanvir was not coping well with school in Hong Kong school he was not satisfied with the school. Mr Islam added that this affected his decision since he was not finding anything rewarding for him in school and finally he stopped going to school.

Although it seems from Mr. Islam's account of the reasons for Tanvir's dropping out was his inability to adapt to Hong Kong's school system, however, parenting practices also seem to be an issue. In the case of Tanvir his father had little involvement in positive family practices or parenting styles for Tanvir's education such as supervision and monitoring or helping with school work, communicating with the school, participation in the school activities etc. This was due to either for Mr. Islam's very busy work or whenever he tried to be involved he lacked the skills to provide the right support and guidance to Tanvir. This was clear in the case of buying Tanvir a computer but not having the skills to supervise him well. Tanvir's mother also could not help him much for study as she was not well educated.

5.5.1.4 Intergenerational and Cultural Gap

Mr. Islam expressed his deep frustration about Tanvir. He commented:

Whenever I told him anything, he said I do not understand things in Hong Kong. He said things are different in Hong Kong than Bangladesh. I really don't understand the differences; I don't understand why he had to spend a lot. I don't understand why he has to do something different that we Muslims are not allowed to do. He has to understand that we Bangladeshis are different. I don't have much education but I gave him a life in a developed country like Hong Kong. In return he is not doing anything. I am still working in a factory even at this age... (Mr. Najrul Islam, Tanvir's Father, interview, 25 March 2013)

The above excerpt clearly shows an intergenerational gap between father and son. This has also been heightened by the gap between two countries' culture. Thus tensions in values between father and son, finally impacted on father-son relationships.

The intergenerational gap was also obvious from Mr. Islam's reply when the first author suggested to Mr. Islam that he must be happy with Tanvir as he had been working since he had dropped out. His response seemed indifferent. He made the point that Tanvir had changed jobs six or seven times in the last 2 years. Mr. Islam channeled him into many jobs within the Bangladeshi community but Tanvir was never satisfied with any job. He stressed that his habit of changing jobs frequently was not good for his career. He continuously blamed Tanvir for not doing anything right in his entire life. Tanvir, however, associated his frequent changes of jobs as a way to grasp better opportunities in a competitive job market.

5.5.1.5 Peer Factors

It seemed the dropout rate was very high in Tanvir's class. There had been about 40 students in Form One, of whom about 50 % dropped out by Form Four and started working. Of the remaining 50 % only three or four of them continued after Form Five and HKCEE. Tanvir only remembered that two of his classmates had a chance in Hong Kong universities. When asked how he knew about his friends even after he left school and given that he was not happy with his classmates he told a strange story. After he had left school one day he invited some of his classmates in to a place where he showed his anger with them, even slapping two of his classmates who used to assault him physically a lot in school. After this incident his classmates changed their attitude and had been nice with him which ultimately meant he was still in contact with some of his classmates.

5.5.1.6 Dropout History in the Family

Although Tanvir did not mention his younger brother's dropout history, Mr. Islam revealed that about Tanvir's younger brother who was also a dropout from a Hong Kong school. After coming to Hong Kong in 2007, he went to a designated secondary school in 2007–2008 academic year and continued only the following one more academic year. Mr. Islam mentioned that he was not doing well in examinations, therefore the school kicked him out, and he ultimately dropped out. Since then he was mostly working mostly part-time.

5.5.1.7 Racism

Tanvir encountered a number of racist behaviors in his life in Hong Kong. He said that life in Hong Kong for people like him was very difficult not only in school but also in job life. One of the companies in airport that recruited people through an agency was asking for Chinese language requirements. Yet Tanvir's experience was that those jobs actually did not need any Chinese language. He commented that many ethnic minority people he knew working in Airport said to him that they were

less paid compared to Chinese people. Tanvir also mentioned that on the streets and in the MTR he found many Chinese people avoided him many times. One of his recent experiences was with a Chinese lady who fainted in the middle of the road. He helped her by calling an ambulance and accompanying her to the hospital instead of going to work. But when the lady had her sense back, she scolded him. On another occasion recently Tanvir tried to help one of his old aged colleagues with his weight loads but in return the old colleague punched Tanvir. Tanvir also said that in a recent district council election he saw one candidate circulating his election promises in Chinese full of racial hatred and that he would not be going to support providing resources for ethnic minority people's well-being if he was elected. When asked what the reasons were for all these, Tanvir replied, "Because we are South Asians, we are Muslims, we are brown color. The problem for me is I can understand and read Chinese, so, whatever they are talking about, I can understand them."

5.5.1.8 Tanvir's Illness

A sad aspect of this story relayed by Mr. Islam was that Tanvir became ill on the night of the interview with Mr. Islam. Mr. Islam called for an ambulance but Tanvir refused to go to hospital. Mr. Islam looked at his wife and blamed her for feeding him too much in childhood which resulted in Tanvir's being overweight. Mr. Islam was suggesting that Tanvir might have developed some blockages in his heart. Tanvir's mother's embarrassed face was obvious. Mr. Islam also said that he would buy Tanvir an air-ticket to go back to Bangladesh for treatment since Tanvir wished to go back to Bangladesh. Mr. Islam sounded very helpless that he could do nothing but fulfil Tanvir's wish. Mr. Islam then requested the first author to help Tanvir understand more about Bangladeshi family values, bonds and cultures on the assumption that the first author had regular contact with Tanvir but Mr. Islam did not wish Tanvir to know anything about this. Yet despite repeated attempts it has not been possible to meet Tanvir again to follow up Mr Islam's request.

5.5.2 Tanvir's 'Out of School' Life

Tanvir started working from early 2009 and since then he had changed jobs many times. His first job was as a sales assistant in an import export company owned by a Bangladeshi person, in between he switched many jobs including garments, mobile phone shop, and general store. Recently he joined a new job as a trainee at the Hong Kong Aviation and Engineering Company in September 2012. He was attending the training courses during the time of the interview. He also mentioned that he was already working for the luggage and baggage handling department as overtime where he was also expecting his placement after finishing the training. His main job in the luggage and baggage handling department was to make sure luggage cabinets were uploaded successfully in the cargo.

Tanvir had been working very hard since he joined this new job. He was attending training all day long and after that he was working overtime in the luggage and baggage handling department. Typically on everyday he was waking up at 6.00 am, took breakfast, and arrived at work before 8.00 am. He continued attending training up to 5.00 pm with an hour lunch break. After that he was working overtime until 10.00 pm or 11.00 pm every night. He went back to home, had dinner and went to sleep. His mother mainly cooked food for all of them at home. Tanvir was also doing overtime almost every Sunday. He had hardly managed to take any day off since he joined this job. Tanvir mentioned that he wanted to learn work as fast as he could.

5.5.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Tanvir seemed happy so far he worked in his airport job. He commented:

It is a good job. I liked the job. In the training I am performing very well, in recognition of this sometimes I was also invited by the trainer to help him. I think my Cantonese and English put me in better position in the job than many other co-workers, be it Chinese or non-Chinese. (Tanvir Ahmed, dropout student, interview, 24 November 2012)

In terms of benefits, since Tanvir was in the training period he did not know how much they were going to pay him finally. It would be settled after successful training. However, he was expecting not less than 10,000 HKD. And with the overtime he estimated that he would earn about 20,000 HKD per month.

5.5.2.2 Future Plan

Tanvir sounded pretty hopeful about staying longer in his airport job. He wished to continue the job and have a long-term career there. He also shared that one of his future plans was to do some charity works for refugee or asylum seekers in Hong Kong who are of Bangladeshi origin. Since they were living a very distasteful life in Hong Kong and he knew some of them closely he would plan to do something for their betterment.

5.6 Azad Rabbani

Azad Rabbani, a 22 year old Pakistani boy, dropped out of Hong Kong school before completing the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Education (HKDSE). The first author of this book came to know Azad through two student assistants who worked for several weeks especially for transcribing the interview data of this research. Both student assistants were freshman at the Hong Kong Institute of Education; they were of south Asian ethnic minority origin, among the rare successful ethnic

minority young people who made it to University in Hong Kong. It was for the first time in history of the Institute that they had a number of undergraduate students from the South Asian ethnic minority community. Azad and two student assistants had studied together in high school and they were friends. Azad happily agreed to be interviewed.

Two interviews were conducted with Azad, once in December 2012 and another in February 2013. Each interview lasted for about 2 h. In the first interview two student assistants were also present as Azad wanted them to be there. Although they mostly remained silent, one of them intervened once or twice in the conversation. In the second interview, however, it was only Azad and the first author.

5.6.1 Azad's Background, School and Life Experiences in Hong Kong

Azad's father migrated to Hong Kong from Pakistan in 1970s but Azad couldn't exactly remember the year. His father then worked in Chungking Mansions for a several years as a trolley-boy. After that he worked in a used car and car tools trading agency for about 12–15 years and finally he had been running his own car tools trading agency for the last 12–15 years. Azad's father stopped going to work from last year and since then he was living a kind of retired life in Hong Kong. Azad said that his father went back to Pakistan 1 week before our first interview date and was not sure whether his father would come back again to Hong Kong. Azad's father had completed only some primary grades from Pakistan but Azad was not so sure whether it was up to Primary Four or Primary Five.

Azad and his mother came in Hong Kong in 1997 when he was 7 years old. His mother had never attended any school. Azad's mother had always been a housewife, she never worked outside. During the time when Azad and his mother moved to Hong Kong he had one elder sister and two elder brothers living in Pakistan with his grandparents. His two elder brothers eventually joined them in Hong Kong in 2000 and 2005 respectively while his elder sister married in Pakistan and was living there. His eldest brother was looking after his father's business in Hong Kong. Azad's second older brother was a delivery van driver. Azad had also a younger sister who was studying in Form Two in a Chinese medium of instruction school. They were all living in a rented flat in Yuen Long.

5.6.1.1 His Schooling

Before moving to Hong Kong in 1997 Azad went to a primary school in Pakistan, but he could not fully remember how many grades he completed there, it was probably Primary One and Primary Two. He said that although he was admitted in school there he was a very irregular attendee at school. After coming to Hong Kong in

October 1997 he did not start going to school until September 1999. He was just staying at home and playing at that time and did not have any education even at home. In the academic year 1999–2000 Azad started his Primary One at a primary school in Yuen Long. He still could remember his first school in Hong Kong:

We were about 16 to 17 students. Among them there were five Nepalese, five Pakistanis, two Indians, four Filipinos. We did not have any Chinese student in our class....I was taught everything in English, we did not have any Chinese language lesson there. I studied there until Primary Three. (Azad Rabbani, dropout student, 1st Interview, 1 December 2012)

Azad then moved to another primary school from Primary Four in 2002. He remembered that they had about 27 students in the class; ethnicity-wise they were 18/19 Pakistani, 3 of 4 Nepalese, 1 Bangladeshi and 1 Indian. In their section there was no Chinese student, but there was another section which was for only Chinese students. He had very little chance to speak to Chinese students in school because they did not have any common class. On a very rare occasion even if he met someone in playground he could not continue conversation with them because he was not able to speak Chinese then. He also said that they were taught Chinese language subject in this school, one lesson in every 2 days.

Then Azad went to a designated secondary school at Form One in 2005. They had about 32 students in their class with 16 Pakistani, 3 or 4 Nepalese 3 or 4, 3 or 4 Indian and 6 or 7 Filipinos. He didn't have any Chinese students in this class but he had Chinese lessons. Unfortunately, he continued in that school only for 1 year because he was 'kicked out' of the school after Form One. Azad said that it was mainly for his failure in three subjects i.e. Mathematics, French and Liberal Studies. He also remembered that there were another two students kicked out and then allowed to repeat Form One there. But in Azad's case the school did not allow him to repeat and he said that they did not give him any reason for that.

Although Azad was kicked out of his first secondary school, he had high aspirations to continue study, therefore, he applied to other schools and was given a place in another designated secondary school to start again from Form One in 2006. He said that it was the first year for that school to admit students from the ethnic minority community. Before that they were only admitting Chinese students. In Form One in his new school he remembered that they had about 10–12 students in their non-Chinese section, 2 or 3 students each from Pakistani, Nepalese, Indian and Filipinos ethnicity. He was taught in English but he also had two other language subjects, Chinese and French until Form Three. From Form Four to Form Six he continued to study Chinese and English.

5.6.1.2 Azad's Mathematics Fear

Azad was progressing from one Form to another Form without any repetition, but he said that he never did well in Mathematics. Sometimes he passed in some mid-term tests but he failed in every final Mathematics examination. Because of his average percentage marks in the final examination was within the required level to

progress to next form, he didn't face any problem in progressing although he was continuously failing in Mathematics. He was always scoring between 50 and 60 %.

Azad's cohort in the school was part of the first cohort for the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Examination (HKDSE) who sat for the examination in around March 2012. After sitting for just one exam, English, Azad did not appear for rest of the examination. He commented:

I was damn sure that I am not going to pass in Mathematics. I knew if I don't pass Mathematics I can't do any further education, so I decided not to appear in other examinations... Although the exam fee 1500 HKD I paid was very high, and I faced difficulties to arrange that amount, yet, I decided not to continue HKDSE examination. (Azad Rabbani, dropout student, 1st Interview, 1 December 2012)

It sounded like he was frustrated with his mathematics. When asked whether he received any extra support from the school regarding Mathematics, he replied that there was some extra class always held on weekend, which he only attended once. It was not convenient for him to come to school over the weekend. Asked again whether he had received any personalized support from school for Mathematics since he had failing in this subject continuously for a long time, he could not remember any such support. Nevertheless, he mentioned that sometimes his eldest brother told him to go to a private tutor but he had not done this. Alternatively, indicating to one of the student assistants who was following our conversation, Azad said that sometimes he took help from him. At this point, that student assistant contributed to our conversation "Azad was really good at computer. He was the topper in the class in that subject. We were always competing with him but never won. But we never really fully got why he was not doing well in Mathematics".

During the second interview, the issue of Azad's problems in Mathematics was raised again. He commented:

I really don't understand mathematics. I tried my best but it did not work for me. At the beginning of every Form, I was getting it right what teachers were saying in the class, but as it went further I was finding myself lost. I don't know but actually math was very difficult for me to understand, I tried a lot... (Azad Rabbani, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 4 February 2013)

Azad also mentioned that during Form Three or Form Four he was actually thinking of giving up study because of his mathematics failure but his eldest brother didn't allow him to leave school. During HKDSE, however, he dropped out finally. Since then he had been working after a small break of 2 months. When asked about his family's reaction when he stopped sitting for the HKDSE Azad replied that his eldest brother tried to force him to continue but Azad did not. He also mentioned his eldest brother still wanted him to have another try.

5.6.1.3 Over-Age and Repetition

Azad was significantly over aged compared to his classmates. He started primary school when he was 9 years old. And again he lost one more year when he was 'kicked out' of his first secondary school after Form One and repeated the same

Form in another secondary school. Altogether he was at least 5 years over-age compared to his peers in the secondary school.

5.6.1.4 School Changes

In Azad's case he studied in two primary schools and two secondary schools in Hong Kong and in one primary school in Pakistan. Altogether he studied in five schools before dropping out. While he voluntarily moved from one school to another in primary level, he was 'kicked out' of his first school in the secondary level.

5.6.1.5 Dropout History in the Family

Azad's eldest brother who came in 2000 after finishing his matriculation from Pakistan went to a Hong Kong school for 1 or 2 years. But he could not finish and did not sit for any public examination in Hong Kong. Azad remembered that his eldest brother joined his father's business after stopping school. Azad mentioned that he had never asked his eldest brother why he could not finish school but later he understood that it was difficult for his brother to continue study in Hong Kong at Form Five or Form Six at that time given that he just came from Pakistan, and also his father needed a supporting hand.

Azad's second older brother, who came in Hong Kong in 2005, was a Form Four completer in Pakistan. After arriving in Hong Kong he applied to two or three schools. While all schools told him that they would contact him about the admission he did not hear anything back from any school. After waiting for more than a year he started working. Since then he has been a delivery van driver. Literature (Loper 2004) suggests that waiting to have a school place for 1 or 2 years was not very uncommon for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. In the case of Azad's second elder brother he never heard back from any schools.

5.6.1.6 Peer Factors

It seemed the extent of dropout students from Azad's classes was 'many' as he mentioned but he could not provide any percentage or figure. He remembered about three of his classmates from his schools. They were all of Pakistani origin. Two of them dropped out of his first secondary school after Form Two. One of them had started working in a restaurant right away. Another was sent back to Pakistan by his parents as he was having drug addiction problem. The third one dropped out of his second secondary school after Form Four. He had been working in a mobile shop in Tsim Sha Tsui since then. The main reasons for all of them was they did not want to continue their study and they did not have interest in their education as well the drug addiction problem. He further added that he saw some of the ethnic minority students in his known circle were involved in some gang activities, drug trafficking

etc. He reasoned that it was mainly for showing off and sometimes they could earn some money; it ultimately had a negative impact on their education, he stressed.

5.6.1.7 Racism

When asked about any discriminating or racial behavior he faced in school or outside school throughout his life in Hong Kong Azad mentioned:

We were the first batch of ethnic minority students in my last secondary school. There were big debates among teachers in the school at that time whether they should continue admitting ethnic minority students. Many times actually teachers were debating in front of us.... Many Chinese students in school were teasing us saying foul languages like: we are dirty, smelly etc....from my early high school years I can still remember many Chinese people teased me saying 'acha' while I was walking on the street, even if I wasn't talking to any of them they were always saying this word to me. Now-a-days I hardly see anyone teasing me saying that word. (Azad Rabbani, dropout student, 1st Interview, 1 December 2012)

Literature on ethnic minorities in Hong Kong suggests that 'Acha' is a word often Chinese people used to refer South Asian ethnic minority people in Hong Kong (Gao and Shum 2010; Ku et al. 2010). When asked Azad what the word 'Acha' means, he mentioned – "according to some people it means 'son of police', some people say 'bad smell', or some say 'dirty'". But it is a bad word for sure, he stressed. It was in Form Three when a Chinese man teased him last time using this word.

5.6.2 Azad's 'Out of School' Life

After dropping out in March–April 2012, Azad stayed in home for 2 months then started working for DHL from June 2012. The job was mainly to do packing. After 3 months he switched to another job in Hong Kong airport where he had to handle passengers' baggage. After doing that job for another 2 or 3 month he left. He went back to Pakistan after that and stayed there for couple of weeks. He had just returned from Pakistan about 3 weeks before the date of the interview. Within 3 or 4 days after coming back from Pakistan he started a new job in a construction company where his position was that of assistant surveyor.

During the second interview while taking a short walk to find a suitable place in Yuen Long, Azad pointed out one person who was using a telescope type instrument on a road side construction site trying to measure something with other people. Azad said that this is the kind of surveying job he was doing. The company where Azad worked was owned by an American and the main office was located in Lai Chi Kok. He got this job through one of his Pakistani friends who was also a member of staff. The company was looking for a person who could speak English, his friend took him there and Azad got the job. Azad was told by his employer that they would teach him everything about work when he was worrying that he knew nothing about

the work. The current project he was working was in a tunnel for a new MTR route. His main job was to assist the Principal Surveyor, his direct supervisor at work, in the surveying tasks such as measurement, identifying straight line, checking whether there were any bricks under the ground etc. His first supervisor was a Filipino from whom he learnt a lot as he mentioned. Recently his Filipino supervisor left and has a new Chinese supervisor, whose English was not so good. He still had a good relationship with his current supervisor and Azad could communicate with his boss in Cantonese. Azad was working 6 days in a week for 9–10 h each day. The work was on a shift basis meaning that he had to work 2 weeks in morning shift from 7.30 am to 5.30 pm and another 2 weeks in night shift from 7.30 pm to 5.30 am. He had Sunday off.

A typical day for Azad if he was on the morning shift was getting up at 6.30 am. He washed, took breakfast and went out to work by 7.00 am. Around 8.00 am they went to tunnel and worked there until 12.00 pm, then came back to base office and took lunch. Azad normally carried his own lunch from home. The lunch break was for an hour. Again he went back to the tunnel in the afternoon around 2.00 pm and continued work until 5.30 pm or sometimes until 7.30 pm if there was overtime. He went back to home and took his dinner. Azad's mother cooked all meals for him. After having dinner he watched TV and finally went to bed. If he had night shift work, he left home at 7.00 pm, went to the tunnel around 8.00 pm, and continued work there until 12.00 am. Then he had a break for an hour in the middle of the night when he took his late night dinner. His work finished around 5.30 am in the morning, and he came back home, took breakfast, went to bed and slept until 4.00–5.00 pm.

During the weekend, Azad normally played Cricket all the day. By 'all the day' he meant he started playing around 1.00 pm and continued until 8.00 pm. He had not been involved in any community work.

5.6.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Azad seemed happy with his current job. He asserted:

The job is really good. I am learning technical stuff here. They pay me very well, it's about 16000 HKD per month, with overtime it comes up to 18000 HKD. I also have two weeks annual leave, medical benefits and MPF... (Azad Rabbani, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 4 February 2013)

His satisfaction with his current job was also evident when he said that he was not thinking to switch to any other job anytime soon.

5.6.2.2 Future Plan

In terms of future plan, Azad was planning to start his own business in 3 years time. He had not explored yet what kind of business he would like to start but he had saved money so that he had a good amount put aside. When asked if he had any plan

to sit for HKDSE again, Azad replied negatively. He said that he was instead thinking about doing some technical courses related to his work. But he did not know where to go and asked whether the interviewer he could give him any information. It was suggested that explore institute of vocational education (IVE) courses where he might find out some relevant courses that might be of his interest. Finally, when asked if he regretted anytime for his decision of not continuing HKDSE, he replied:

Yes sometimes, when I see some of my friends are studying at Universities in Hong Kong. Although I have good income now but I am sure they are going to do much better work and have a better income as well in future. (Azad Rabbani, dropout student, 2nd Interview, 4 February 2013)

5.7 Summary

This chapter presented six case studies of dropout ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. Each case study focused on understanding the reasons for dropping out as well as depicting their 'out of school' life after dropping out. The experiences of Maneesha Rai, Morshed Uddin, Aruna Thapa, Veem Pun, Tanvir Ahmed, and Azad Rabbani provided a nuanced understanding of their background, their schooling life, the reasons for school failure, and their 'out of school' life.

Case studies with six participants revealed that none of them were born in Hong Kong. Four of them such as Morshed, Aruna, Tanvir and Azad moved to Hong Kong at some point in their primary education age while two of them, Maneesha and Veem moved in secondary level. Some participants had been living in their home country with their relatives such as uncle-aunty or grand-parents from an early age while their parents were living in Hong Kong. Later they reunited with their family in Hong Kong. All participants were living with their parents during the time of the interviews.

It was commonly found that Hong Kong schools did not admit most of the participants at their age specific grade and some participants had to repeat some of their grades later. Therefore, many of them actually were over-aged compared to their other classmates. All participants studied in designated schools except Morshed. They dropped out of high school at different Forms.

It emerged from the case studies that a number of factors contributed to their school failure and it is difficult to attribute any single factor. Rather, often several factors together actually influenced an individual's school failure. While there were many factors found at individual level such as low academic achievement, absenteeism, over-age, lower aspiration, behavioral issue, employment, involvement with gangs etc., there were factors also found at the level of family such as dropout history in the family, parental education, parental practices etc., at the level of school such as teaching issue, school policy and practices, segregation at their school, stereotypes etc., and at the level of community such as availability of dropout and working young people in the community etc. In addition, some factors related to cultural differences and racism were also noted. In terms of participants' 'out of

school' life, they all started working after (and sometimes before) dropping out of school. They were working in different sectors such as restaurants, clubs, construction, private clinic, carrying goods, and airport authority during the time of the interviews.

These case studies will be revisited in Chap. 9 as part of the cross case analysis.

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