

Chapter 9

Understanding ‘Out of School’ Issues for Ethnic Minority Young People in Hong Kong

Abstract The findings of Chaps. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are summarized with comprehensive and critical discussion, referencing the theoretical frameworks and wider literature utilized in this research. For issues that could not be easily explained, broader frameworks and wider literature were drawn upon. Implications for Hong Kong education policy, practice and theory, and how these related to the findings are discussed. The chapter starts with the extent of ‘out of school’ ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong and implications. The reasons for ethnic minority young people being ‘out of school’ are organized and discussed according to factors identified with case study participants and interviews with other stakeholders. Factors are organized into 17 themes: low academic achievement; over-age and retention or repetition; low education aspiration; attendance issue; Chinese language; behavioral problems; employment; involvement with gangs; health issues; school changes or student mobility; peer factors; family factors; school factors; community factors; differences of culture in education; immigration and citizenship; and racism. Family factors and school factors are further sub-divided. For the other stakeholders, special educational needs and stereotypes were factors that also identified. Gender and school failure, and implications are discussed. Finally, the life of ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong and implications are reported.

While Chaps. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 presented findings of the research reported in this book, the current chapter summarizes these findings, and provides a comprehensive and critical discussion drawing on different theoretical frameworks and wider literature. There are five sections in this chapter. Section 9.1 reiterates aims and objectives and highlights the questions to be addressed in this book. Sections 9.2, 9.3, and 9.4 present a summary of the findings according to these guided questions. These sections also critically discuss the findings in relation to theoretical frameworks and wider literature, and how these help to explain these findings. Issues that are not easily explained are also discussed by drawing on broader frameworks and wider literature. There is a focus on these discussions on implications for policy, practice and theory as these relate to the findings. Section 9.5 provides a summary of the chapter.

9.1 Aims, Objectives and Questions

This book has sought to explore the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong, the reasons for these young people being 'out of school', and what their 'out of school' life looks like. The following three questions guided the investigation:

1. What is the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?
2. What are the reasons for ethnic minority young people being 'out of school'?
3. What is the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?

9.2 What Is the Extent of 'Out of School' Ethnic Minority Young People in Hong Kong?

Limited international data sources showed that there are 'out of school' students in Hong Kong. Yet there seems to be inconsistency found between government and international reporting of 'out of school' data. The discrepancy might be attributed to government data that reports only dropout rate and does not include other important components such as percentage of students never enrolled in a particular level of education and students at risk of dropping out, all of which would help to understand the 'out of school' issue more holistically. Importantly from the point of view of the issues raised in this book, the government data on non-attendance cases or dropouts does not include any breakdown in terms of the ethnic background of students so that the government data and international data reported cannot be used to understand the extent to which ethnic minority students are 'out of school'.

The census and other available data sources regarding the number of ethnic minority students raised the problem of multiple data sources and inconsistencies across datasets. The lack of data regarding ethnic minority education on the part of Education Bureau (EDB) led us to examine the census data to understand the extent of the 'out of school' issue. Unfortunately, the census data seemed to be a very blunt data source for estimating the number of 'out of school' ethnic minority students. If the pre-primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary age-group are taken into account, however, then at the upper levels (upper secondary and post-secondary) the figure may be as high as 25 % and 85 % respectively and at the lower levels (pre-primary and lower secondary) it could be as high as 13 % and 2 % respectively.

Since the available datasets were either contradictory or incapable of adding any real understanding to the issue of 'out of school' ethnic minority students, we moved to the individual school level to explore in depth in three schools whether the issue was recognized and to try and understand it in context. We found that 'out of school' ethnic minority students were a common feature of all three schools meaning that

there were examples in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. Fieldwork at schools provided rich data to understand the dynamics of the ‘out of school’ issue seen from the point of view of schools, principals, teachers, school social worker, ethnic minority education support programme staff, and students. While the statistical analysis suggested that there was an ‘out of school’ issue for ethnic minority students, the fieldwork highlighted the nature of the issue and its meaning for individuals and the schools that were meant to support them.

9.2.1 Implications

The implications of the findings for question 1 are manifold. First, at policy level, there is simply not enough data available to judge adequately the nature of the ‘out of school’ problem for ethnic minority students. Therefore, it is hard to devise any appropriate support measures to address the issue for them. Internationally, the findings of the research reported in this book have implications in relation to one aspect of the popular discourse of ‘Education for All’ (EFA) agenda including Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Dakar Goals (UN 2000; UNESCO 2000). The issue is, those ideas are usually applied only in development contexts and do not concern societies such as Hong Kong’s. Findings reported here, however, raise serious concerns about the ‘out of school’ issue for ethnic minority young people if Hong Kong to ensure ‘Education for All’ for all its children.

Second, at the practice level, schools face great difficulties making decisions that are any different from those made concerning Chinese students. That is, since the system does not see the ‘out of school’ issue as a priority to be addressed, schools do not see the retention of ethnic minority students as something to which they should be committed. For example, the lack of guidelines on reporting dropouts by ethnic group may send the message that it is not an important issue. In addition, recording only the dropout figure at school level or system level can only portray part of the scenario, and cannot provide a full picture of ‘out of school’ issue. Therefore, it is important on the part of EDB to produce ‘out of school’ data drawing on broader theoretical frameworks, and to disaggregate by ethnic group.

Third, from a theoretical perspective, the study has important implications in relation to understanding multiculturalism in Hong Kong. It is clear from the findings that Hong Kong is a multicultural society and it is reflected in its students’ population. Available educational data, however, does not say much about ethnic minority students’ access, participation and outcomes in education. Thus at the system level there is less recognition that a multicultural society requires any special policy measures. This means that policy makers and the education system as a whole are not aware of the different needs and challenges of ethnic minority students which, of course, are a prerequisite for addressing those needs and challenges. The goal of civic integration (“2014 Policy Address”, 2014), an aspiration of the Hong Kong government, masks the diversity and difference within society. This issue is discussed in more detail below.

Despite the fact that there is legislation in place to protect the educational rights of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong, they continue to face a huge number of issues and challenges inside school, as shown in this book as well as the literature in general (please see Sect. 2.4.7 of Chap. 2 for a review of this). In addition, this book shows that a good number of ethnic minority young people seem to be also 'out of school' which adds a new dimension to ensuring equitable educational provision. There are some general support measures in place (although inadequate and inappropriate) but no one is actually giving attention to students who are receiving either no or limited education. This raises the question of Hong Kong's overall attitude towards its ethnic minority young people. Drawing on critical race theory, the mainstream attitude towards ethnic minorities in general can be understood by one of the findings of a survey carried out by Census and Statistics Department (2009). The report indicated that only 56–67 % Chinese parents were comfortable sending their children to schools where a majority of students were from other ethnic minority groups (Indonesian, Filipino, Malaysian, Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese, Bangladeshi) (Census and Statistics Department 2009, p. 3). The same kind of tone was also evident in a recent survey on racial acceptance by Hong Kong Unison Limited (2012). From a more optimistic view, the study commissioned by EOC and conducted by Centre for Civil Society and Governance and Policy 21 Limited (2012) reported that South Asians in Hong Kong had been accepted as full members of Hong Kong society, thus were entitled to the same rights and benefits as the local Chinese. The study also asserted, however, that there had not been a high degree of integration between local Chinese and South Asians and they lived in two separate communities without much interaction (Centre for Civil Society and Governance & Policy 21 Limited 2012).

The government's attitude towards ethnic minority education can be understood by drawing on Kennedy (2011) who has explained overall education policy towards diversity in Hong Kong. He argued that the education policy in Hong Kong has remained mono-cultural despite the diversity of its population. He also argued that the idea of "fairness" is different in Chinese society and any kind of affirmative action seems contrary to Chinese notions of social justice in the sense that all citizens must be treated equally for there to be "fairness" in any society. Therefore, social justice itself is conceptualized differently in Chinese societies. This explains well why there is not enough 'out of school' data available for ethnic minority students as the same data for Chinese students are also unavailable. It may also explain why there is some reluctance on the part of EDB to acknowledge that retention issues are of particular importance for ethnic minority students requiring special and targeted measures. In a monocultural view of the world, all students are treated the same irrespective of their unique needs and life contexts.

9.3 What Are the Reasons for Ethnic Minority Young People Being ‘Out of School’?

All the case studies with 11 ‘out of school’ ethnic minority young people and interviews with other stakeholders revealed an array of factors that contributed to ethnic minority young people for being ‘out of school’. Table 9.1 lists these factors that appeared to affect individual ‘out of school’ ethnic minority participants as well as the list of factors from the views of other stakeholders. These factors, as themes, were created from both cross case and within case analyses.

The above table shows that there are some common factors affecting many of the participants’ school failure. For example, low academic achievement partly contributed to school failures of Maneesha, Morshed, Aruna, Veem, Azad, Abdal,

Table 9.1 List of factors contributing to being ‘out of school’

Participants	Factors contributing to being ‘out of school’
Maneesha Rai (dropout)	Low academic achievement in mathematics and science, differences in schooling culture, peer and community factors, dropout history in family, racism
Morshed Uddin (dropout)	Low education aspiration, over-age, poor academic achievement and behavioral problem, involvement with gang, dropout history in family, racism
Aruna Thapa (dropout)	Failure in HKCEE, Chinese and school’s language policy, peer factors, dropout history in the family, racism
Veem Pun (dropout)	Low academic achievement, struggle in Chinese, issues in teaching, differences in schooling culture, employment, racism
Tanvir Ahmed (dropout)	Harassment, parental factors, intergenerational and cultural gap, peer factors, dropout history in the family, illness, racism
Azad Rabbani (dropout)	Mathematics fear, over-age and repetition, school changes, dropout history in the family, peer factors, racism
Abdal Rashid (at risk of dropping out)	Attendance issue, teachers’ differential behavior, over age, health problem, low academic achievement, peer factors, employment, racism
Taufiq Iqbal (at risk of dropping out)	Low academic achievement, struggle in Chinese, Teacher’s low expectation, racism
Nadia Bashir (at risk of dropping out)	Low academic achievement, problems in mathematics and Chinese, spoken language policy of the school, racism
Sahid Afridi (at risk of dropping out)	Low academic achievement, struggle in Chinese, racism
Shormin Abbas (never been to school)	Family poverty, high kindergarten fee, immigration policy, racism
Other stakeholders’ view	Academic achievement, inadequate schooling provisions for ethnic minority students, low education aspiration, Chinese language, behavioral problem, stereotypes of ethnic minority students, health issue, special education needs, employment, family factors, school factors, peer factors, technology when ‘deviator’ instead of ‘mediator’, inadequate educational support and lack of quality assurance, racism

Taufiq, Nadia and Sahid. There are also some factors affecting only specific individuals. For example, Morshed's involvement with a gang contributed to his school failure in part. The table also shows that ethnic minority young people's school failure was more than simply a consequence of academic failure, rather there were many other interrelated factors contributed to it. Rumberger (2011) in the context of the United States and Hunt (2008) in the context of developing countries also suggested this interaction of factors that affect dropping out.

While Chaps. 5, 6, 7, and 8 indicated how these identified factors affected individual's school failure, the following sub-sections provide a comprehensive and critical discussion regarding these factors by using the identified frameworks for this study. The focus is on international literature and how this helps explain the factors influencing ethnic minority students in Hong Kong.

There are two broad sections in what follows. The first will discuss factors identified from case studies with 'out of school' ethnic minority participants and the second will discuss factors identified from interviews with other stakeholders. Since there are many common factors found from both data sources, many of the factors identified from stakeholders' interviews will inevitably be covered in the discussion of the first section. Therefore, in the discussion of second section we will only focus on those factors not covered in the first section.

9.3.1 Factors Identified from the Case Studies with 'Out of School' Participants

This section discusses factors identified from case studies with 'out of school' ethnic minority participants. In doing so it will describe factors identified in common through cross cases analysis as well as factors located within cases analysis. In addition, there are many common factors identified both from case studies with 'out of school' participants and interviews with other stakeholders. In discussion of this section, therefore, appropriate reference will be given if a particular factor is also identified by other stakeholders.

9.3.1.1 Low Academic Achievement

The most common factor found across all dropout participants (except Tanvir) was low academic achievement. While the failing subjects list included almost all school subjects such as Mathematics, Liberal Studies, Chinese, Science, Biology, Chemistry, English, Business, Accounting and Financial Studies, the first three subjects in the list emerged to be the main subject areas where many ethnic minority participants had not done well academically. This is to note here that Chinese is the most significant publicly identified cause of school failures of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong (Centre for Civil Society and Governance, & Policy 21 Limited 2012;

Ku et al. 2005; Hong Kong Unison Limited 2011; Loper 2004; Ullah 2012). Yet this book shows how problems with Chinese flow into all other academic subjects. Tanvir's exception of not having low academic achievement might perhaps be partly attributed to the extra academic support he had received from his father's Chinese friend and his uncle's Filipino girl-friend. Nevertheless, Tanvir also dropped out of school at the end of Form Four owing to a number of other factors. Harassment in school, parental factor, peer factor, dropout history in the family, illness, and racism all contributed to his school failure.

Academic achievement has been identified as one of the powerful predictors of dropping out in the developed context such as the United States (Rumberger 2011). A majority of the studies that examined the effects of test scores and grades on school failure found that academic achievement had a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of dropping out, more powerful in the middle and high school, although the majority of the studies did not find a direct relationship between achievement in elementary grades and dropping out (Rumberger 2011, p. 166). Similarly, lower achievement has been identified as an 'at risk' indicator of dropping out in the developing context (Hunt 2008, p 48). Research suggested that students with lower achievement were more at risk of dropping out than those with higher achievement.

9.3.1.2 Over-Age and Retention or Repetition

It was common that many of the 'out of school' ethnic minority participants actually came to Hong Kong at the end of primary school age or early secondary school age after having spent the first years of schooling in their home country. At the entry point to Hong Kong schools they were not allocated to the respective grade level relevant to their ages. Some of them also had to repeat in the same class because they had not achieved the required marks academically for promotion. Therefore, many of the participants ended up being in the classroom where they were significantly over-age compared to their peers. In the cases of Morshed and Azad, the issue of over-age was very prominent.

Over-age has been identified as an indicator for at risk of dropping out students in the developing context (Hunt 2008) and a predictor of dropping out in the developed context such as the United States (Rumberger 2011). Hunt's review found a number of studies that suggested students who started schooling over age were more at risk of dropping out than those who began at the official age and were less likely to complete full education cycle (2008, p. 45). Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review identified that 31 studies out of 52 that examined the relationship between over-age and dropout showed older students were more likely to drop out than younger students at the high school level (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 164).

Similarly grade retention has been found as a consistent predictor of dropping out in the United States (Rumberger 2011). Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review in this regard showed that 37 of the 50 studies found retention in primary or junior secondary level increased the likelihood of dropping out of high school (cited in

Rumberger 2011, p. 163). Retention in the name of repetition has also been identified as at risk indicator for dropping out in the developing context (Hunt 2008). Hunt's review found a number of studies that showed a link between repetition and dropout meaning that repeating students were more at risk of dropping out than non-repeaters (p. 44).

9.3.1.3 Low Education Aspiration

It was found from the case study with Morshed that he had a low expectation for his education. Dropout literature in the developed context such as the United States shows a direct link between educational expectations and school dropout (Rumberger 2011). Most of the studies found that at the high school and middle school level higher educational expectations reduced the odds of dropping out while no significant relationship was found between expectations at elementary level and dropping out at high school (Rumberger 2011, p. 180). The case study with Aruna, however, revealed that despite her high academic expectation and some real efforts she could not succeed in high school. The relationship between low education aspiration and dropout has not been examined in the dropout literature in the context of developing countries.

9.3.1.4 Attendance Issue

Abdal's case study suggested that he had attendance problems in the school which contributed to his being at risk of dropping out. School attendance, often perceived as the most direct and visible indicator of school engagement, has been identified as a powerful predictor of dropping out in the context of the United States (Rumberger 2011). Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review reported that 13 out of 19 studies found high absenteeism predicted dropping out (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 169). Similarly, irregular attendance has been identified as an at risk indicator of dropping out in the context of developing countries (Hunt 2008, p. 46). Hunt's review suggested that irregular attendance led to students' falling behind and they found difficulties in adjusting to the school activities. Therefore, they were more at risk of dropping out.

9.3.1.5 Chinese Language

Case studies of students such as Taufiq, Nadia, Aruna and Sahid, who were at risk of dropping out, revealed that many of them were seriously struggling in Chinese language especially in Chinese medium of instruction schools. It was found from the case study with dropout participant Veem that his struggle in Chinese was one of the main reasons for his dropping out. In addition, Aruna's high academic expectation in Hong Kong was hindered by her poor Chinese skills. Moreover, Maneesha

felt that she would never do well in work and career in future due to her lack in Chinese skill. Chinese emerged as one of the main three subjects in the list that many participants failed academically in school.

Dropout research in the context of the United States identified immigration status has a bearing on dropping out (Rumberger 2011). In most cases this was related to their poor English language skills. Most of the studies found that immigrant students with less English language ability had higher dropout rates (p. 184). Dropout research in the context of developing countries referred to the role language might play in dropping out (Hunt 2008). It can be particularly exclusionary when students are taught in languages other than their native languages. The research in Burundi found that repetition rates increased for children by up from 28 to 40 % in the first 2 years of using French as the language of instruction (Jackson 2000, cited in Hunt 2008). Research from Paraguay suggested that language influenced school performance and was highly associated with poverty, leading to dropout and low earnings (Patrinos and Psacharopoulos 1995, cited in Hunt 2008, p. 40).

In Hong Kong literature it has been common to attribute school failure for ethnic minority students to problems with Chinese language as the language of instruction in most secondary schools and to lower achievement in the Chinese language school subject (Centre for Civil Society and Governance, & Policy 21 Limited 2012; Ku et al. 2005; Hong Kong Unison Limited 2011; Loper 2004; Ullah 2012). Yet we learned differently from some ‘out of school’ participants’ stories in this book. Maneesha’s story showed that her experience of failure in other subjects such as Mathematics and Science also contributed to her lack of successful schooling. Morshed’s success was only in Chinese and English subjects but he failed his other school subjects. Azad’s main failure was in Mathematics. Aruna failed HKCEE in Biology and Chemistry. Nadia’s continuous failure in Mathematics pushed her to be at risk of dropping out.

9.3.1.6 Behavioral Problems

Behavioral problems affected one participant’s school failure as found from the case study with Morshed as well as some of the stakeholders who also viewed behavior an issue for some ethnic minority young people accounting for their lack of success in school. In addition to meeting academic achievement targets, acceptable grades in behavior is a requirement for progressing into the next Form in Hong Kong schools. Misbehavior in school seen as a deviant behavior exerts a direct influence on dropping out irrespective of educational level, as identified in the context of the United States (Rumberger 2011). Misbehavior was found to be significantly associated with higher dropout rates (Rumberger 2011, p. 173). In the developing context the relationship between behavioral issues and school failure seems not have been explored.

The research reported in this book, however, identified some divergence on the issue of behavior. Mr. Knowles, a teacher, indicated that judgments on behavior and conduct were not always value free and often reflected cultural values. ‘Talkative’ ethnic minority students were often seen as having behavioral problems in the context of relatively quiet Chinese classrooms that remain mostly silent.

9.3.1.7 Employment

Employment emerged as one of the important factors that influenced some of the 'out of school' ethnic minority participants' school failure. One of them, Abdal, seemed to be working below the legal employment age in Hong Kong with pay in cash arrangement. It was also found that Veem actually had been involved in work on a part-time basis first and eventually dropped out of school and started full time work.

In the United States' dropout literature, the relationship between students' employment and dropout was widely examined and the finding was mixed (Rumberger 2011). Some studies suggested that students who worked more than 20 hours a week were more likely to drop out than those who worked less or not at all (e.g. Monahan et al. 2011; Warren and Lee 2003 cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 178). Other studies found that students who worked fewer than 20 h consistently throughout the high school were less likely to dropout than those who worked more or not at all (e.g. D'Amico 1984; Zimmer-Gembeck and Mortimer 2006 cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 178). Dropout literature in the developing context identified child labor as a factor affecting educational access (Hunt 2008). Hunt's review pointed out that due to such labor a number of factors interacted to influence whether children become vulnerable to dropping out or actually dropped out of school (p. 15). It further argued that child labor was often part of a household's risk management strategy, with access to credit or assets influencing whether a child could stay in school. Children were more vulnerable to dropping out without these assets.

9.3.1.8 Involvement with Gangs

Morshed's case study suggested that he was part of a gang. It was also revealed from the interviews with other stakeholders that some ethnic minority students were involved with gangs during their high school and some of them became more engaged after stopping school. The gang involvement can be seen as misbehavior outside school, a deviant behavior which is often referred to as delinquency in the educational literature. In general, most of the research in the United States that looked at the relationship between delinquency and school dropout found that delinquent youths were more likely to drop out than non-delinquent youths (Rumberger 2011, p. 174). Most of the studies, however, were based on students' self-reporting of delinquency. One study (Finn et al. 2008 cited in Rumberger 2011) considered gang involvement as a classroom and school misbehavior along with other seven misbehaviors such as fighting, alcohol and marijuana use and examined its relationship with school failure. The study found that students who displayed at least two or three misbehaviors were three times more likely to drop out than the students displayed none or one. Students who displayed four or more misbehaviors were five times more likely to drop out. In the context of developing countries, the relationship between gang involvement and school failure has not yet been explored.

9.3.1.9 Health Issues

Health issues appeared to affect Tanvir and Abdal's status for dropping out and being at risk of dropping out respectively. In addition, some of the other stakeholders also identified health issues as a reason contributing to some ethnic minority students' school failure. The research in the United States examined the relationship between poor physical and mental health and dropout revealed mixed findings (Rumberger 2011). While one study (Roebuck et al. 2004 cited in Rumberger 2011) reported that having good health reduced the odds of dropping out, another review (Breslau 2010 cited in Rumberger 2011) found a somewhat ambivalent relationship in showing a clear and direct connection. Yet Rumberger (2011, p. 185) argued that there was stronger evidence found that health issues such as psychiatric disorders and overweight diminished learning and thus contributed to dropping out. Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review of research literature found some research revealed that adolescents with depression symptoms such as feeling helpless, lonely, sad etc. were less likely to graduate and more likely to dropout even after controlling for factors such as academic achievement and family background (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 185).

Hunt's (2008) review in the context of developing countries argued that health problems such as under-nutrition and stunting were related to late enrolment that, in turn, is often associated with high dropout rates. He also pointed to research that indicated school-aged children suffered from protein-energy malnutrition, hunger, or who lacked certain micronutrients in their diet did not have the same potential for learning as healthy and well-nourished children (Pridmore 2007 cited in Hunt 2008).

9.3.1.10 School Changes or Student Mobility

School changes were common phenomena among ethnic minority students especially for those who joined late in Hong Kong schools as they had their first years of schooling in their home country. Even after coming to Hong Kong some of them changed schools voluntarily or involuntarily. In Azad's case study it was found that he studied in five schools altogether before dropping out. Among these four were in Hong Kong and one in Pakistan. While in primary level Azad voluntarily moved from one school to another, in the secondary level it was involuntary. Because of his low academic achievement he was 'kicked out' of his first secondary school. Therefore, mobility was very often related to low academic achievement and in some cases misbehavior. That is, students didn't always choose to move, rather the choice was made for them.

Changing schools, often referred to as student mobility in the dropout literature, was identified as a predictor of dropping out in the context of the United States. In all levels of education including primary, middle and high school, research found that student mobility increased the odds of dropping out and decreased the school

graduation rate (Rumberger 2011, p. 168). In the developing context, Hunt's review (2008) identified that child movement especially from rural to urban areas within country both increased and decreased educational chances. The review pointed out that children might move into urban areas to access education, but also might migrate for paid employment, which might limit educational opportunities in turn; and children who were living in slum areas or without permanent residence might move frequently, as a result, they often dropped out of school (p. 15).

9.3.1.11 Peer Factors

It was common that many 'out of school' ethnic minority research participants had friends from their own community who also dropped out of school previously. It was also found that some of their ethnic minority classmates were working part-time and at some point they stopped coming to school and started full-time work. Some of their ethnic minority classmates were also involved with gang activities and as a result at some point they also dropped out of school.

Undoubtedly, peers have a strong influence on adolescents. In the United States dropout literature it was consistently found that having dropout friends increased the likelihood of dropping out, with such association appearing as early as seventh grade (Rumberger 2011, p. 176). Dropout literature in the context of the developing countries, however, has not yet explored the relationship between peer factors and dropout.

9.3.1.12 Family Factors

A number of factors related to family background seemed to be related to participants' school failure. Literature both in developing and developed contexts identified family factors powerfully influencing school failure. The following are the different family factors that affected 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong.

Family Poverty

Family poverty seemed to be a very strong factor for the 'out of school' participants such as Shormin and Abdal. In Shormin's case it was so pervasive that the whole family was living in Hong Kong with an amount of only 10,000 HKD for a month for a family of four members which was far below than the poverty line considered in Hong Kong. As a result the family could not afford to send Shormin to a kindergarten even at the age of 5. In general the census data shows that the median incomes for the South Asians are among the lowest of all major ethnic minorities in Hong Kong excluding foreign domestic helpers (Census and Statistics Department 2007, p. 75; Census and Statistics Department 2012, p. 86).

In the context of the developing countries Hunt’s (2008) review identified research that indicated direct and indirect schooling costs were important factors in whether children enroll in, attend and continue school since schooling incurred a range of costs. While direct costs referred to school fees, the more hidden costs included uniforms, travel, equipment and the opportunity costs of sending children to school. Therefore, family poverty appeared to be an important factor in determining success in school. Hunt argued: “both statistical data and empirical research suggest that children from better off households are more likely to remain in school, whilst those who are poorer are more likely never to have attended, or to drop out once they have enrolled” (Hunt 2008, p. 7).

In the United States’ context family poverty as a part of composite indicator of socioeconomic status (SES) has been widely examined in the dropout literature (Rumberger 2011). Rumberger and Lim’s (2008) review of research revealed that students from High SES were less likely to drop out than their counterpart students from low SES (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 191). The review also found that family income predicted school failure; therefore, childhood poverty is a powerful predictor of adolescent and adult outcomes. Rumberger also highlighted one US national study that found students from the lowest quartile of SES were five times more likely to drop out than the students of highest quartile of SES (Dalton et al. 2009 cited in Rumberger 2011).

Parental Education

It was common that most of the parents of ‘out of school’ ethnic minority participants in this research did not complete secondary schools, some of them even did not complete primary schools. In some cases mothers did not attend any school in their life time. In the dropout literature in the developing context parental education has been identified as very influential in determining whether and for how long children continue schooling (Hunt 2008). Hunt’s review highlighted research that found parental education was the most consistent determinant of child education and employment decisions (Ersado 2005, cited in Hunt 2008). The review also identified other research that suggested higher parental or household head level of education was linked to increased access to education, higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates (e.g. Ainsworth et al. 2005; Ersado 2005; Chugh 2004; Connelly and Zheng 2003; Hunter and May 2003; cited in Hunt 2008). Similarly, Rumberger and Lim’s (2008) review in the context of the United States found that parental education predicted dropout from high school (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 191). In the context of Portugal, Chagas Lopes and Medeiros (2004) examined the impact of intergenerational school achievement upon school failure and found that mother’s school achievement had a bearing on children’s school success. They also found a relationship between parents’ school outcomes and children’s extra school qualification and training programmes, civic and associative participation, and hobbies and leisure activities.

Dropout History in the Family

Based on the cases of Maneesha, Aruna, Tanvir and Azad it was commonly found that their siblings dropped out of school. In all cases their siblings dropped out of Hong Kong schools. Research in the context of the United States found a relationship between dropout and the dropout history in the family (Rumberger 2011). Rumberger suggested that students having a dropout sibling were more likely to drop out of school (p. 193). Dropout research in the context of developing countries, however, has not yet explored this relationship.

Parental Practices

It appeared that parental support to education was an issue for some 'out of school' ethnic minority participants as revealed from the case study with them as well as from the interviews with other stakeholders. While some parents were busy with their work for managing a living in Hong Kong and hardly found time to help their children in education, there were also some parents who lacked the skills to support their children in school work. Some of them also could not maintain proper communication with the school.

Dropout literature in the context of the United States identified family practices influenced dropping out (Rumberger 2011). Practices such as supervision and monitoring or helping with school work, communicating with the school, participation in the school activities etc. were suggested as positive family practices or parenting styles. Yet, American dropout literature did not find any consistent relationship between parental practices and school dropout. Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review revealed that only about half of the studies found positive parental practices reduced the odds of dropping out (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 192). The dropout literature in the developing context mostly focused on the family factors at family structure and family resource level in exploring their relationships with school failure, but not in relation to family practices level (Hunt 2008).

Intergenerational transfer of psychosocial risk has been a popular research area in psychology. Serbin and Karp (2004) reviewed conceptual models and findings in relation to intergenerational transfer of psychosocial risk. They found that parenting has mediational effects on the transfer of risk including school failure, adolescent risk-taking behavior, early and single parenthood, and family poverty.

9.3.1.13 School Factors

Several school factors emerged from the case studies with 'out of school' ethnic minority participants that affected their school failure. Literature both in the developing and developed context identified schools exerting powerful influences over students' school success. The following are the school factors that contributed to ethnic minority students for being 'out of school' in Hong Kong.

Inadequate Schooling Provisions for Ethnic Minority Students

The case studies revealed that all the dropout and at risk of dropping out ethnic minority participants, with the exception of Morshed, studied only in designated schools. In Hong Kong although ethnic minority students were free to choose to apply for any type of school the real scenario was most of them actually went to designated schools and the number of these schools was limited. It was revealed from the interviews with other stakeholders such as community leader, Mr. Rahman, that some of the ethnic minority students had to wait 1–2 years to get a place even in designated schools. In addition, access to the pre-primary school seemed to be expensive for some ethnic minority young children, such as Shormin, as this provision had not yet been free and compulsory in Hong Kong.

This particular issue does not feature in the dropout research in the United States reviewed by Rumberger (2011). Yet his classification of school resources as one of the four school factors affecting school failure can be insightful in this regard. In contrast, in the developing countries’ context supply of schools has been identified as a factor influencing dropout in Hunt’s (2008) review. The review highlighted research that suggested, in many countries educational access could be restricted by an inadequate supply of schools or enough school places (Colclough et al. 2000 cited in Hunt 2008).

Segregation Effect in Designated School

It was evident that most of the ethnic minority students in Hong Kong were attending designated schools where only very few local Chinese students attended. The literature has criticized designated school provisions for segregating ethnic minority students (EOC 2011, p. 7; Hong Kong Unison Limited 2011). Such schools were seen to hinder students from integrating with the mainstream society. It might also affect their school failure and thus being ‘out of school’.

Student composition, often referred as a social composition of a school, has been identified as a factor influencing school failure in the United States (Rumberger 2011, p. 194). Rumberger argued that recent research revealed that social composition in school could have as much impact on student outcomes as individual background characteristics of students. He highlighted research that found racial or ethnic and social class composition was almost twice as important as student’s own race, ethnicity and social class in explaining educational outcomes (Borman and Dowling 2010, cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 194). The negative effects of social composition of school on educational outcomes are also well documented in the social, educational and developmental psychology literature (Schofield et al. 2006) in the context of developed countries. Schofield et al. (2006) suggested there was considerable evidence that segregating immigrant students in lower ability groups in Germany’s three-tiered system of secondary education often increased achievement gaps between them and others. The relationship between social composition of school and school failure, however, has largely been unexplored in the developing context.

Issues in Teaching

Issues in teaching skills in Chinese and other subjects, as revealed from the case studies with dropout ethnic minority participants such as Maneesha and Veem, affected their school failure. Lack of teachers' skills in teaching Chinese as a foreign language was identified as a barrier for ethnic minority students to learn Chinese in the EOC report (2011). A wider literature has also reported the Chinese language issue including teaching for the Hong Kong ethnic minority students (e.g. Centre for Civil Society and Governance, & Policy 21 Limited, 2012; Ku et al. 2005; Hong Kong Unison Limited 2011; Loper 2004; Ullah 2012).

In the developed context such as the United States, it was found that teacher quality as a part of school resources has a bearing on dropout or graduation rates (Rumberger 2011). Similarly, in the developing context teaching quality has been identified as a factor affecting dropping out. As Hunt (2008, p. 39) argued, the quality of the teaching in schools is linked to the learning outcomes of student, it can also influence students' experiences of schooling, their motivations and the move towards dropping out.

School Policy and Practices

Several school policies and practices affected the school failure of ethnic minority participants. The most common was varied requirements in academic achievements and conduct records for progression. Setting academic standards by individual schools is common in Hong Kong and schools are free to set their own academic standard. Although there were some guidelines from EDB for lowering the requirement for progression it seemed that many schools actually relied on their own standard of high requirements. Unfortunately, these were more in designated schools where many ethnic minority students usually attended. Principal Mr. Yuen's comment was a testimony in this regard "the requirements in local Chinese schools for progression are much flexible compared to the designated schools". It was also found from the interviews with teachers and principals that the schools did not care much when some of their ethnic minority students reached compulsory education age whether they continued or dropped out.

Another policy and practice was related to language in the Hong Kong school. For example, language policy in Aruna's school did not offer her a better Chinese language course other than a very basic course. In case of participants at risk of dropping out, while Abdal was not allowed to speak in his home language in the school Taufiq, Nadia and Sahid were not even allowed to speak in English in addition to their home languages in school. These had made the school and classroom climates challenging for them. It was also found from some of the case studies that some of the 'out of school' ethnic minority participants were treated badly by their teachers and sometimes it even included verbal harassment.

School policy and practices have been identified as important school factors that affected school failure in both developed country and developing country literature

(Rumberger 2011; Hunt 2008). Rumberger argued that school policies and practices affect students in two different ways, one way is through policies and practices that lead to students' disengagement and in effect voluntary withdrawal through either dropping out or transferring, and the other way is through policies and practices that lead to involuntary withdrawal from school due to lower grades, poor conduct, lower attendance etc. (2011, p. 197). In Hong Kong context, the latter can be characterized as being 'kicked out' that was observed in some participants' cases. This was a process which was actually initiated by schools due to their progression policy that resulted in involuntary withdrawal or dropping out on the part of students. Rumberger (2011) also highlighted one study that found in a New York City high school some students were allowed to leave school at the age of 17 because they had reached the compulsory education age (Fine 1991 cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 198). In regard to the policies and practices related to schools' academic and disciplinary climate, Rumberger noted that positive school climate reduced the odds of dropping out (2011, p. 199). In the context of the developing countries verbal abuse or harassment by teachers has been found to lead to dissatisfaction with schooling and affects dropping out (Liu 2004; PROBE 1999 cited in Hunt 2008).

Teachers' Low Expectation

Teachers' low expectation seemed to affect Taufiq, an at risk of dropping out student. Some other stakeholders also felt that teachers' low expectation about ethnic minority students' educational success influenced ethnic minority students in the Hong Kong schools.

While Rumberger's (2011) framework for dropping out failed to explain this factor, Hunt's (2008) work in the context of developing countries identified literature showing a relationship between teachers' low expectations and dropping out. He highlighted research from Peru that suggested teachers had very low expectations of girls, because they believed girls would drop out (Ames 2004, cited in Hunt 2008). Drawing on social, educational and developmental psychology literature in the context of developed countries Schofield et al. (2006) suggested that there is a significant amount of evidence supporting the conclusion that teachers' expectation regarding students' academic ability and achievement can impact students' academic outcomes. They also found that it is often case that teachers often have lower expectations for the academic performance of students from low socioeconomic status and/or immigrant and minority backgrounds.

9.3.1.14 Community Factors

The case studies with some 'out of school' ethnic minority participants revealed that it was a common scenario among their communities that young people stopped going to school after a certain point of time and then they largely started working. It seemed this practice in the community affected their school failure. It can be also mediated through peer factors in the ethnic minority community.

Community factors have been identified as predictors of dropping out in the developed context such as the United States (Rumberger 2011). One study highlighted that community factors could affect adolescents in three different ways such as access to institutional resources, parental relationships and social relationships (Leventhal and Brooks-Gun 2000, cited in Rumberger 2011). Although Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review of literature failed to find a statistically significant relationship between dropout and community factors (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 201), in his later work Rumberger (2011, p. 200–201) argued that affluent neighborhoods or communities provide students more access to community resources and positive role models from affluent neighbors. In the developing context relationship between community factors and dropout has not yet been explored.

9.3.1.15 Differences of Culture in Education

Case studies with Maneesha and Veem revealed that differences in schooling culture between their previous education in Nepal and later education in Hong Kong had affected their school failure. It was also common that many ethnic minority students who joined late in Hong Kong schools had experienced two types of different cultures in schooling. Rumberger's (2011) dropout framework cannot explain this cultural difference in schooling as a factor that can affect dropout. Hunt's (2008) work in the context of developing countries does not identify the influence of culture. The relationship between cultural differences in schooling and dropout and the limitation of existing dropout frameworks in conceptualizing this is discussed below.

There is a common trend within the Nepalese community in Hong Kong that many of their children start their schooling in Nepal at early years and then move to Hong Kong in the middle of their school age (Ku et al. 2010). Therefore, they actually experience two different schooling systems. Sometimes, they might have some cultural shock due to differences in schooling features as happened to Maneesha when she saw students were not obeying teachers in the school. One cultural difference that impacted on her and Veem in Hong Kong was schools or teachers did not seem to care whether they were doing well or not. Although Maneesha and Veem loved the freedom at their school it came with a price – lack of attention to their academic development. Maneesha and Veem, like many of their ethnic minority friends, and as reported in the broader literature on ethnic minority experience in Hong Kong (O'Connor 2011), liked the freedom afforded them in Hong Kong, but it seemed such freedom also meant inadequate attention from their teachers. This clearly shows a wide gap in the knowledge of South Asian schooling culture and education systems in the part of Hong Kong schools and teachers. It might have a serious implication for the way South Asian students are viewed in Hong Kong schools. An example discussed below shows how cultural difference means different things to different people and lack of this understanding can lead to stereotypes and can ultimately affect educational outcomes.

As reported in the literature, teachers hold views about parents of ethnic minority students such as ‘not supportive to education’, ‘don’t cooperate with the school’ are common among Hong Kong school (EOC 2011; Ku et al. 2005). These are merely stereotypes, however, as they lack a proper understanding of South Asian schooling culture. One common cultural value exists across the South Asian communities is that teachers are highly regarded in the society and their positions are considered as next to the parents. Parents do not bother much with the school activities after sending their children to the school believing that their children are looked after by their ‘second parents’, the teachers. Parents never challenge teachers as teachers are highly respected and parents trust that teachers would never do anything bad for their children. This is one of the long standing cultural traditions to which South Asians belong. It is really important to understand this schooling culture in order to make sense of their behaviors. Otherwise it runs the risk of creating stereotypes. That the negative effects of stereotypes threaten educational outcomes are well documented in the social, educational and developmental psychology literature (Schofield et al. 2006). Therefore, Hong Kong schools need to think very carefully about managing different aspects of schooling experiences for South Asian ethnic minority students. For example, processes for helping them to integrate into new school environment, managing their cultural shock, managing the expectations from the school and developing appropriate liaison with parents.

Rumberger’s (2011) framework additionally offers conceptualizations of ‘socio-economic’ factors that are relevant to this point. These include differences in resources, in the social contexts of family, school and community, and ‘socio-cultural’ factors, such as cultural differences in values, attitudes and behaviors. These can all help to explain racial and ethnic differences in dropping out. While his framework locates ‘socio-cultural’ factors as cultural differences among individuals, it largely fails to recognize any cultural differences regarding schooling that may also affect school failure. We found such differences in the case of some ‘out of school’ ethnic minority participants such as Maneesha and Veem. Therefore, drawing on Bekerman and Geisen’s (2012) work relating to ‘Migration, minorities and education: understanding culture’ it can be argued that culture is crucial in understanding issues such as educational outcomes and experiences of migrants and ethnic minorities.

9.3.1.16 Immigration and Citizenship

The case study with Shormin and her family revealed that her father’s student immigration status in Hong Kong and therefore Shormin’s status of being a dependant of a student stopped her from receiving financial support from Hong Kong government’s pre-primary education voucher scheme in order to attend kindergarten. It was also heightened by family poverty and the high fees for kindergarten education in Hong Kong. Case studies with other ‘out of school’ participants found that they were either first or second generation immigrants in Hong Kong. While many of them were born in their home countries some of them were also born in Hong Kong.

All the participants except Shormin had permanent residency status in Hong Kong. None of them, however, actually had Chinese citizenship as naturalization processes for the non-Chinese ethnic population in Hong Kong is not easy.

Dropout research in the context of the United States identified immigration status as a predictor of dropping out (Rumberger 2011). Rumberger highlighted research that found foreign born students had 13 % higher dropout rates than native born students (Aud et al. 2010 cited in Rumberger 2011). Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review of research revealed mixed findings from the research that examined relationship between dropout and immigration status by comparing first generation, second generation and third generation immigrant students (cited in Rumberger 2011). While one study (White and Kaufman 1997 cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 183) found the second generation had fewer dropout rates than first or third generation, another study (Rumberger 1995, cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 183) found no differences in dropout rates by immigration status. Hunt's work (2008) in the developing context highlighted 'child migration' as a factor influencing dropping out; however, it was limited to only in-country migration such as rural-urban.

While dropout literature talked about the relationship between immigration status and dropout, the relationship between citizenship status and school failure is yet unexplored in international literature. This is particularly important for Hong Kong as the naturalization procedures to acquire Chinese citizenship are difficult for the non-Chinese ethnic population. Chinese citizenship is mainly based on ethnic citizenship that follows *jus sanguinis* or descent principle of citizenship. Therefore, most of the ethnic minority people in Hong Kong only can become permanent residents because acquiring Chinese citizenship is a difficult process. In order to be naturalized as a Chinese citizen immigrants have to renounce their home country's citizenship since Chinese citizenship does not allow holding dual citizenship. Drawing on Bloemraad et al.'s (2008) work of "ethnic citizenship' and 'civic citizenship' and a state's willingness to incorporate migrants and minorities", it can be argued that Chinese citizenship based on descent principle actually excludes non-Chinese ethnic immigrants or minorities in Hong Kong. Literature supports the complexity of Chinese nationality law, as well argued by White (1987, p. 502) quarter century ago that, Chinese nationality law is not well equipped to cope with the inclusion of people of non-Chinese origin which effectively creates a racial barrier for them. Therefore, drawing on Bauböck's (2011) work of 'temporary migrants, partial citizenship and hypermigration', it can also be argued that ethnic minorities in Hong Kong are actually temporary migrants who are only partial citizens who can never be accorded equal citizenship status as regular citizens with associated social and political rights. This conceptualization is very important to explain the interaction of citizenship status and 'out of school' issue for ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. Since most of the ethnic minorities will always remain 'partial citizens' in Hong Kong, the government might not have thought about issues of ethnic minorities as seriously had they been considered citizens. This leaves ethnic minorities to accept the harsh fact that they may live in Hong Kong for a long time by taking it as their home but cannot enjoy full citizenship rights.

9.3.1.17 Racism

The case studies indicated that almost all ‘out of school’ ethnic minority participants experienced racism in their life in Hong Kong. Many of them also encountered racism in the schools. Even one community leader, Mr. Baral, had also faced racism in his life in Hong Kong as he revealed in his interview. He also mentioned that some ethnic minority students in his school experienced such while he was teaching in a Hong Kong school. Therefore, it appeared that racism was a common feature in the life of ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong including in their schools. Such experiences are not confined to this study but have also been in the literature. Using an ethnographic approach Ku et al. (2010) conducted a year-long field study to understand the lives of the South Asian community in Hong Kong. They published eight stories that portrayed vividly the life of this particular group of ethnic minorities. These stories depicted South Asians’ experiences of racial discrimination in areas such as “employment (hiring, firing, and advancement), admission to facilities, purchasing of goods and services, access to government services, and acquiring a home” (p. 4–5). In the literature, it is not uncommon to find the differential behavior that ethnic minority students received at schools in Hong Kong. Ku et al. (2005) found a quarter of the ethnic minority students who participated in the research agreed that their teachers did not treat students of different ethnicities equally. They also reported that teachers gave more attention to the Chinese students than ethnic minority students, and teachers gave more severe punishment to the ethnic minority students than Chinese students.

Dropout literature in both developed and developing contexts did not identify racism as a separate factor for school failure. Critical race theorist López (2003) was right when he identified that the presence and effects of racism remain largely absent from the discussions in the areas such as educational administration, politics of education, policy studies and political science. Drawing on Rumberger’s (2011) dropout framework, however, through factors such as social composition of school that segregates ethnic minority students, school policies and practices that treat ethnic minority students differentially and ultimately create negative school climate for them and stereotypes that characterize inferior academic ability of ethnic minority students can explain how racism affects ethnic minority students’ lower academic achievement and finally school failure. Similarly, drawing on Hunt’s work (2008), factor such as teachers’ lower expectation towards ethnic minority students can also explain that because of racism teachers have lower expectations that contribute to lower academic achievement and ultimately affect school failure. Moreover, the work of Schofield et al. (2006), which was based on social, educational and developmental psychology literature in the context of developed countries, can be drawn on to explain how racism interacts with ethnic minorities’ or immigrants’ lower academic achievement through the effect of negative stereotypes, teachers’ lower expectation and segregation at school.

It has been important in this book to draw on critical race theory to explore racism and its effect in the life of ‘out of school’ ethnic minority students rather than silencing it. It helped to understand the majoritarian stories that characterized the

deficiency of ethnic minority young peoples' in their ability and skills and taken for granted explanation of their lower academic performance and dropping out. Therefore, the insights of critical race theory in education and the adoption of critical race methodology as informed by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), as part of the methodology for this book enabled us to dig deeper beyond the majoritarian stories and helped to conceptualize how racism interacted with other factors that have a bearing on school failure. Following López (2003) we can see that critical race theory introduces the idea that politics and policy alone cannot make progress on racial issues and, in the Hong Kong case, it cannot be remedied without substantially recognizing and altering Chinese privilege.

9.3.2 Factors Identified from Interviews with Other Stakeholders

This section discusses factors identified from the interviews with other stakeholders. As stated earlier at the beginning of the previous section many of the factors identified from other stakeholders were in common with the factors identified from the case study with 'out of school' participants. The common factors were academic achievement, low education aspiration, Chinese language, behavioral problem, health issue, employment, family factors, school factors, inadequate schooling provisions for ethnic minority students, peer factors, racism. The following is a discussion of the factors identified exclusively from the interviews with other stakeholders and different from the factors identified from case study with 'out of school' participants.

9.3.2.1 Special Education Needs

Although none of the 'out of school' ethnic minority research participants reported any disability or special education needs some other stakeholders argued that there were some ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong schools with disabilities and needed special education support. They were seen to be more prone to school failure. In Hong Kong literature there have also been concerns identified in the area of ethnic minority children with special education needs. For example, in a LegCo paper a group expressed their different concerns regarding the education of ethnic minority children with special education needs, and asked EDB to supply detailed plan regarding specific curriculum programmes for them (Growing Together: Hong Kong's Special Education Needs Community for language and ethnic minorities 2008). The EOC also made a recommendation to EDB to adapt assessment tools for early identification of the ethnic minority children with special education needs (EOC 2011).

Research in the context of the United States found that students with disabilities were more likely to drop out than students without disability (Rumberger 2011). However, Rumberger's review further pointed out that the effects of disability fac-

tors were often mediated by factors such as test score and high school grades (p. 184). Hunt's (2008) review in the context of the developing countries noted a lack of empirical research around access to schooling for children with disabilities and the relationship between disability and dropouts. Yet he argued that the scale of educational exclusion for children with some form of disability or special education needs appeared to be vast, as he pointed out one study claiming that more than 90 % of children with disabilities in developing countries did not attend school (UNESCO n.d., cited in Hunt 2008, p. 28). Hunt's review also highlighted another study that strongly claimed disability might be the single most important factor which excluded children from schooling (Peters 2003, cited in Hunt 2008, p. 28).

9.3.2.2 Stereotypes

Stereotypes as a school factor can affect ethnic minority students' school failure. Interviews with some other stakeholders such as the Principal, Mr. Yuen and teacher, Mr. Knowles, revealed that stereotypes of ethnic minority students such as 'lazy', 'less motivated', 'not hard-working' were very pervasive among the teachers in Hong Kong schools. Literature also suggests that teachers hold stereotypes of ethnic minority students such as 'useless', 'misbehaving' and 'impolite' as shown by Ku et al. (2005). In addition teachers also hold stereotypical views about parents of ethnic minority students such as 'not supportive to education', 'don't cooperate with the school' (EOC 2011; Ku et al. 2005).

Rumberger's (2011) framework located stereotypes within socio cultural factors instead of school factors to explain racial and ethnic differences in dropout rates in the United States. He highlighted research that demonstrated social stigma or stereotypes related to intellectual inferiority among some cultural minority groups contributed to their lower academic achievement (Claude 1997 cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 204). In addition, social, educational and developmental psychology literature in the context of developed countries suggested that, for immigrant and minority students, negative stereotypes relating inferior intellectual skills to group membership can be a considerable obstacle to both short and long-term performance in a variety of academic domains (Schofield et al. 2006). Eventually it can lead to reduced interest in academic accomplishment and to behaviors that undermine achievement in the long term. Dropout literature in the context of developing countries, however, has not yet explored relationship between stereotypes and educational achievement.

9.3.3 Gender and School Failure

The gender aspect of dropping out is somewhat mixed in the context of the United States as reported in the literature (Rumberger 2011). Rumberger and Lim's (2008) review of 200 statistical analyses that examined the relationship between gender

and dropout found that 27 analyses reported females had higher dropout rates, 55 reported no significant relationships and 20 found females had lower dropout rates (cited in Rumberger 2011, p. 182). Rumberger (2011) illustrated from statistics, however, that dropout rates are higher for males than females in the United States. In the context of developing countries it was found that the emphasis in studies of gender and access tended to be around the education of girls with a particular emphasis on enabling the retention of girls in school (Hunt 2008). Hunt's review also found that boys were more likely to withdraw early in some contexts such as South Africa, Jamaica (2008, p. 30). The school failure literature in both developed and developing contexts, however acknowledged that gender interacts with other factors and influences dropout. Because of this ambivalent and indirect relationship between gender and dropout, as reported in the literature, and because of the way participants were identified in the current study, the effect of gender alone cannot be determined although the case studies of ethnic minority girl participants were very telling. Additional work is needed to pursue this issue further, especially in the context of the cultural issues that also intersect with gender issues for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

9.3.4 Implications

The findings in relation to Question 2 have some important implications. First, at the policy level, it is very important to be aware of and understand different school failure factors such as low academic achievement, over-age and retention or repetition, low education aspiration, attendance issue, Chinese language, behavioral problems, employment, involvement with gangs, health issues, school changes or student mobility, peer factors, family poverty, parental education, dropout history in the family, parental practices, inadequate schooling provisions for ethnic minority students, segregation effect in designated school, issues in teaching, school policy and practices, teachers' low expectation, community factors, differences of culture in education, immigration and citizenship, racism, special education needs, stereotypes. Despite this long list of factors identified in this book affecting ethnic minority students' school failure, policy makers in Hong Kong have assumed that the only issue that needs to be addressed is the Chinese language skills of ethnic minority students. In light of the result of this study, this is a very limited response on the part of government. Without addressing the other issues it would be difficult to gain any success on the language issue.

It is also important to understand the interaction of different school failure factors at students' individual, family and school levels so that the support measures can be targeted at all levels. Without intervention at all levels it would be difficult to gain successful outcomes in fighting against school failure. Structural issue such as family poverty needs special attention as it has been identified as one of the most powerful predictors irrespective of developed or developing context. In a recent newspaper article, Kennedy (2013) has recommended five easy steps to supporting

ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. His fifth recommendation was to introduce a cash transfer scheme to the poor ethnic minority parents who have children in the age-groups of kindergarten and senior secondary levels. This book strongly supports this recommendation drawing on one of the findings that ethnic minority young people are more at risk of being 'out of school' at these two educational levels.

Kennedy's (2013) other four recommendations were developing a policy on multiculturalism, developing a school curriculum for non-Chinese speaking students acknowledging that they are second language learners of Chinese, providing professional development support to Chinese language teachers so that they can effectively teach Chinese as a second language and appointing bi-lingual teaching assistants to provide support in both teaching and learning of all school subjects. The findings of the book also strongly support these recommendations if the government genuinely wants to address issues like school failure for ethnic minority students. We would also like to add one more recommendation. Reforming pre-service teacher education program to focus on prejudice reduction or anti-racist education or culturally responsive education is essential. Some optimistic news was the Chief Executive's policy address making a commitment to introduce Chinese as a second language curriculum from 2014 to 2015 academic year, and providing necessary support for teachers' professional development ("2014 Policy Address" 2014). Yet there is a long way to go on the part of government to address comprehensively school failure for ethnic minority students.

Intervention in early childhood education has been consistently found to work in fighting against school failures in the later years (Rumberger 2011). Although the Chief Executive's 2014 policy address talked about enhancement of the school based support services for ethnic minority children in the kindergarten, policies such as making pre-primary education free and compulsory might be helpful for poor ethnic minority parents as well as for those parents who are not much aware of pre-primary education provision since they had not experienced it previously.

Second, at the level of practice, schools should take more responsibility to address all the school factors that have a bearing on ethnic minority students' school failure. At the same time schools also need to be aware of which school factors exert more powerful influence than others on school failure, and therefore, should be targeting to address those in the first instance. In addition, schools also might need to take prompt and active initiatives to work closely with students' families for a well-integrated intervention.

In terms of addressing school factors such as 'inadequate schooling provisions for ethnic minority students', mainstream Chinese schools should be welcoming of ethnic minority students and be willing to commit towards equitable opportunities for all children in Hong Kong. This is in contrast to accepting the admission of ethnic minorities for the schools' own survival because of the declining school population. A revised rationale for admitting ethnic minority students would provide a better start for schools to consider how they can best cater for these students' needs.

To address another school factor 'segregation effect in designated school', designated school should not further segregate their ethnic minority students by estab-

lishing separate classes for ethnic minorities and Chinese students. Such streaming practices limit opportunities for ethnic minority students to mix with Chinese students. Designated schools, that still exist in practice if not in policy, also need to think about how they can utilize the diversity in their student population as a source of motivation for students' learning. This can address under-achievement on the part of ethnic minority students. It is to note here again that EDB is no longer using the word 'designated school' on their website but has changed the description to 'schools provided with recurrent funding and school-based professional support for non-Chinese speaking students' (EDB 2012). Yet this surface change does nothing to address the issues of segregating ethnic minority students in specially 'designated' schools.

Another school factor 'school policy and practices' might be addressed by embracing policies and practices that are conducive to ethnic minority students. They must not be barred to speak their home language or English in the school. A policy such as the school's being a centre of community cohesion might bring all students' parents together from different communities and help integrate with the school as well as in the wider society. Making schools a more natural part of their communities can remove the barriers between school and families.

An ethos of school policy based on respect and celebration for diversity might be helpful for fighting against school factors such as 'teachers' low expectation', and 'stereotypes'. It is also a matter of teachers' inter-cultural sensitivity for which they might require ongoing professional development training. Perhaps maintaining the fullest commitment towards professional learning as a ground rule might help more than anything else. When a school's population changes to be more multicultural, teachers need to be supported to learn how to accept, manage and celebrate this new diversity.

Third, at the level of theory, a key issue that stands out is that the results of this book cannot be understood in the context of a single theoretical frame. This book has unearthed the relationship between school failure and macro factors such as poverty, citizenship status and racism. At the middle level are differences in schooling cultures, teacher expectations, school policies and practices and then there are family contexts and individual attitudes and behavior. All of this has been identified through case studies and interviews of 'out of school' ethnic minority participants and other stakeholders respectively. But how can these results be theoretically framed?

Here we borrow from the work of Kabeer (2011) regarding 'intersecting inequalities' that challenges the achievement of the MDGs in the context of development and the work of Duncan and Corner (2012) regarding 'severe and multiple disadvantages' in the context of public service policy and delivery in the United Kingdom. Kabeer (2011) argued that due to multiple inequalities such as cultural inequalities, spatial inequalities, economic inequalities, and political inequalities a particular group of people in every society and region face systematic social exclusion that limits their life chances. Duncan and Corner (2012) conceptualized severe and multiple disadvantages as social in nature that should not be understood as individual-

ized but rather as inhering in social relations and thus calling for social and political solutions.

In this light it can be argued that ethnic minorities, more specifically South Asians, are a group in Hong Kong who are living at the intersection of multiple inequalities and disadvantages. They are poor, with limited citizenship status and associated rights, and often subject to racial hatred. The disadvantage attached to the ‘out of school’ issue is not due to any reason at the individual level but rather reflects inherited social disadvantages that have been systematically perpetuating them at the edge of disadvantages and structural inequalities for a long time.

Drawing on critical race theory it can also be argued that associating school failure to factors at their individual level only will uphold deficit and racialized notions against them and will only add another story to the majoritarian storytelling. This will ultimately oppress them by silencing and distorting their epistemologies. Telling the ‘out of school’ story for ethnic minority young people from their epistemology strengthens their voices which have been historically silenced and marginalized.

Chinese culture places a great deal of stress on individual effort, so the Hong Kong education system needs to understand better the cultural values of its ethnic minority students if it is to support them and help them to become the kind of learners so much valued in Hong Kong. If the stories told in this book are in any way typical of what will happen to ethnic minority students in Hong Kong, what is the future of these bi-cultural students? They live in Hong Kong but remain connected to their country of origin. They do not succeed in school and pick up jobs where they can, but have few skills that will allow them to develop a career. Returning to education seems difficult for them but in any case can be interrupted by return home visits. Such students seem to be really ‘caught between cultures’ and the pathway to academic and social success seems elusive. The Hong Kong education system does not seem geared to help them and their future remains uncertain. Since, as pointed out in Chap. 4, groups like the South Asian ethnic minorities are growing in Hong Kong, a solution needs to be found that will address these problems and provide a more conducive environment for ethnic minority students.

9.4 What Is the Life of ‘Out of School’ Ethnic Minority Young People in Hong Kong?

Case studies with all six dropout ethnic minority participants revealed that they were all working after dropping out of school. Maneesha was working in a restaurant as a waitress, Morshed as a follower in a van to carry goods, Aruna in a private clinic as doctor’s assistant, Veem as a bar-tender in a club, Tanvir as a trainee in an aviation and engineering company, Azad as an assistant surveyor in a construction company. Many of them were also working previously in a range of other jobs and it appeared that job changes were common phenomenon among them. Some of

those jobs were labor intensive. While most of these young people were apparently satisfied with their jobs some of them just accepted their destiny about the kind of job they could get in Hong Kong without a school diploma. In terms of future plans, some of them had plans to continue the type of job they were doing or would switch to a better job in future while some of them had plans to start own business in future. Apart from Aruna, none was inclined to come back again to school or continue any other alternative education track.

Among at risk of dropping out ethnic minority participants Abdal was only found working in a restaurant even though he was below 15. Although he did not admit it during the interview, however, he was seen at least three times working in a restaurant when the first author of this book went to buy food there after the interview. The other three at risk of dropping out ethnic minority participants spent their life after school by staying home or playing like many other students. Shormin, not being able to attend any kindergarten, was receiving education at home from her parents and elder sister. In addition, she was going to a local NGO 3 days a week for one and half an hour each day to learn some drawing and to read books with other ethnic minority young children.

Interviews with other stakeholders revealed that in general many of the ethnic minority young people actually started working right away after dropping out mainly in restaurant, bar, construction and security service jobs, while some of them just did not do anything apart from staying at home or roaming around with friends for a significant period of time. Some of them went back to their home country. Some of the other stakeholders also indicated that some ethnic minority young people were involved with gangs and triad groups after dropping out, therefore, they became engaged in criminal activities such as drug trafficking, fighting and theft.

9.4.1 Implications

There are some significant implications in relation to findings for Question 3. First, at the policy level, government should be planning sensitively if they are to stop ethnic minority young people from going into low and labor intensive jobs who are supposed to be in education. The government could consider extending the compulsory education age that might have potential to stop ethnic minority young people from joining the job market early. Policies around devising more innovative and flexible alternative tracks of education might help to equip 'out of school' ethnic minority students with the necessary skills for upward social mobility.

Second, at the level of practice, schools might need to be more careful in handling those ethnic minority students who have already been exposed to the employment market legally or illegally. Support measures should be in place to make them aware of different consequences through appropriate career counseling about the early job market entry without having enough qualifications and skills. Such a move also means that attendance records need to be more detailed both in terms of identifying the ethnicity of non-attending students as well as the reasons for it.

Third, at the theory level, it is important to unearth whether the availability of low and labor intensive jobs are used to trap ethnic minority young people from upward social mobility. d'Addio (2007) examined the research in OECD countries on intergenerational mobility and found the evidence of intergenerational immobility implies to other outcomes, such as, occupations persist across generations and factors such as education, race or migrant status contribute to this persistence. She also found that education is a major factor for intergenerational income mobility and educational differences persist across generations. Therefore, without investing significantly on the retention of ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong schools it would be difficult to break their inherited persistence with lower and labor intensive jobs.

Hong Kong should have similar expectations about its ethnic minorities as it has for Chinese students. Equipping ethnic minority young people with higher employability skills through higher levels of education not only facilitate their upward social mobility but also will ultimately contribute to Hong Kong's economic development. This will also ensure the optimum uses of the city's entire human resources.

9.5 Summary

This chapter began with reiterating aims and objectives and highlighted the questions posed in this book. It then presented a summary of the findings according to these guided questions. It also critically discussed the findings drawing on the theoretical frameworks and wider literature, and sought to explain these findings. Issues that could not be explained by existing literature were also identified and discussed. Finally, discussions on the implications of these findings at the levels of policy, practice and theory were provided.

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