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**Disadvantaged youth in alternative schooling:
Investigating Indonesian young people's
re-engagement with education**

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**A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2016

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adult Community Education
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AL	accelerated learning
ALS	alternative learning system
APPEAL	Asia-Pacific Program of Education for All
BPKB	<i>Balai Pengembangan Kegiatan Belajar</i> (Centre for Learning Activities)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BPS	<i>Badan Pusat Statistik</i> (Central Bureau of Statistic)
CLC	community learning centre/s (<i>Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat</i>)
DGHE	Directorate General of Higher Education
DNFE	Department of Non-Formal Education
EFA	Education for All
EP	equivalency program (<i>Pendidikan Kesetaraan</i>)
EPs	equivalency programs
GED	General Education Development, USA
HCAS	Human Child Aid Society
HPI	Human Poverty Index
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JSS/s	junior secondary school/s
LSM	<i>Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat</i> (community organisation)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MORA	Ministry of Religious Affair
NGO	non-government organisation/s

NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
OBE	Open Basic Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSIS	<i>Organisasi Siswa Intra Sekolah</i> /Intra School Organisation
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
PNFI	Pendidikan Formal dan Informal
PKBM	<i>Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat</i> (Community Learning Centre)
PS/s	primary school/s
SES	socio-economic status
SKB	<i>Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar</i> (District Non-Formal Education Centre)
SSS/s	senior secondary school/s
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNAS	<i>Ujian Nasional</i> (Formal School National Examination)
UNPK	<i>Ujian Nasional Pendidikan Kesetaraan</i> (EP National Examination)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSS	Vocational Secondary School

DEDICATION

To the Indonesian young students who were generous to share their experiences with me, thank you. I hope your learning journey is not one of domestication, but of liberation.

*If I am not in the world simply to adapt to it, but rather transform it,
and if it is not possible to change the world without a certain dream or vision for it,
I must make use of every possibility there is, not only to speak about my utopia,
but also to engage in practices consistent with it.*

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (2004)

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative, interpretive study was informed by the current educational practice experienced by disadvantaged youth who participate in non-mainstream schools in Indonesia, categorised generally as the Equivalency Program (EP). While these disadvantaged youth can be seen to be successfully returning to school through non-mainstream pathways, little is known about how they re-engage in learning after their initial unsuccessful attempt. The present study attempts to fill that gap by using theories of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973), and in particular, Mezirow's concept of 'perspective transformation'. The study explores these students' transformative learning experiences, that is, through self-knowledge and subsequent insight into the relationship between their learning experience and participation in society.

The stories of learning presented through this research are gathered in individual interviews and focus group discussions with 48 students in three EPs in disparate locations in Java. Three forms of transformative experience seem to have emerged as a consequence of individual students' reflection upon their learning: (i) learning through resistance; (ii) learning through individuation; and (iii) learning through consciousness-raising, suggesting that transformative learning affect people differently within their own context. In this respect, the thesis suggests that transformation is not a linear process that refers to a learner 'moving forward' from one position to another, but a multi-dimensional means of creating resilience for future orientation derived from an appreciation of life and wisdom within society. Therefore, this study not only affirms the theoretical work that underpins the study, but enriches it by applying it and showing evidence of transformative learning in a non-Western context.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

In 1977, Indonesia introduced non-formal education, which is an official category administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) to provide another form of schooling aimed at reaching people outside the formal education system. According to Law Number 20 of the National Education System (2003), non-formal education comprises early childhood education, youth education, literacy education, life skills education, women empowerment education, vocational training and internship, and the equivalency program (EP)¹. This thesis aims to investigate current educational practices experienced by young people who are not in formal education, but participate in non-formal education, especially in the EP context. The EP offers an alternative method for acquiring a qualification equivalent to what is offered in the formal education system.

Chapter 1 aims to present the contextual orientation of the research to provide a portrait of the Indonesian education system and the EP to situate the research problem. It also provides the research purpose and questions about the experience of disadvantaged youth in the EP context. The significance of the research will also be examined to inform the key research findings in fulfilling the gap of knowledge of

¹ Some publications have different terms when referring to the Equivalency Programs (EP) in Indonesia, such as School Equivalency Packages (OECD/ADB, 2015), Equivalency Education (UNESCO, 2006b), Equivalency Education Program (USAID, 2009). However, all UNESCO for Asia and Pasific Regional Bureau for Education publications frequently use Equivalency Program term. The term EP in *Bahasa Indonesia* is *Pendidikan Kesetaraan*, which have equal meaning to Equivalency Education.

the practice of the EP in Indonesia. The chapter then presents an overview of the conceptual framework that is used to interpret the students' experiences, followed by a brief examination of research literatures and methods. Finally, it concludes with the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Research problem

Indonesia is a country in Southeast Asia, with a population of approximately 252.2 million people in 2014 (OECD/ADB, 2015). As the world's fourth-most populous nation, it has over 300 ethnic groups and 700 languages. Despite the great diversity of cultures, its people are united by the '*Bahasa Indonesia*' (Indonesian language) and its motto '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' or 'Unity in Diversity'. Indonesia is in a transition phase, moving from an agricultural economy to a more industrialised one. However, in 2014, the number of Indonesian people who lived below the poverty line (less than USD 2 per day) reached more than 28 million people, that is, 11% of the Indonesian population (OECD/ADB, 2015, p. 59). The economic and monetary crisis in mid-1997 created a sharp increase in the severity of poverty. The crisis had a tremendous impact on political, economic and social life. In the education sector, the crisis resulted in approximately 10 million children dropping out of school (Soedijarto, 2000).

The economic crisis also forced the Indonesian government to delay a proposed nine-year compulsory education program for primary schools (PS) and junior secondary schools (JSS). In 1994, the program was launched for children aged 7-15 years, requiring them to obtain a basic education (Grades 1-9). The MOEC reported that the number of PS and JSS students had risen steadily since 1990, but

decreased in 1998, the second year of the economic crisis (Dursin, 2000). In 1994, the number of school students totalled 36.44 million, increasing to 39 million in 1997. However, the number decreased to 38.94 million children due to the economic crisis in 1998. The net enrolment rate for PS and JSS also declined because of the financial crisis.

In 2008/2009, the MOEC claimed that the number of students in the nine-year compulsory education program was 43.44 million students, consisting of 30.90 million PS students and 12.53 million JSS students. However, the number of students who dropped out created a problem. The International Labour Organization (ILO) in Jakarta (2011) reported that in 2008/2009, 449,700 students dropped out of PS and 608,900 students discontinued their education in JSS. Furthermore, students who dropped out from JSS numbered 233,400 students, and 1.2 million graduates did not continue to senior secondary school (SSS). In a recent publication (2015), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2015) reported that the dropout rate for students in PS was 1.09 per cent in 2011/12, and 4.7 per cent do not continue to JSS. In the JSS context, 1.7 per cent of students dropped out, and 10 per cent did not continue to SSS. In addition, the total dropout rate for SSS is 3 per cent per year. These numbers do not include children who never attended school.

The majority of out-of-school children are from disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minority groups, poor families, remote geographical areas and street children. The primary reasons why Indonesian young people drop out of school are: (i) lack of financial resources; (ii) distance to school and children with disabilities; and (iii) high rates of teacher absenteeism in disadvantaged areas (OECD/ADB,

2015, pp. 108-109). Compared to urban areas, children living in rural areas are significantly more likely to be ‘not attending school’ (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, 1998). Some factors that may contribute to the risks are accessibility (people from isolated areas), poverty (families with many children), lower aspirations for education, religious beliefs and cultural beliefs (isolated tribal communities).

Interestingly, urban children also contribute to the increasing number of students who drop out of school. One of the main reasons why rural people come to the big cities is to obtain a better life. According to the *Badan Pusat Statistik* (Central Bureau of Statistic (BPS)), in 2011, 363,420 (3.75%) poor people existed in Jakarta, which was an increase from 312,180 (3.48%) in 2010. These statistics excluded poor urban families who live under bridges, and in impermanent houses in slum areas and riverbanks. As an industrialised city, Jakarta attracts rural people who often come without skills and qualifications. As a result, a great number become beggars and homeless drifters, and their children become street children. Most street children lack access to education because of an inability to pay costs associated with education, such as books, school uniforms and transportation. Due to these economic reasons, street children have to work to help support their family. They may become a parking attendant, street singer, housemaid, scavenger, newspaper seller or porter, which means they do not attend formal schooling.

Some children who drop out of school attend EP as another pathway to improving their chance to engage with the nine-years of compulsory education. The EP includes Package A (equivalent to PS), Package B (equivalent to JSS) and Package C (equivalent to SSS). It can also be accessed by older people up to the age 44 years who lack educational experience but seek to gain better literacy. Learning

centres that have adult learners focus more on life skills or employment skills combined with the EP primary curriculum.

Under Law No. 20 of the National Education System (2003), alternative education, referred to as ‘non-formal education’, is a pathway outside the formal education channel that can be implemented in a structured and tiered way. The EP, overseen by MOEC, was initiated in 1984 as a ‘second chance’ education program for children and young people in disadvantaged situations and developed as an equivalent to the formal system in terms of curriculum and certification, to facilitate the student’s ability to enter formal education. As well as formal education, the EP is approved by the Indonesian government to allow all children and young people to receive the basic level of schooling and educational services. In 2010 throughout Indonesia, 829,000 EP students attended 23,210 learning groups (or equal to school) of which 20,907 learning groups were managed by MOEC and 2,303 learning groups were led by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) based on the Islamic faith.

Table 1.1 Equivalency in Indonesia – number of students and learning groups (2010)

Equivalency Program	General	Islamic	Total
Package A			
Learning Groups (equal to school)	5.504	318	5.822
Students	151.908	16.978	168.886
Package B			
Learning Groups (equal to school)	9.130	736	9.866
Students	353.805	20.315	374.120
Package C			
Learning Groups (equal to school)	6.273	1.249	7.522
Students	230.744	56.026	286.770
Total			
Total Learning Groups (Package A, B, C)	20.907	2.303	23.210
Total Students (Package A, B, C)	736.457	93.319	829.776

Unlike formal schooling, in the EP, student characteristics vary widely. Learning groups may consist of the school-age population only who attend the EP to study, while other learning groups consist of young people who have responsibilities other than studying, such as family duties and working. Consequently, the process of learning in an EP has to be more flexible than formal schooling. Some EPs provide learning time over weekends while others provide evening classes. However, some EPs prefer morning study classes similar to formal schooling. This variation depends on the situation of each student, as well as an agreement between students and teachers. Even though the EP provides flexibility in the time allocated to learning, students do not attend class regularly (Irwanto, Hendriati, & Hestyanti, 2001) due to work commitments or a lack of motivation. Therefore, on regular schooldays, only a few students come to school while during exam times most will attend classes.

Regarding this situation, it appears that students in the EP face problems in managing their activities, especially the relationship between work and study. Absenteeism and non-participation in learning often occurs, which can lead to a lack of academic performance (Irwanto et al., 2001). For disadvantaged people, life's orientation is towards the 'now', that is, in the current moment. For street children or children from poor families, earning money may be more important than study.

Community learning centres (CLC) or *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM)* manage the EP. UNESCO (1998) defines a CLC as a local educational institution outside the formal education system for villages or urban areas. It was set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities for community development and to improve people's quality of life. In Indonesia, there are 4,014 CLC (Badan Akreditasi Nasional Pendidikan Non Formal, 2010). CLC

were established by the government (95), non-government organisations (NGO) (2,226), private companies (29), religious organisations/*pesantren* (873), international organisations (13), individual ownership (625), and others (153) (Direktorat Pendidikan Masyarakat Dirjen Pendidikan Non Formal dan Informal, 2010).

Despite CLC being established since 1999, some people do not appreciate alternative education programs. Compared to mainstream schooling, the EP is not recognised as an alternative education pathway, and is classified by some as low-quality education with low-performance by students compared to students from formal schooling. ILO research findings in 2011 showed that graduate students from an EP could not enter higher education or formal schools. This is because they cannot compete with students from formal schools, or because the principals from formal schools do not have the initiative to accommodate disadvantaged groups due to managing students' accomplishments (International Labor Organisation, 2011).

Consequently, the EP has to find a way to bridge the wide gap between vulnerable student conditions and student engagement. This problem needs further analysis. By examining this unique type of education for students from diverse backgrounds and experiences, it may be possible to contribute to a reformulation of alternative education that is needed to establish the integrity of alternative programs to ensure their survival among other types of education, especially mainstream education.

1.2 Research purposes

The purpose of this study is to examine student-learning experiences in the EP, in particular, the process of engaging education in alternative school settings from the viewpoint of disadvantaged youth in Indonesia. Attending alternative schooling for these young people might be a necessary choice of study because it provides flexibility in scheduling or a ‘second chance’ at education. These learning experiences are investigated to understand whether they engage or alienate in alternative school cultures, as well as identify the factors that contribute to engagement or alienation experiences. Since students in the EP come from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is important to examine the real-life problems that influence their educational involvement. Students’ voices are valuable to present another perspective and as input into existing and future developments of the EP.

1.3 Research questions

The principal research question is: *How do disadvantaged students engage with alternative schooling?* followed by three related questions:

1. *Why do Indonesian disadvantaged youth choose to re-enter education through alternative schooling?*
2. *What is the process of re-engagement in learning in alternative school cultures?*
3. *How do these students believe that their experiences were improved?*

1.4 Significance of the research

Nationally, several research projects have been undertaken by Indonesian researchers and international agencies, which have evaluated the Indonesian EP (International Labor Organisation, 2011; Irwanto et al., 2001; Suharno, 2005; Syaokani, 2008), some of which focused on the EP program (as part of government evaluation and outcome mapping) while others focused on enhancing the capacity of EP tutors.

However, no studies have examined student learning experiences in the EP.

Therefore, as one who understands the field of non-formal education within the Indonesian context², I have a curiosity and responsibility to uncover the meaning and value of the non-formal education program, in particular, the meaning and value of the EP. Research in the field of non-formal education has been my interest since I graduated from the undergraduate program in the Department of Non-Formal Education (referred to as *Program Studi Pendidikan Luar Sekolah* in Bahasa Indonesia), Faculty of Educational Sciences at the State University of Jakarta, Indonesia. I now work at a university level in the Department of Non-formal Education in Indonesia. From my experience in this area, I advocate that alternative education, such as the EP, gives young people, especially those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, the opportunity to achieve a nine-year basic compulsory and secondary education through an alternative pathway. However, I have found that the EP has challenges, especially how to engage learning with students from

² The field of non-formal education is established in developing countries and mostly covers literacy education and community schooling due to combating illiteracy and increasing the level of participation in education. Non-formal education activities in Indonesia have grown nationally as part of the government's commitment to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which provide educational activities for many people as part of implementing lifelong learning. Therefore, the needs of academician or scholars who are concerned in this field become necessary, as it has limited publications that uncover the value of non-formal education.

disadvantaged backgrounds. I also discovered that the quality of learning experiences and outcomes in EP are not held to the same accountability standards as the mainstream school. Therefore, I understand that if a society undervalues the EP, learning quality can be viewed as instrumental or rationally technical, which is a standard of learning outcomes based only on academic performances (Zyngier, 2008, pp. 1771-1772). However, the EP offers a ‘different’ learning experience beyond the instrumentalist approach in which students can reflect and rethink their learning experience for a more just and democratic community. In other words, the main argument in this study is to give students the voice to express what they mean by the quality of their learning experience in the EP, as well as allow an opportunity for them to recognise self-transformation as a learner. In this study, I believe that young people, including those who are disadvantaged, have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling in which those perspectives shape their education.

To identify self-transformation as learners in this study, the students reflect three points of learning engagement as they emerged in the findings. The first issue of engagement relates to the point of entry, the means whereby disadvantaged youth attend an EP. The EP offers a promising route to education. The research findings discovered the reasons for returning, from both a student’s personal awareness and external factors, such as family, peer pressure and school factors that act as a catalyst. This leads to a youth acting purposefully and intentionally weighing alternatives to participate in education. The second issue of engagement relates to the experience of students when entering the EP. There are forms of transition and disorientation experienced by them in the EP school culture. However, the disorientation associated with entry into the EP contributes to student learning in

valuable ways. The third issue relates to transformation in the ways in which students engage while learning. There are multiple meanings of transformative experiences articulated by them, which include learning through resistance, learning through individuation, and learning through consciousness-raising. Different ways of making sense of learning in the EP implies that transformation in learning has different consequences in specific context.

By giving students a voice to reflect on their learning experiences in the EP setting, this study can be utilised by the Indonesian government as a reflective study for enriching the EP in Indonesia. Describing how disadvantaged students can survive in alternative school cultures can also illustrate the implementation of non-formal education programs in Southeast Asia. As other countries in Southeast Asia have similar programs, Indonesia contributes to the improvement of its non-formal education programs, as well as understands the complex dimensions of student engagement.

Internationally, research on the intersection of a student's re-entry and re-engagement, especially in alternative school systems, is less examined (Barrat, Berliner, & Fong, 2012) compared with research addressing risk factors associated with the school dropout rate (Bowers & Sprott, 2012b; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004; Rumberger, 2011). This gap includes little being known about the capacity of school systems to serve the needs of students who re-enter schooling after they have experienced dropping out of school. If returning students do not succeed in their first attempt, it is important to understand the challenges they face when re-engaging in learning for increased success in their second attempt at education. It can also give the

opportunity for young people in disadvantaged situations to assert their opinions and needs in respect of what to learn and how to learn, which in turn will inform policy-makers and practice educators (Hattam, Smyth, & McInerney, 2003).

1.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was situated at the intersection of the theory of transformative learning and critical pedagogy. The theory of transformative learning and critical pedagogy frame the interpretation of a student's experiences in the EP. The EP seeks educational access for disadvantaged students to have a right to education, including benefits that schooling will bring to their lives. This program is utilised by young people, both as a first chance and as a second chance. Through alternative education systems, marginalised students are expected to experience learning that gives them the possibility to engage in different kinds of learning and bring this knowledge into their personal and social transformation for future opportunity and mobility.

The interpretation of student experiences of learning engagement was analysed by utilising the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973), in which learning engagement is seen as a transformative process. In other words, engaged students are those who experience self-change through learning, which is a result of thinking critically and reflecting on their own behaviour and knowledge that contribute to self-empowerment (Harvey & Knight, 1996). Mezirow (1991) constructs learning as the means by which people come to perceive, interpret, criticise and transform the world in which they live. A student who engages in learning calls into questions his/her old meaning of learning

to seek new meaning or perspectives. The student actively and consciously analyses any new experience until he/she finds them meaningful. Furthermore, from a critical pedagogy viewpoint, personal transformation is emancipatory (Taylor, 1998, pp. 16-17). Emancipatory learning is concerned with empowerment, that is, ‘the ability of individuals or groups to take control of their own lives in autonomous and responsible ways’ (Grundy, 1987, as cited in Askew, 1998, p. 90). The ability to take ownership of one’s control, as Freire described, is being ‘capable of transforming, of producing, of deciding, of creating, and of communicating’ (1998, p. 499). Through transforming a student’s consciousness, the idea of learning can result in changes in the individual.

Mezirow (1991) and Freire (1973) argue that transformative learning will promote student self-awareness and freedom, which is necessary to create social equity for the oppressed and for learning to occur. Through the assumption that people can make choices, disadvantaged youth in alternative school situations have the potential to grow and develop. Therefore, the transformative learning and critical pedagogy frameworks are useful for examining Indonesian disadvantaged students and witnessing change or transformative experiences in the EP whether it is through the perspective of the individual (confronting epistemic and psychological distorted assumptions) or the influence of *conscientisation* or consciousness-raising as social experiences (Christopher, Dunnagan, Duncan, & Paul, 2001; Cunningham, 1992). Further explanations of the theoretical frameworks are discussed in Chapter 2.

1.6 Overview of the research literature

This section presents the overview of literature regarding research. There are many facets of non-mainstream educational provisions among established alternative education programs throughout the world that can benefit the EP in Indonesia. Literature on returning to school in Indonesia is limited, especially returning to education through non-mainstream pathways. Therefore, a detailed discussion of the reviews in this research includes the characteristics, motivations and challenges of re-entry students (Chapter 3).

The study of non-mainstream education provision includes alternative education (Aron, 2006; Fraser, Davis, & Singh, 1997; Gut & McLaughlin, 2012; Kellmayer, 1995; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Nagata, 2007; Raywid, 1994; te Riele, 2007), second chance education (Asín & Peinado, 2008; Cuban, 1990; Inbar, 1995; M. Rose, 2012; Shavit, Ayalon, & Kurlaender, 2002; Walberg & Herbig, 1990; Watson, 2011) and non-formal education (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991; Hoppers, 2005, 2006; A. Rogers, 2005; P. Rose, 2009; Thompson, 2001). Although the educational forms are on the same axis in which they are established, that is, outside mainstream educational provisions, there are specific distinctions. For example, alternative education offers separate curricular tracks at various stages of the educational system and often prepares students for immediate entry into the labour market as skilled workers, as the curriculum contains a vocational program. Meanwhile, the idea of a second chance education intends to provide students who did not initially succeed, with a renewed sense of potential for disadvantaged group in society (Shavit et al., 2002). The notion of non-formal education is a broad term that is commonly used in developing countries (Hoppers, 2006). It aims to provide basic education for specific

populations outside the framework of a formal school system, at a low cost in terms of time and resources (Thompson, 2001).

The EP in Indonesia and similar programs in other Southeast Asian countries (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Kingdom of Cambodia) is situated at the intersection of three non-mainstream education forms, as mentioned above. Some schools and education centres focus on vocational/skills programs for preparing students who enter the labour market. Other centres typically have similar settings and designs as mainstream schools but with a limited number of subjects and time allocated for studying. For example, in Indonesia and Bangladesh, their EP focus on academic subjects that are tested in national examinations. However, in Myanmar, the EP curriculum is focused on skills-based learning for improving quality of life and income generative activities (UNESCO, 2013a, 2013b). The programs also offer space for first chance students who deliberately choose the EP due to their inability to pay mainstream school fees or other reasons, and second chance education. In most countries in Southeast Asia, Departments of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) administer EP, using limited methods of learning and teaching compared with the formal school system. Silberman-Keller (2006) defines this as the concept of ‘non-formal pedagogy’ which operates on the basis of open participation of its students, viewed as ‘creative or unconventional’ methods of learning.

In the literature, student profiles in the programs show the difference. The trend of youth in alternative schools are: (i) those ‘at-risk’ and marginalised (Lange & Sletten, 2002); (ii) have been encouraged to leave the mainstream school (Guerin & Denti, 1999); (iii) from ethnic minority groups (Lehr & Lange, 2003; Raywid, 1994); (iv) have poor academic skills; and (v) have inadequate social, emotional and

behavioural skills (McIntyre, 1993). These young people may choose alternative education because they do not fit into the mainstream school culture. In contrast, a general characteristic is applied for second chance school students, which includes those who failed their first experience (Inbar, 1995). Furthermore, the literature on re-entry reasons shows that life circumstances, such as: (i) a family crisis, employment and pregnancy (Barrat et al., 2012; Berliner & Barrat, 2009; Metzger, 1997); (ii) a significant person's guidance and encouragement (Altenbaugh, Engel, & Martin, 1995; Metzger, 1997); and (iii) a school's culture, such as providing 'adult environment' (Dwyer, 2001; te Riele & Crump, 2002) contribute to the decision of returning students. The motivation of returnees can be distinguished in the form of increasing learning and useful skills (Marshall, Mejia, & Claudia, 2005; Umansky, Hernandez, Alas, & Moncada, 2007) or obtaining school credentials for economic motivation (Altenbaugh et al., 1995). Literature also shows that some challenges exist upon re-entry, such as: (i) placement in classes with less committed students and troublesome dynamics associated with age discrepancies (Dwyer, 2001); (ii) unsupportive school environment (Holden & Dwyer, 1992); and (iii) credit deficiency and capacity limitations (Barrat et al., 2012).

Some studies indicate program outcomes for students, such as: (i) students' sense of flexibility (Watson, 2011); and (ii) students' change in self-esteem (Daugherty & Compton, 1996; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Mills & McGregor, 2010; te Riele, 2011). However, studies documenting academic outcomes indicate mixed results, both positive in term of students successfully graduating from the program (Williams & Sadler, 2001) and negative in the context of students receiving little

academic achievement (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Jan & Evguenia, 2007; Lange & Lehr, 1999).

The review of non-mainstream education provisions helps situate thinking about the Indonesian EP. The literature also reveals studies of student experiences in alternative school and second chance school that have been conducted throughout the world. However, few studies have examined student learning experiences in similar educational programs in Southeast Asia. Even so, the detail of the research is mainly about the educational program itself, rather than focusing on the students. Thus, it leads the current study to explore, document and analyse student perspectives of their learning experiences of the Indonesian EP. The emphasis is on the students' ability to express their views about their learning and school experiences (Groves & Welsh, 2010) and to reflect those views to make meaning of those experiences. Therefore, the epistemological lens, which is an interpretive paradigm, is used to allow students to articulate their subjective meaning of their learning experience.

1.7 Overview of the research methodology

Section 1.7 briefly explains the research methodology used in this study in terms of the research paradigm, research design and data analysis. A detailed discussion and justification of the research methods are outlined in Chapter 4.

This study explores the experiences of students in relation to understanding the process of re-engaging in the EP. The research adopts an interpretive paradigm in which the goal of this study is to listen to the students' view of the situation, including the subjective meaning of their learning experiences. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the students' situation and meaning for those involved, a

case study approach is utilised to allow a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon. Furthermore, characteristics of EPs in Indonesia are unique from each other because each has atypical features and contexts. The selection of cases is based on geographical locations to show the differences of each context, including urban, suburban and rural alternative schools. A similar strategy for selecting cases and determining participants was applied in this study. By using purposeful maximal samplings (Creswell, 2007), participants are selected to represent the criteria of gender, age, school grade and background. To gather information and to answer the research questions, an in-depth interview and a focus group discussion are conducted. The first phase of data collection, gathered from individual interviews, allows the research to focus directly on the personal views of each participant, and information from interview guided focus group discussions. The second phase is a focus group discussion that allows the comparison of members of the group, as well as obtains insight of data from the interview process.

Data analysis in this study is organised into three general steps: (i) category construction; (ii) single case analysis; and (iii) cross-case analysis. A set of data and information from the in-depth interview and focus group is organised and highlighted into coding in tabular form (Morrissette, 2011). Furthermore, the codes are organised and developed into themes and categories in which its process comes from the researcher, participants and literature that influence the process of conceptualisation. Data interpretations are displayed into within-case and cross-case analysis. The single case analysis is represented in a chronological structure (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014) that is guided by the research questions and theories being used in the study. The cross-case analysis is developed from the pattern of the variable across the cases

and presented in a theme-based description (Stake, 2006). The single case analysis report is presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, and the cross-case analysis report is presented in Chapter 8, as explained in the thesis structure (Section 1.8).

1.8 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 establishes the research problem, research questions and significance of the research, as well as provides the overview of the conceptual framework, research literature and research method.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework that underpins this study and includes the theories of transformative learning and critical pedagogy. The objective of Chapter 2 is to expound the lens used in this study to understand the reality of the experiences of students. It provides a guide for establishing the principal research question, as well as a tool for data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 3 investigates the notion of providing non-mainstream education through the exploration of three forms of non-mainstream pathways: (i) alternative education; (ii) second chance education; and (iii) non-formal education. The purpose of this exploration is to establish the position of EPs in Indonesia among similar programs around the world. Furthermore, Chapter 3 provides literature on student experiences in non-mainstream schools related to why students enter schooling, their motivations and challenges.

Chapter 4 provides an exploration of the research paradigm, as well as an explanation and justification of the research design, including the procedure for data collection and data analysis. The qualitative research method employed a multiple case study approach in this study to provide a comprehensive investigation of the

Quintain (i.e. an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied, which is used in multiple case studies; it is the target of collection) (Stake, 2006).

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the findings of the research in which each chapter provides a detailed interpretation of each school as a single case study. The findings in all case studies are presented in similar themes but have different content and stories embedded in each theme.

Chapter 8 presents detailed interpretations and a discussion of cross-case analysis in which the commonalities and differences that emerged from three cases are presented to provide insight into the principal research question. The cross-case findings are presented using a theme-based description of all case studies.

Chapter 9 provides a summary of the key findings that emerged in the cross-case analysis and links them to the theoretical framework and literature review to provide further discussion of the thesis. The chapter begins with a self-reflection on the assumptions underpinning the research. Similar to the story of the research journey, Chapter 9 presents the story of how disadvantaged youth relate to their current learning, disorientation experiences and reflection about learning itself. Additionally, Chapter 9 provides a summary of the thesis by discussing the significance of the results and implications of policy and practice, and a statement of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

1.9 Conclusion

Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, beginning with the contextual orientation that describes the statement of the problem. The research problem addresses the process of re-engagement in the EP setting from the viewpoint of

disadvantaged youth in Indonesia. It is important for marginalised and ‘at-risk’ students to re-engage in learning after experiencing failure in their mainstream schooling. Rather than interpret the concept of engagement from a rational technical approach (Zyngier, 2008), such as examining a student’s attendance and academic performance, this study perceives engagement as rethinking the student’s experience and interest in non-mainstream schooling for a just and democratic community. The concept of re-engagement in this study derives from the theory of transformative learning and critical pedagogy in which learning engagement is seen as a transformative process. Chapter 2 explores these theoretical frameworks and provides a lens for this study.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

The contextual background to the study and research problem are outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 describes two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study: (i) critical pedagogy; and (ii) transformative learning, which are utilised in the process of understanding and communicating the experiences of disadvantaged Indonesian school students in the Indonesian EP.

Critical pedagogy is a theory of change in which educational and classroom practices provide space for a learner to experience personal change and social transformation. It addresses the means by which marginalised students and the oppressed can be assisted to understand their existential reality of learning in a second chance school, in this case, the Indonesian EP. Through the lens of critical pedagogy, this study aims to understand how a purposive selection of students involved in this system gains meaning from their educational processes and develop self-capacity and self-confidence in order to open up possibilities and opportunities in life. Transformative learning is a learner-focussed approach. It addresses the understanding of change within individual learners (and thereby learning systems). This study uses both theories to draw meaning from the experience of students.

Because transformative learning theory engages with individual understandings of learning, it offers an opportunity to assess the impact of critical

pedagogies. Transformative learning provides students with a perspective from which to reflect on their learning and argue its social significance.

Critical pedagogy provides a framework for valuing those insights and arguments. In this regard, critical pedagogy explains the benefit of learning through the subjective judgement of the learner rather than through a measure based on increasing knowledge or developing skills. This does not mean the subjective judgement of the learner cannot be tested against other criteria; rather, it is a sound starting point for constructing an effective base for learning. If students who have previously disengaged with education and value learning acquired through the EP with its limited resources, there is an argument for increasing opportunities for students to re-visit education through a 'second chance' system.

The first section of Chapter 2 focuses on a review of the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). It discusses theory formulation, the process of transformation and other perspectives on transformative learning, as well as the outcomes of transformative learning. The second section focuses on the work of Freire and his theory of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973). In his work, Freire has attempted to use the development of critical consciousness as a means of transforming the realities of marginalised students. The third section presents similarities and differences between notions of 'perspective transformation' and 'conscientization'.

2.2 Theory of transformative learning

2.1.1 Theory formulation

Central to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is the concept of 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1991). Perspective transformation is learning that creates a change from a personal individual's perspective that transforms the way they understand and engage with the experience of life. This includes the process of how we see and understand our immediate experience and ourselves. A person who changes his/her experience through a transformative perspective is someone who is drawn to call their past experiences into question in order to seek new meanings, and then to attribute this new meaning to contemporary life experiences. Personal transformation is emancipatory (Freire, 2000). Mezirow's theory of transformative learning emerged from a large qualitative study of women returning to a community college after an extended period of absence from formal education (Mezirow, 1978a). The research focused on the changes in roles and self-concepts that the women experienced as a result of participating in the college programs and the processes that led to those changes. The study found that as the women became critically aware of their personal, historical and cultural contexts, their assumptions and frame of reference changed, resulting in what Mezirow called 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 2000, p. xi).

Mezirow's discussion of the experiences of women returning to education has resonance with this discussion of the experiences of students returning to study through the alternative school system in Indonesia. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Indonesia EP is concerned with people who have left school without completing their studies. After dropping out or discontinuing formal schooling,

teenagers and early adults have made the decision to re-enter the educational system through the EP. Mezirow argued that the women he studied experienced significant changes in their meaning, perspectives and ways of being. The possibility of similar changes being evident in the experiences of Indonesian students interviewed for this study led me to consider Mezirow's theory of transformative learning as helpful when interpreting their experiences in the EP. Indeed, Mezirow has suggested that his findings on the experiences of his participants may be similar to the experiences of other learners in other learning contexts.

The philosophical underpinnings of the theory are based on constructivist assumptions, humanist assumptions and critical social theory. Constructivist assumptions suggest that meaning arises within ourselves, through human interaction and experience rather than through external systems (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiv). Every person interprets the world based on their own experiences and perceptions of their experiences in context. Transformative learning is a process of constructing, examining, questioning and revising perceptions. Mezirow stated that we develop habitual expectations based on experiences; therefore, we expect things to be as they were before. These expectations guide our decision-making and actions until we come to a point of a 'disorienting dilemma', as described by Mezirow that could lead us to transform to a new perspective

Furthermore, from humanist assumptions, transformative learning theory works with the notion that human beings must be seen to be capable of making personal choices within the constraints enforced by biology, personal history and environment (Elias, 2005). Humanist principles highlight the importance of the individual and specific human needs. Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1969) had a strong

influence on Mezirow's conceptualisation of transformative learning. The concept of self-actualisation by Maslow includes the characteristics of acceptance of self and others, which contributes to the process of personal transformation. Knowles's (1975) development of self-directed learning, inspired by Rogers's client-centred therapy, also observes the influence of transformative learning.

Critical social theory strongly influences the transformative perspective.

Mezirow was a student of Habermas, who argued that perspectives, assumptions and beliefs arise in relation to the dominant ideology in a society (Habermas, 1987).

Ideology affects people and it is used by people to make sense of their experiences.

For instance, if the dominant ideology is capitalism, people may view the acquisition of wealth and material benefit as central to life. In this way, the dominant ideology constructs the 'normal' way to think and act. It identifies this in accord with our best interest. By contrast, when we are able to recognise that these assumptions and beliefs are not in our best interest, we can enter into another learning process, one that is transformed by a new perspective.

The goal of transformative learning, as theorised by Mezirow (as cited in Christopher et al., 2001, p. 134), is to assist learners to understand how they have learnt, and how this is a consequence of patterns of cultural formation. A consequence of this insight is to develop a more critical and coherent perspective on individual and social learning processes through appreciating learning as socially defined and socially constructed. Educational programs that result in transformative learning create significant life changes in participants; a 'conversion' to a way of understanding acting that is better for them. Transformative learning shapes people. As Clark (1993, p. 47) states, 'They are different afterwards, in ways both they and

others can recognise.’ Considering my research participants, it is important to ascertain if EP students are experiencing transformative learning, which based on this theory, will influence their understanding of their school experiences and future opportunities because of second chance education.

2.2.2 Process of transformation

Transformative learning is a process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience to guide future actions (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Transformation in learning refers to how students learn to negotiate and act on their purposes, values, feelings and meanings while learning. Through transformation, students gain a greater control of their learning. This leads to them becoming reflective and socially responsible, as well as being able to think clearly about decisions they need to make. Based on transformative learning theory, the transformation in learning occurs in one of four ways: (i) by elaborating on existing frames of reference; (ii) by learning a new frame of reference; (iii) by transforming their points of view; or (iv) by transforming their habits of mind (Mezirow in 2012, p. 84).

The *frame of reference* is the ‘structure of assumptions’ that selectively shape and delimit perceptions, cognition and feelings (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). A change in perspective or frame of reference will result in a change in actions and behaviours (Cranton, 1994, p. 730). A *habit of mind* is a set of assumptions that act as a filter for interpreting a meaningful experience. It articulates a *point of view* – the expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and judgements that shape how we interpret and evaluate our learning experience. EP students have been socialised by broad swathes of Indonesian society to think that the learning experience in an alternative school

system such as EP, which may not be equivalent to the education that is offered in the mainstream school system. That socialisation may frame an individual's habit of mind, and may influence how a student views his/her learning experience in the EP. However, as frames of reference can be shared among students when they connect and communicate with each other, these may be different to assumptions held in other sectors of society.

Mezirow (2000) identified perspective transformation as moving through the following 10 phases:

1. Experiencing a disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examining feelings of guilt or shame
3. Assessing assumptions critically
4. Recognising that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared, and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploring options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Trying out new roles provisionally
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. Reintegrating into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 22)

Two encounters could be identified as crucial in the process of transformation: (i) an encounter with disorientation ('disorienting dilemma': Phase 1); and (ii) 'critical

self-reflection' (incorporating Phases 2 to 10). Phase 1, disorienting dilemma, describes an encounter with an experience that does not fit our expectations. It is something that often brings an 'emotional charge' to a situation (Mezirow, 1991, p. 94). The disorienting dilemma, to an extent, marks its own significance.

Phase 2, critical self-reflection, involves an examination of the factors that cause a change in a person's worldview (Phases 2 to 10). It refers to the process whereby the person attempts to justify their beliefs, either by rationally examining assumptions or challenging the validity of a way of thinking through discourse with others (Mezirow, 1995, p. 46). Mezirow (1991, 1994) argues that the central element of perspective transformation is critical self-reflection. This study expands on the process of transformation through discussions on the disorienting dilemma and two key aspects of critical self-reflection: (i) critical reflection; and (ii) reflective discourse. People who arrive at a change in a cognitive or rational way often encounter these three elements. In his early writings, Mezirow argued that the transformative process is both rational and cognitive.

Disorienting dilemma

A disorienting dilemma usually occurs when people face experiences that do not fit their expectations and do not make sense to them. This means they cannot resolve the dilemma without changing their viewpoint of the world. Disorienting dilemmas could result from 'death, illness, separation, divorce, children leaving home, failing an important examination or retirement' (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). Disorienting dilemmas can also result from an eye-opening discussion, book, poem or painting, or from efforts to understand a different culture with customs that contradict our previously accepted presuppositions. These dilemmas can be resolved by learning to

manage them more effectively (Mezirow, 1978b, p. 101). When these issues are resolved, self-development is signified.

King (2005) identifies a similar process. She proposes catalysts for change based on the situational needs of learners. In her *Transformative Learning Opportunities Model*, King identifies three events that could engage learners and educators in a transformative learning process: namely (i) personal challenges; (ii) professional opportunities; or (iii) social interactions with individuals who hold differing belief systems. Bennetts (2003) also identifies ‘possibilities of hope’ as triggering events or catalysts for transformative learning. Bennetts stresses that readiness to accept change depends on ‘contextually appropriate and timely opportunities that allow for possibilities of hope and the formulation of dreams’ (p. 474).

A new possibility for change was offered by Erickson (2007). He argues that in the disorienting dilemma phase of the process, the learners may find themselves in an ‘opportunity dilemma’ or ‘touchstone dilemma’. The opportunity dilemma offers new possibilities for individuals who imagine that it will happen. The touchstone or formative dilemma is a dilemma held and revisited, and resolved in the context of today’s actions and meaning-making capacity (p. 74). Erikson further argues that in the socialised self, the experience of the disorienting dilemma is something perceived as external to the individual learner. By contrast, in the self-authorized self, the individual frames the dimension of the dilemma. In the process of making meaning from the experience, the ‘socialised self’ undergoes a self-examination that is confirmed or informed by the values and expectations of others or the community,

and the 'self-authorized self' makes self-definition the principal reference point in learning or development.

Critical reflection

Critical reflection is at the heart of perspective transformation. It is a process oriented towards achieving the goal of transformative learning. This refers to the process whereby a person reflects upon and then justifies their beliefs. It refers to questioning the integrity of beliefs and assumptions based on prior experience (Taylor, 1998).

Reflection is the process by which we change our minds. It is also the process of turning our attention to the justification for what we know, feel, believe and act upon (Mezirow, 1995, p. 46). Learners will approach the reflection process as a response to an awareness of a contradiction in their thoughts, feelings and actions. I will explain the various types of reflection that guide the process of interpreting student experiences in my study.

Cranton (1994, pp. 33-35) categorises critical reflection into three areas: (i) content; (ii) process; and (iii) premise reflection. *Content reflection* examines the content of a problem. For example, a student returning to school after dropping out might ask him/herself about his/her decision for returning, '*Why should I come back to school? Is it useful for my future life?*' To ask questions is the beginning of the reflective process that seeks to find answers about one's fears about not being able to succeed or feeling uncomfortable about one's study skills. *Process reflection* is an attempt to find strategies for solving the problem that might be encountered during learning. The learners might ask themselves, '*Did I misinterpret what my teachers said?*' Finally, *premise reflection* takes place when the problem is questioned.

Returning students might ask themselves, '*Is it natural to feel a lack of acceptance in*

this school?' Cranton (1994) places an emphasis on premise reflection because it has the potential to change a habit of the mind. The returnees might revise their reactions to any new situation. The crucial issue is how they see themselves and how they come to see themselves in relation to others and the context of the learning.

Reflection can construct a reaction that leads to transformation, a change in a frame of reference or habit of the mind.

Reflective discourse

In the context of transformative learning theory, discourse is the use of dialogue with others, searching for common understanding and considering alternative perspectives or justifications for belief or interpretation. Discourse is used 'when learners have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms) or authenticity (in relation to feeling) of what is being asserted' (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). Multiple interactions with others allow learners to question their assumptions about their thoughts in relationship to situations. Reflective discourse involves critical assessments of assumptions that lead to a clearer understanding of the experience and a tentative best judgement.

Participation in discourse in transformative learning requires 'emotional intelligence', that is, knowing and managing one's emotions, motivating oneself, recognising emotions in others and handling relationships, as well as clear thinking (Goleman, 2014). Goleman further explains that this includes empathy (understanding others), social skills (adapting to desired responses to/from others), and self-regulation, which involves self-control and trustworthiness (maintaining standards of honesty and integrity). Mezirow (2012) explains that the generic role of

discourse in human communication implies certain conditions. To freely participate in discourse, participants must have the following:

- Appropriately accurate and complete information
- Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception
- Openness to alternative points of view: empathy and concern for how others think and feel
- The ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments
- Greater awareness of the context of ideas and more critically, reflectiveness of assumptions, including their own
- An equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse
- Willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgement as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgement (p. 80).

Although these conditions are ideal, they constitute a set of principles that may never be fully realised in practice. They imply what Bellah and others (1995 as cited in E. W. Taylor & Cranton, 2012) refer to as ‘democratic habits of the heart’: respect for others, self-respect, willingness to accept responsibility for the common good, and willingness to welcome diversity and to approach others with openness. Critical questioning of students, especially those who are in a disadvantaged situation, might happen through the sharing of experiences and values. A comfortable group atmosphere can act as a stimulant for critical questioning that leads to critical discourse (Cranton, 1994).

2.2.3 Major perspectives of transformative learning

This study aims to understand young people in the EP context in relation to how they find meaningful experiences while learning. It is undertaken through the lens of transformation or self-change. In my analysis of the findings, I use various major streams of theory and practice drawn from the literature of transformative learning. The first approach is a cognitive/rational one. Based on Mezirow's works, the cognitive/rational approach concentrates on the importance of rational thought and reflection in the process of transformation. The second approach constructs links between spirituality and learning, and values learning that arises through the interpretation of unconscious communication, metaphors, dreams and creative works (Dirkx, 1997, 1998; Healy, 2000). The third perspective emphasises a developmental approach. Daloz's (1986, 2012) examines the interplay between students' developmental transition and change. For Daloz, education helps students make sense of their lives. Through education, students negotiate their developmental transition and the process of self-change. The final approach is a social emancipatory approach drawn from Freire's (2000) notions of emancipatory education where students participate in 'conscientization' through which they learn to see the world differently, largely in relation to the operation of power in social relationships. I also make reference to a more recent and far-reaching perspective on transformation: a planetary ecological worldview of the need for a profound and transformative change in individual and social learning in response to looming ecological crises (O'Sullivan, 2012).

In the following sections, I will expand the explanation of different 'strands' of thought within the research and theory on transformative learning to communicate

a deeper understanding of its meaning and consequences. Importantly, these various approaches to transformative learning should be seen as complementary rather than conflicting (Imel, 1998). The journey of transformation can take place along different pathways because individual learners are different to each other.

Cognitive rational approach

The cognitive rational approach defines transformation as a consequence of critical reflection (Dirkx, 1998, p. 3). Central to this approach is the process of making meaning from a learner's day-to-day experiences through reflection and critical self-reflection. Within the cognitive rational approach, the core of the learning process is mediated largely through a process of reflecting rationally and critically on one's assumptions and beliefs. Thus, transformation involves a fundamental reordering of assumptions (Brookfield, 2000, p. 139). The goals of a rational approach is for greater personal autonomy and less dependence on false assumptions. Specifically, based on this approach, the outcome of transformative learning constructs learners who are open to other points of view, able to integrate differing dimensions of their experiences into meaningful relationships, able to differentiate various aspects of life, and are more inclusive in their perception of their world (Mezirow, 1991).

However, there are critics of the cognitive rational approach. The debate notes the failure to address social change (Cunningham, 1992), neglect of power issues (Hart, 1990), disregard for the cultural context of learning (Clark & Wilson, 1991) and overemphasis on rational thought (Dirkx, 1997). The alternative approaches, as discussed below, emerge from these criticisms.

Depth psychology approach

The depth psychology approach describes transformation as a process of individuation. The transformation based on this approach is a journey of coming to understand oneself through reflecting on the psychic structures that make up an individual's identity (Boyd, 1988; Cranton, 2000). It emerges from the works of Boyd (1988, 1994) who expanded the model of transformation based on the analytical (depth) psychology of Carl Jung. A Jungian approach to transformative learning embraces the concept of individuation. Stein (1998) explains:

Jung used a term 'individuation' to talk about psychological development, which he defines as becoming a unified but also unique personality, an undivided and integrated person. (Stein, 1998, p. 175)

Individuation involves a deeper understanding of one's inner self, a sense of empowerment and confidence and a greater sense of self-responsibility (Boyd, 1994). For Boyd, transformation as individuation means:

... fundamental change in one's personality that involves the ability to deal with a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration. (Boyd, 1989, p. 459)

Boyd's concept of transformation differs from Mezirow's cognitive rational approach. While Mezirow focuses on cognitive conflicts experienced by an individual's relationship with culture, Boyd focuses on conflicts within the individual's psyche. Thus, Mezirow's transformation is a result of critical reflection of assumption by the learner. Boyd explains that it is through the process of discernment that transformation will occur. The process of discernment leads to contemplative insight and personal understanding that enables life to be seen in relational wholeness. Boyd and Myers describe activities that can lead to such

discernment and transformation, such as *receptivity* (listening), *recognition* (recognising the need to choose) and *grieving* (self-talk and emotional crisis) (Boyd, 1988, p. 280). *Receptivity* is a process whereby a person becomes more open to the internal forces that are manifested in images, symbols and archetypes. Through receptivity, the person allows her/himself to interact with other ways of thinking. This allows the transformative journey to begin. *Recognition* leads to an acceptance of the value and truth of experience on the part of the person. The person encountering 'recognition' might lead her/himself to the third activity, *grieving*. Through the grieving process, transformation takes place in gradual acknowledgment of the loss of previous meaning perspectives. Within one's own psyche, a process of transformation is personal and extra-rational, focusing on the internal and subjective experience, leading to open dialogue with the Self. Among elements of transformation through this understanding are imagination, intuition and emotion (Dirkx, 2001).

The depth psychology approach to transformative learning explores the role of the unconscious (Dirkx, Mezirow, Cunningham, Scott, & Hart, 1993). The unconscious constitutes what we do not consciously know, in contrast to consciousness that refers to what we do consciously know. From this perspective, transformation will be possible through dialogue with the unconscious. The unconscious compensates the ego by manifesting itself in dream images and in other states in which the ego's control is reduced, such as emotional arousal (Dirkx, 2012). Jung defines 'ego' as a term that 'refers to one's experiencing oneself as a centre of willing, desiring, reflecting and acting' (Stein, 1998, p. 15). This emerges very early in our lives and develops while changes occur in relation to our egos, changes in

such elements as ‘cognition, self-knowledge, psychosocial identity, competence ...’ (p. 21). Transformative learning through individuation leads to an enlargement of ego-consciousness. It is through interactions between, and relationships with, both our inner and outer worlds. Thus, it is important to help learners to acknowledge the individuation processes of learning. This is achieved through decentring the ego and ego consciousness in the learning process and allowing inner selves greater expression and voice. This allows a deeper and more meaningful presence of the imagination and the spontaneous and semi-autonomous forces of the unconscious to gain voice (Dirkx, 2012, p. 117).

Young learners who experience learning as transformative through the process of individuation are those who make sense of their learning through their feelings and emotions, through images, and intuition. Disadvantaged youth who encounter this process may be those who experience difficult life situations, such as street children, beggars and young workers. Emotional crises in day-to-day life, such as how to deal with police patrols when street children sing for a living, open up dialogues with the internal self. This can give rise to a greater consciousness of the experience of being a street singer that can lead to a self-perception that constructs a better attitude within the self and carries through into social relationships.

Structural developmental approach

The structural developmental approach identifies transformation as development. Through the work of Daloz (1986), which focuses on adults returning to complete undergraduate degrees, a central framework is developed to understand transformative learning as growth. Daloz identifies adults who participate in formal learning experiences as finding themselves in the ‘in between’ phase of development,

where learners realise that their old meaning structure is no longer relevant to their life experiences. Thus, learners have to find new meaning structures that will help them make sense of their changing world. The developmental tasks of this period help learners to move towards a new construction of self. A *psycho-developmental* view of transformative learning emphasises an epistemological change over a behavioural change or quantity of knowledge. It appreciates the role of relationships, personal contextual influences and holistic ways of knowing (Daloz, 1986; Kegan, 1994).

Daloz's approach to transformative learning as developmental places a greater emphasis on holistic and intuitive processes than rational and reflective acts. It argues that through their lifespan, learners have the capacity to perceive, feel, understand, act, relate and know with new imagination (K. Taylor & Elias, 2012, p. 147). Indeed, a person's capacity to perceive and understand about her/himself may increase exponentially during the lifespan, but Daloz argues that there is a qualitative change that shows shifts, not just in meaning, but in the ways the person makes meaning (Daloz, 2012, p. 126). The argument, for this reason, based on Daloz's work, observes that people's growth is not merely a matter of physical maturation, but also mental and spiritual growth. Piaget (as cited in Daloz, 2012) also understands growth to be a result of the interaction between the individual and the environment. Piaget argues that growth involves the simultaneous interplay of both assimilations (by modifying the environment) and accommodation (by modifying themselves) as the organism adapts to its shifting environment. Intellectual growth proceeds similarly. A child develops an understanding of information from relatively simple, global and self-centred ways of making to increasingly complex and

differentiated forms as the world she/he encounters becomes more diverse and complicated.

Kegan's constructive developmental approach contributes to the explanation about the transformative learning process as development. Kegan (2000) considers transformational in learning as an epistemological change. Epistemology refers to 'not what we know but our way of knowing' (p. 52). Transformational learning, in Kegan's explanation, is learning 'aimed at changes in not only *what* we know but changes in *how* we know' (p. 49) This concept is different from informational learning which 'aims at increasing our fund of knowledge, at increasing our repertoire of skills, at extending already established cognitive capacities into new terrain' (p. 48).

There are two types of activities that are central to transformative learning: (i) *meaning forming* (the activity to shape meaning in our inner and outer experience); and (ii) *reforming our meaning forming* (a meta-process affecting our meaning-construction). Within this place, transformative learning refers to the liberation of efforts and designs that support changes in the learner's form of knowing. To illustrate the process of transformation, Kegan brings the story of Nora, a wife and mother who decided to leave her home, husband and children, and go on with 'her life' as a form of self-actualisation. Kegan refers to Nora's story of self-actualisation as transformative, 'as a process of moving aspects of her knowing from subject to object' (pp. 57-58).

The connection between learning and the developmental process is also echoed by Perry (1999). To develop a scheme for ethical and intellectual development of college students, Perry conducts a longitudinal study with Harvard

undergraduate students from 1954 to 1963. Accordingly, Perry outlines a nine-point scale of a developmental scheme in which each stage represents a different set of assumptions about knowledge and values, as detailed in the following nine points:

1. *Basic duality* – embrace unexamined assumptions to be polarised in the terms of we-right-good against others-wrong-bad.
2. *Multiplicity pre-legitimate* – believe that authority knows the real answer behind the diversity or multiplicity of opinions.
3. *Multiplicity correlate* – accept the diversity and uncertainty as legitimate, real and unavoidable, but not affecting the nature of truth.
4. *Relativism subordinate* – encounter qualitative contextual relativistic reasoning as a particular circumstance and in which the authority wants them to work.
5. *Relativism correlate* – start to think critically and perceive all knowledge and values to be contextual and relativistic.
6. *Commitment foreseen* – realise that in this relativistic world, people need to have a commitment to themselves, including purposes, activities, relationships and truth.
7. *Initial commitment* – decide who he is, or who he will be, in some important areas of his life.
8. *Orientation in implications of commitment* – acquire a level of experience in which their commitments have become apparent in greater significance over external forms.
9. *Developing commitment* – represent ‘a maturity in which a person has developed an experience of ‘who he is’ in his commitment, both in their content and in his style of living them’ (Perry, 1999, pp. 10-11).

The last stage of Perry's concept shows the learner's position of self-development as transformed. It is because the learner's experiences have 'settled' and he/she is committed to taking responsibility for learning. Thus, the developmental theory argues that transformative learning helps students to become wiser. For example, Weathersby (1981, as cited in Daloz, 2012, p. 129) found that the meaning of education for those in his study group developed from 'practically useful' to 'intrinsically valuable'. For instance, youth who drop out of school tend to return to school simply to acquire educational credentials to help them when applying for a job. However, it might be to their benefit to view education more broadly, for example, as a way to enhance their sense of competency and ability to achieve, and for this to be reflected in their personal sense of accomplishment. From the perspective of the growth and development approach, regardless of a learner's age, transformation can take its place as the proper aim of education, that is, education is the development of the 'whole person' of the learner, rather than knowledge acquisition, which can be demonstrated when learners show intellectual, emotional and ethical growth (Daloz, 2012).

Social emancipatory approach

The social emancipatory approach is a theory of transformative learning as *conscientization* or consciousness-raising (Freire, 1973). Critical consciousness refers to a process of developing the ability to analyse, pose questions and take action on social, political, cultural and economic circumstances that influence and shape learners' lives. It is through a dialectical relationship with each other (praxis) that learners can reflect on their world, thereby changing it. In this sense, transformative learning is emancipatory and liberating at both a personal and social level.

Transformative learning, from this approach, can be seen as an ideology critique (Brookfield, 2003, 2005). Giddens defines ideology as ‘shared ideas or beliefs that serve to justify the interest of dominant groups’ (Giddens, 1997, p. 583). Gramsci introduces the concept of ‘hegemony’ by referring to the way in which ‘ideology’ supports the status quo in maintaining power relationships. Throughout society, the values, attitudes, beliefs and morality of a dominant group is internalised within people as ‘commonsense’ and representing the natural order of things (Boggs, 1976, p. 39). Ideology is manifested in language, social habits and cultural forms that legitimise the educational practice. The school, according to Gramsci, can be experienced as a coercive or non-coercive institution. Some school practices, such as curriculum, national standards and qualifications are quite clearly coercive while the hidden curriculum is not (Burke, 2005). The learner, in this situation, has to recognise and learn how to challenge ideology and governing beliefs, recognise hegemony, unmask power and act on his/her own human response. The goal of freedom from ideological struggles is not limited to individual consciousness rising, but must expand into the practical processes of social transformation.

Ideological critique is appropriate for critical reflection on our own ‘economic, ecological, educational, linguistic, political, religious, bureaucratic or other taken-for-granted cultural systems’ (Mezirow, 1998, p. 193). Brookfield (2012) argues the purposes of critical reflection related to ideology critiques are investigating power relationship (between educators and learners) and uncovering hegemonic assumptions (e.g. opinions, conventional wisdom or commonsense ways of seeing and ordering the world that people take for granted). However, Freire

stresses that critique or reflection only becomes real when it is connected to action. Without social action, a critical reflection will be meaningless.

In this sense, transformative learning is close to Freire's idea of social transformation. Brookfield suggests that an awareness of the contradictions in society and a commitment to engaging in transformation could be fostered in classrooms. Four broad methods can be applied to fostering emancipatory transformative learning: (i) critical reflection with a purpose of rediscovering power and helping learners develop an awareness of agency; (ii) liberating approach to teaching couched in 'act of cognition not in the transferral of information; (iii) 'problem posing' and dialogical methodology; and (iv) horizontal student-teacher relationship where the teacher works in an equal manner with students (Brookfield, 2012).

Planetary view of transformative learning

Another approach to transformative learning is based on ecological consciousness (O'Sullivan, 2002). O'Sullivan argues that ecological consciousness reshapes student views, understanding and actions, thereby enhancing ecological sustainability and the quality of ongoing human life. He explains that people generate knowledge within and through relationships rather than individually. He argues that transformative learning is not only about humans or reflection upon themselves, but needs to incorporate an understanding of the relationship to the physical world in which people survive. O'Sullivan describes transformative learning through ecological consciousness:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. Transformative learning is a shift of consciousness that dramatically alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race,

and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to leaving; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan, 2002, p. 11)

The concept of transformative learning through ecological consciousness contributes three ideas to the educational process: (i) education for survival; (ii) education for critical understanding; and (iii) education for integral creativity (O'Sullivan, 2012, p. 166). The first concept, *education for survival*, means creating conditions for the continuance of living. In an effort to survive, a person often faces the dynamics of denial, despair and grief. Therefore, to be able to encounter transformative learning in a survival mode, a person needs to be able to deal with denial, despair and grief while learning. The second concept, *education for critical understanding*, is an approach to transformative learning that includes moments of resistance and critical pedagogy. Based on this moment, deep critical reflection is a way to examine our frame of reference about the modern world, saturation of commodity consciousness, and the nature of hierarchical power. The last concept, *education for integral creativity*, is a visionary transformative education that highlights the need to challenge the hegemonic culture of a market-oriented vision over a planetary vision. This requires a person to have a sufficient self-orientation to perceiving and addressing problems caused by environmental destruction.

Transformative learning via a planetary approach is an integrative process in which transformation incorporates all levels of personal, community, institutional, global and planetary views (O'Sullivan, 2012, p. 176). Transforming learning through a planetary approach has a sense of adventure and requires the learner to identify what he/she needs to learn to live well, ecologically, peacefully and justly, rather than finding fixed facts about learning and knowledge.

To summarise the major perspectives of transformative learning, I refer to Fisher-Yoshida and others (2009, pp. 7-10) who refer to differentiate processes within transformative learning. They describe the **cognitive rational approach to transformation** as a change in meaning perspective. They say that transformative learning involves a process of disorientation, critical reflection on assumptions, dialogue and action on new meaning perspectives. They describe the **depth psychology approach** as one that defines *transformation* as individuation, ‘a fundamental change in one’s personality involving conjointly the resolution of personal dilemmas and expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration’. *Transformative learning* for individuation involves an intuitive process of discernment and receptivity as images and symbols from the individual, and collective unconscious are integrated into our consciousness. They postulate that the **structural developmental approach** defines *transformation* as a shift to a different stage of development, sometimes conceptualised as a higher order of consciousness. *Transformative learning*, in this approach, occurs through confronting the limitations of our previous way of making meaning and exposure to other satisfactory forms. They describe the **social emancipatory approach to transformation** as the development of critical consciousness, and *transformative learning* as a continuing process of action, critical reflection and dialogue.

2.2.4 Learning outcomes of transformative learning

The outcomes of transformative learning often occur through social processes where learners gain an understanding of how social relationships and cultures have shaped their beliefs and feelings. There are many forms of transformative learning outcomes reported in the literature, including an empowered sense of self, an increase in self-

confidence in new roles and relationships, compassion for others, new connectedness with others (E. W. Taylor, 1997), informed actions, a broader and more differentiated perspective, increased personal autonomy and openness to learning (Mezirow, 1991), changes to self-understanding, changes in beliefs, and/or changes in actions (Clark & Wilson, 1991). In addition, other outcomes have been reported, including empowerment and spirituality (Scott, 1991), connectedness and emotional development, the ability to be critically reflective and dramatic change that is recognizable to oneself and others (Clark, 1993). Along with themes of greater awareness and appreciation, King (1988) identifies increases in self-esteem and self-confidence as significant transformative outcomes.

In line with the four major approaches to perspective transformation, as outlined in the previous sections, the outcomes of transformative learning relate to cognitive development, psychosocial change and social action. Cognitive development outcomes are more about perspective change, psychological change related to personal autonomy, and social action in Mezirow's concept related to informed action (Mezirow, 1991). *Perspective change* can include changes in epistemological assumptions that influence the outcome of learning to construct it as a broader, more inclusive, discriminating and permeable worldview (Mezirow, 1991). Through the activity of ongoing critical reflection, a person will achieve perspective change. Within the depth psychology approach, individuation constructs self-awareness as a perspective change (Boyd, 1994). By contrast, in the developmental approach, the reformulation of meaning perspective represents a specific kind of self-awareness, a more realistic view of self (Kegan, 2000).

Personal autonomy is the degree to which individuals are free from the constraints that guide action. According to Mezirow (2000), personal autonomy is a product and process of transformative learning, described as autonomy in thinking, and as a result, enhances autonomy in actions. *Informed action* is a key outcome of transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) explains that a change in meaning perspective is a guide to action that results in decisions, attitude changes, perspective changes and new ways of interacting with the environment, other people or oneself.

To sum up the link between the theory of transformative learning and young people's re-engagement in the learning experience, self-transformation in the second chance education context is specific. It is non-mainstream schooling that becomes transformative for young people if they are able to become autonomous and socially responsible thinkers. The value of learning, in this sense, is not to acquire knowledge and develop skills that may be difficult to achieve in the EP because of resource limitations (such as facilities, teachers and school financial support), but it is rooted in communication (critical discourse) in the way learners are able to explain and defend their beliefs, to assess evidence and reasons for these beliefs and to judge arguments. By considering what transformative learning has to do with a process of deep and complex personal change that involves various dimensions such as cognition, emotions, relationships and spirituality, I use a holistic approach in the present research. By doing so, I aim to gain a full and deep understanding of students' transformative learning experiences.

2.3 Critical pedagogy

To utilise a critical pedagogy framework is to address student's learning experiences and to examine personal and social changes. Freire's educational philosophy and praxis is emphasised because it works on the premise that every individual has valuable experiential knowledge and opinions, including those who are in marginalised positions. This pertains directly to students enrolled in EPs in three study sites examined in this project. Through Freire's pedagogical framework, this research approaches students' experiences for their potential to develop a critical consciousness that opens their minds to the liberating potential of education. The core elements are the philosophy of humanism and concept of *conscientization*: the transformation of consciousness from an acceptance of oppression/reality to a belief that reality can be changed.

2.3.1 Freire and humanism

Humanism is the philosophy of human nature. Freire argues that a human being is 'capable of transforming, of producing, of deciding, of creating, and of communicating' (Freire, 1998, p. 499). For Freire, a human is not an empty vessel. He believes that every human has the capacity to look critically at his or her world, therefore, they are called upon to humanise him/herself through naming the world through dialogical encounters with others.

Freire (2000) argues that human beings have the capacity to think and reflect which makes them distinct from animals. Humans are able to discover the contradictions inherent in social experiences and critically reflect upon how to transform them. They are also able to 'name the world' and to create their own history and future through their thought-language. For Freire, every human has the

potential for reflection, the ‘ontological vocation’ of being human. To be human is to be a subject, which is a person who has the ability, desire and opportunity to participate in social and political life. This optimistic view of human beings invites criticism of Freire’s philosophy. For example, Elias (1994) argues that human nature also has a dark side in which they can behave in a bad or anti-social manner. In saying this, he suggests that individual consciousness, external dynamics and unconscious factors determine human actions. Freire rejects this criticism by warning the oppressed not to duplicate the oppressor’s mentality (Freire, 2000).

2.3.2 Alienation or ‘objectification’

Indonesian disadvantaged youth often live in communities of poverty or social marginalisation that prevents them from educational experiences that could broaden their world. Often, they are isolated from interacting with society, which may inhibit their personal growth. This can be exacerbated by educational processes that are experienced by the disadvantaged group enrolled in the EP, an education channel introduced by the government to recognise the need for different educational practices. The students may experience isolation from other educational systems. Stereotypical biases expressed through labelling EP students as ‘at risk’ and ‘non-capable’ may lead to feelings of being ‘educationally deprived’.

The term ‘alienation’ supports theorising students in EP schooling systems because it captures the interaction between the individual agent and the larger social structure (Newman, 1981, as cited in Taines, 2012). Alienation is the dialectical negation of subjectivity that is separate from active human participation in the world. In this sense, the oppressed do not exercise their human capacities, either in the form of reflecting on ‘their lives, their experiences, their misery, or the reasons they find

themselves among the dominated’ (Frymer, 2005, p. 4). Objectification of potential subjects is a form of violence according to Freire (1998) in that it influences the human essence: psychological, existential, political and ontological. Teaching practices can reinforce alienation through the banking approach to education³, and teachers and the school community can act as an authoritarian control system with the potential to harm disadvantaged youth. In this regard, critical pedagogy recognises student alienation as a major concern, especially with disadvantaged students. Alienation will contribute to student disengagement from, and resistance to, learning⁴ in that it can impede their development of critical consciousness.

The concept of alienation has acquired sociological and psychological meanings. It encompasses notions of separateness, isolation and estrangement of individuals from the modern world (McInerney, 2009). Alienation occurs when students lack meaningful connections to their studies, when they see little relevance in the course content, and when they are effectively disconnected from other students (Martin, 2008, pp. 35-36). Since the majority of students in the EP previously left mainstream schooling because it was a painful experience for them, it is necessary to investigate whether their current learning in the EP alienates them in their second attempt or allows them to engage in schooling.

³ The ‘banking’ concept of education depicts education as an act of depositing in which the teacher is the depositor and the students are the depositories. In teaching and learning processes, students patiently receive, memorise and repeat what the teacher says or communicates. Thus, in the banking concept of education, knowledge is ‘a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing’ (Freire, 1998, p. 52).

⁴ A theory of resistance in critical pedagogy explains how disadvantaged youth choose to become resistant in their learning. Resistance within the education system is a result of ‘the social and material conditions in which the disadvantaged youth have been forced to survive and ideological formations that have been internalised in the process’ (Freire, 1998, p. 12).

Marx and Durkheim highlight unequal power relations and oppressive social and economic conditions as causes of alienation. In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx analysed various factors of human 'alienation' (Martin, 2004, as cited in McInerney, 2009). He conceptualised alienation as constituting a profound separation of individuals from their true human nature, natural experience of and relationships with themselves, environment, activities and others.

Drawing on Marx's theory of alienation, Freire locates a source of oppression within society and material conditions of people's lives. Although his initial writings refers to the oppression of the peasantry in Brazil, oppression is a global phenomenon. The oppression phenomenon includes those influenced by economic factors, and social and cultural forces, such as patriarchy and racism that operate through families, school, state, media and other agencies. In the Indonesian education context, Nuryanto (2006, p. 63) argues that oppression takes place through education institutions in the same way that governments encourage people to go to school, but they only receive 'deposits' of education. The learning process in education institutions is no more than a means of domesticating students. As a result, students do not have the capacity to transcend their limited situations. Furthermore, in the wider society, there is a contradiction in the quality of the EP in which it is often seen as 'less than' mainstream schooling. The factor that influences this view comes from the representation of student backgrounds. As the majority of EP students failed in mainstream schools, the label given to them as 'bad students' puts them among members of marginalised groups. This social dislocation can influence their self-identity. According to Freire, marginalised students can respond to the situation by liberating themselves from the conditions that subjugate them.

To enable this to occur, critical pedagogy involves radical examination of existing ideologies and practices of education (Pangilinan, 2009). Freire does not separate education from the wider social context in which it exists. For example, the way a teacher teaches, the methods used in delivering knowledge and relations of student teachers are all political because they contribute to either liberating or domesticating⁵ the student. The EP, as a second chance mechanisms, has its own ideologies and practices that have emerged in its manifest and hidden curriculum. The manifest curriculum is more about a ‘good thing’ that comes from the EP, such as the EP structure that enables individuals to actualise opportunity. The hidden curriculum of second chance education, however, leads to some troubling ‘psychological’ deductions for learners (Gordon, 1990). Possible aspects of the hidden curriculum of second chance mechanisms, as mentioned by Gordon, are: (i) everything is negotiable; (ii) there are no standards; and (iii) there are no absolutes given the low credit attached to this type of education. This hidden curriculum may act as a form of alienation in second chance schooling as young people who were previously familiar with mainstream school culture may find it very different.

The hidden curriculum in mainstream schooling in Indonesia include *prestasi* (performance, recognition and achievement), *disiplin* (discipline) and *mandiri* (independence). The mainstream school teaches young people to be competitive and to meet the set standard and discipline rather than being negotiable. This may lead

⁵ In domesticating education, the learner is conditioned into a passive receiver and anti-intellectual with the teacher actively transferring facts and skills instead of inviting students to think critically about ‘subject matter, doctrines, the learning process itself and their society’ (Shor, 1993, p. 25). By contrast, in Freire’s pedagogy, students experience education ‘as something they do, not as something that is done to them’ (p. 26).

young people in the EP to find the ethos, values and culture of the school different to what they experienced in their former schooling. As a result, they might feel alienated (e.g. normlessness and powerlessness).

In order to liberate themselves from alienation and their oppressed condition, Indonesian EP students have to find their own voice. The oppressed are not 'marginal'; they are not people living outside society. Oppressed people have always been inside the structure that has oppressed them into 'being for others.' Thus, it is important for them to transform that structure to become 'beings for themselves' (Freire, 2000). Based on Freire's idea, this research examines the possibility of Indonesian EP students transforming themselves to restore education's essential human nature. Freire emphasises the importance of oppressed students' critical awareness in the process of their liberation. Critical capacities allow disadvantaged students to become conscious beings who understand how the EP system works and how it affects their future lives.

2.3.3 Conscientization

Another key element of critical pedagogy is the concept of critical consciousness. Student consciousness of the learning experience can be observed in the way they perceive their existence, that is, whether they see it naively, superstitiously or critically. The concept of critical consciousness describes how oppressed or marginalised people learn to analyse critically their social conditions and act to change them (Roderick, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Critical consciousness was developed to help disadvantaged youth overcome structural constraints on human agency, or to serve as a 'preventive' measure to structural oppression (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). According to Freire (1973), the development of

critical consciousness involves people moving through a series of stages of consciousness; magical, naïve or critical. He called this ‘conscientization’.

The first of these is *semi-intransitive or magical consciousness*, characterised by naivety rather than critical consciousness. People with this type of consciousness view their life conditions as inevitable, given, natural and impervious to change. People also often view poverty and oppression as an unavoidable fate and a normal condition, rather than as the product of human action and abnormality. They cannot investigate contradictions within society and problematise the daily life situation as a ‘given’. People in this form of consciousness are characterised by a fear of change, resignation, accommodation and conformity. Freire concludes: ‘Magic consciousness is characterised by fatalism, which leads men to fold their arms, resigned to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts’ (Freire, 1973, p. 44). Connecting to my study, students in this stage of consciousness are not able to see the meaningful experience in the EP. Thus entering an EP is perceived as their destiny due to the position of becoming poor people who only deserve a second class education. Under these circumstances, educational channels for marginalised youth are seen as a ‘given’ and those oppressed by the situation tend to accommodate the experience they receive in the EP without the courage to make meaningful value of it.

The second form of consciousness is *naïve or semi-transitive*. At this stage of consciousness, people understand the contradictions and problems in the social context, but do not investigate them thoroughly. This is because they begin to understand if they become subjects, but it is only partly so because they do not yet know reality in the true act of knowing. In this sense, students understand that

poverty has channelled them to an EP, but they never criticise the educational system as a vehicle for grouping them into the same ‘hole’ as a marginalised group.

The final stage is *critical transitivity* where people demonstrate the ability to think and reflect critically on the conditions that shape their lives. Such people are also able to work collectively to change oppressive conditions based on critical insight. Students in this level of consciousness have more self-confidence and openness to other ideas. They also tend to view learning experiences in an optimistic way rather than passive and apathetic. The idea comes from self-understanding that an opportunity exists, as evidenced among students who comment on their learning in the EP but value it as being available.

The transition from naive to critical consciousness involves an active dialogical educational program (Freire, 2000) where people are actively involved in formulating critical analyses and generating scenarios of alternative ways of being. However, exploitation and oppression in life situations lead to the development of *adapted consciousness* rather than critical consciousness. Adapted consciousness refers to a state where ‘a person accommodates to conditions imposed on them and acquires an authoritarian and a critical frame of mind’ (Freire, 2000). This constitutes a situation of ‘democratic inexperience’ in which oppressed people have a lack of confidence to challenge situations and the ability to conceive alternative actions.

In the process of *conscientization* or moving into the critical consciousness stage, Darder (1995) states that students might experience an epiphany when they engage in opportunities to surround themselves with members of their cultural community. This engagement is important because members of the same cultural community can serve as ‘critically conscious people with whom the students can

identify and interact' (p. 41). The classroom environment can then provide awakening moments for students to begin the process of *conscientization*. The following statement by Darder (1995) addresses this process:

The bicultural voice is awakened through a critical process of dialogue and reflection within the context of the classroom, when students find opportunities to reflect together on their common lived experiences, their personal perceptions of the bicultural process, and their common responses to issues of cultural domination, alienation, resisting, negotiation, and affirmation. (p. 42)

To explore the process, Freire (1973) explains that students will experience consciousness through three components: (i) self/reflection; (ii) others/dialogue; and (iii) action/transformation.

Self-reflection

A decision of *conscientization* is a process of constant *self-reflection* (Berta-Avila, 2003, p. 123). It is uniquely a 'human process' that is made possible by a person's ability to reflect upon his/her reality and connect it to the world. Reflection may happen when students realise they can be owners of their reality, experiencing both joy and pain in learning. This moment becomes a point of the relieving process. A legitimate sense of anger overwhelms students and allows them to place into context the injustices they experience (Freire, 1998). For many, this anger becomes a fire of motivation that 'fuels the desire to resist, create change and continue the flight'(Berta-Avila, 2003). Freire (1998) states that it is understandable to have this anger, but students cannot let it get out of control. If anger controls the situation, students are not allowing space for reflection, possibly demonstrating reactionary as opposed to critical attitudes. When anger is processed and released, students can

come to an understanding of who they are in this world. Coming to terms with this new understanding helps them to open up their hearts, spirits and minds to love.

Freire (1998) further states that to understand life is an objective of the *conscientization* process. It is important to identify what students want out of life in relation to educational experiences in the EP and recognise that it will be forever unfinished because the world and our reality are in constant change. By practising a life of *conscientization*, students can open their eyes to comprehend who they were, who they are, and who they will be (Paive, 1992, cited in Berta-Avila, 2003). In short, critical reflection refers to a social analysis and moral rejection of social inequities, such as social, economic, racial/ethnic and gender inequities that constrain well-being and human agency. Those who are critically reflective view social problems and equalities in systemic terms (Roderick et al., 2011).

In the Indonesian context, the practice of reflection for liberation rarely happens in social institutions such as schools, because the culture of silence is influenced by hegemonic practices: rule by consent, by virtue of moral and intellectual authority (Nuryanto, 2006, p. 62). The political and ideological consensus through the manifest of the dominant curriculum tries to secure the spontaneous consent of subordinate groups, that is, learners. The socialisation of morals, values and cultural practices of the dominant society in schools are internalised. As a result, students see it as ‘commonsense’. Arguably, as a religious society, Indonesia (90% Muslims) is open to Freire’s idea of liberation as the basis for education (Hermawan, 2001; Ibhar, 1993; Susanti, 2002; Warid, 1996). In Islam, liberation is a key element of teaching. Its etymologically means submission, surrendering or servitude. However, Hanafi (1995, as cited in Nuryanto 2006, p. 84)

extends its meaning to ‘a protest, an opposition and a revolution’. The idea of liberation that is manifested in critical reflection is practised in the educational sectors of Muslim society, and is not alien to the Islamic tradition.

Others/dialogue

The next essential component, *dialogue among students*, demonstrates a commitment to others and the world. Dialogue becomes a praxis that encourages students to act with humility and to engage with others in the act of knowing and thinking about the world (Collins, 2000). Listening is also part of the dialogue because it recognises the existence of others. It is important to remember, as Freire (1998) proposed, that the ideas and experiences of some individuals are not the only ones that exist. By listening, students work towards fostering an environment where all who engage can claim their authentic voice. In this way, a praxis that transpires from discussion, dialogue and listening becomes a frame of mind in which students serve as agents of humanity.

However, in the Indonesian context, Sudiarja (2003, as cited in Nuryanto, 2006) argues that a tradition of indoctrination in education is still the norm in contemporary Indonesia. For instance, the educator does not leave the room for dialogue with his/her students. As a result, people uncritically accept such teachings and internalise its practice as truth. This study, however, is trying to discover if there is any process of *conscientization* in the EP setting, such as finding a student’s different meaning of his/her schooling experience.

Action/transformation

The last component, *action/transformation*, helps students understand the factors that inhibit them so they can work towards transforming them. Students who are at this

point of *conscientization* can allow their actions to speak for themselves and demonstrate their sincerity and humility. Action is the perceived capacity to effect social and political change by individual and/or collective activism. If people feel that they can create change, they are more likely to engage in critical action. Critical action refers to an individual or collective action taken to change unjust policies and practices in society. However, it is important to note that a student's action partly depends on what the student experiences in classrooms. Using critical pedagogy as a framework, I will argue that a student's decision to re-enter education is the result of *conscientization*, and critical consciousness is a significant factor in arriving at this decision. Some factors, such as cultural considerations (e.g. a family and society valuing education as a basic human need and viewing it as obligatory), the influence of peers in a previous school and the influence of limited employment opportunities, especially in rural areas, may motivate students to return to education. However, a student's decision resulting from self-consciousness can recognise the opportunities and constraints to education.

2.3.4 Language of possibility

Critical pedagogy is a reason for constructing a 'language of critics' in education and a 'language of possibility'. Freire argues that education could be a space for liberation, even within the most limiting circumstances (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 72). Thus, Kincheloe calls Freire a 'critical pedagogy's prophet of hope'. Like Freire, Bloch (1991) defines 'hope' ontologically: 'Not only a basic feature of human consciousness, but, concretely grasped, a basic determination within objective reality as a whole' (p. 7). He argues that if hope remains 'uneducated', without the guidance of how to formulate 'informed discontent', it can become a dangerously abstract

form of fantasy, which he called ‘fraudulent hope’ (i.e. ideology). The role of education from Bloch’s perspective is to enable people to develop a critical hermeneutics of everyday life and to learn habits of ‘educated hope’. Similarly, Giroux (2003) connects a critical pedagogy of educated hope to political action. In his view,

Hope is one of the preconditions for individual and social struggle, the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites, and the mark of courage on the part of intellectuals in and out of the academy who use the resources of theory to address pressing social problems. (Giroux, 2003, p. 98)

Based on a critical pedagogy perspective, the main agenda of the EP is to develop critical consciousness among marginalised youth. It aims to help students understand their existential reality in a more critical way, to increase self-confidence and provoke them to see self-capacity and maintain self-identity to open up future possibilities and opportunities.

2.4 Learning for perspective transformation: Between Freire and Mezirow

Section 2.4 presents some similarities and differences between Freire’s critical consciousness and Mezirow’s transformative learning. It aims to highlight the relationship between educational, personal and social changes that come from both perspectives. Brookfield (2003) states that transformative learning is required for critical pedagogy to make an impact.

Transformation in learning emerged from the works of Freire (1973) and Mezirow (1991) as they sought to create social change for oppressed people through education (Christopher et al., 2001, p. 134). Their goal is to assist learners in gaining knowledge. Freire and Mezirow believe that transformative learning will promote

student self-awareness and freedom. Self-awareness is necessary to help students to create social equity for the oppressed and for learning to occur. Freire and Mezirow view critical reflection as central to transformation in the context of a learner's development.

Despite the similarities, some scholars find differences in Freire's and Mezirow's views of transformation in learning. Mezirow's transformative learning correlates with personal experiences (confronting epistemic and psychologically distorted assumptions), while Freire's *conscientization* approaches it as social experiences (Christopher et al., 2001; Cunningham, 1992). For example, Newman (2012) is interested in the contrast between Freire's consciousness and Mezirow's identity. Learners, as Newman argues, emerge from the process with a new role (e.g. from life-parent, plumber, artist, village head and extrovert) and identity: a new perspective upon the self. By contrast, *conscientization* is conceived as a collective activity in which learners shift from unthinking, unspoken acceptance of things as they are, to articulate and passionate participation in a world they can change (Daloz, 2000, pp. 42-43).

Furthermore, Cunningham (1992) stresses that for Mezirow, a transformation is first and foremost a personal experience that empowers people to reintegrate (not question dominant assumptions). His critical reflection stresses personal transformation through a person's beliefs, specific knowledge, value judgement and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience. Tennant (1993, as cited in E. W. Taylor, 1998) also argues that perspective transformation is a change in the perspective of the individual and that Mezirow gives little attention to the influence of the social forces that shape people's lives and development.

However, for Freire, transformation is clearly a social experience. By the very act of transformation, society is transformed. Integration and adaptation are only two ways for humans to relate to the world. Integration encompasses the critical capacity to act in the world as a ‘subject’ but adaptation is an ‘object’ acted upon by the world. Freire is concerned about how oppressed people learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and take action against their oppressive element. For Freire, education is never neutral:

It is either domesticated by imparting the values of the dominant group so that learners assume things are right the way they are or liberates, allowing people to reflect critically upon their world and take action to change society towards a more equitable and just vision. (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007)

To sum up, I refer to Taylor (1998) who notes that the two perspectives offer broad viewpoints on the relationship between education and personal/social change. There are two models of change, one emphasises change associated with the Self and the other emphasises change associated with the Self in relationship to society. Thus, according to my research, the focus on disadvantaged student schooling and learning experiences will emphasise a personal self-awareness and the need to make a change in relation to social action.

2.5 Conclusion

The theories of transformative learning and critical pedagogy are useful lenses to examine for identifying the possibility of disadvantaged students witnessing transformative experience in the EP. In particular, the transformative learning theory informs the principal research question: *How do disadvantaged students engage with alternative schooling?* Based on this theory, every student can make their own

meaning of the process of re-engagement in learning because each has the capacity to examine their own experiences. The philosophical underpinning of this assumption is based on constructivist, which suggests that people can create their own meaning through interaction with others, experience and context/environment rather than through the influence of external forces. In the process, students may encounter ‘a disorienting dilemma’ – an experience that does not fit their expectation – before it comes to the process of ‘critical self-reflection’, an examination of perspectives and value judgements.

To give meaning to the experience, to change perspective and to become an autonomous and socially responsible thinker, transformative learning acknowledges individual differences. Thus, the theory of transformative learning provides a different explanation about the transformation in learning. Learners are able to see their learning as transformation through different processes and the result includes learning through critical reflection, individuation, self-development or growth, and consciousness-raising.

To shape transformative learning, students need to understand social, political and economic contradictions, and take action against their oppressive characteristics. In doing so, they have to exercise their capacity to become a ‘subject’ rather than an ‘object’. In other words, learners have to liberate themselves from any alienation that may arise while learning. In this matter, the core element of critical pedagogy, namely *conscientization*, provides an explanation as to how marginalised people learn to critically analyse their social conditions and act to change them. Critical pedagogy is concerned with the social dimension of learners’ development.

Transformative learning theory and critical pedagogy also provide the lens through which data collection and analysis is conducted. During data collection, participants are asked to reflect critically on their learning experiences in the EP in relation to the point of entry, experience upon entering the EP and while learning. From the stories of student experiences, the aim is to identify processes that are creating self or group transformation among disadvantaged students. Four questions asked to identify student transformation include: (i) *How do you engage with the different ways of learning?* (ii) *How do you value your school?* (iii) *What is your experience when participating in school activities?* and (iv) *What is your expectation after graduation?*

Furthermore, critical consciousness and reflective discourse require students to think critically about how their experiences in the EP can be improved: *What aspects in this program need to be improved? How can the EP be improved?* Thus, I further identify the processes and self-reflection involved in a student's transformative journey. The key concept to be harnessed from these two theories is 'perspective transformation/change'. The study develops from the assumption that EP students have the capacity to examine critically assumptions, values and oppression as a result from their experience. Through perspective transformation, students come to challenge those assumptions, and then take charge of their learning by reformulating assumptions and liberating themselves from an oppressive experience of reality. The new perspective is, necessarily, inclusive and integrative.

Chapter 3 reviews relevant literature for this study. The EP in Indonesia as alternative schooling differs compared to other countries that provide similar schooling systems. Therefore, in the literature review, I describe the different notions

of providing non-mainstream educational approaches, such as alternative education, second chance education and non-formal education. The purpose is to establish well-defined axes that situate thinking about the EP in which student participants in this study are located. Chapter 3 concludes with previous studies on ‘at-risk’ youth and how they engage in alternative school.

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of schooling experiences in the Indonesian EP and to identify their self-transformation in learning. Transformative learning and critical pedagogy are theoretical lens used in this study to analyse the meaning of student experiences through the student's own perspectives. This chapter provides a review of relevant literature dealing with topics of non-mainstream educational provision. The main purpose is to provide an overview of how the Indonesia EP links to similar systems of educational provision around the world. In doing so, Chapter 3 sets the context of the Indonesia EP and continues with an overview of comparable EPs in the regions. The overview of the literature on non-mainstream educational provision throughout the world is to provide an understanding of the research field globally. Three broad sections are reviewed.

The *first* section sets the context by providing a description of the Indonesia EP. The EP in Indonesia is part of non-formal education that is specially designed for children and adolescents who are not in formal schooling. It provides alternative education pathways outside the mainstream, but recognises formal schooling. EP has been extensively implemented in South and Southeast Asian countries to improve basic educational standards by providing Education for All (EFA). The *second*

section examines similar programs in selected countries in the regions to provide a comparative basis for understanding the diversity of similar programs.

The *third* section discusses the issue of providing non-mainstream education as a broad concept *vis-a-vis* mainstream education. The literature shows variations in the terminology of non-mainstream education for out-of-school youth used interchangeably among countries. The notions of non-formal education, alternative education and second chance education are often used and relevant in order to establish well-defined axes along which to situate thinking about the EP in Indonesia. The section also discusses empirical research studies that were conducted on non-mainstream education. In the fields of alternative education (the majority in America and Australia) and second chance education, these empirical research studies cover student experiences of learning and schooling. Unfortunately, in the area of non-formal education, few studies are based on the perspective of the students themselves.

3.2 Indonesian equivalency program

The EP in Indonesia is non-formal education that includes Package A (equivalent to PS), Package B (equivalent to JSS) and Package C (equivalent to SSS). Under the Asia-Pacific Program of Education for All (APPEAL) launched in 1987 by UNESCO, the EP is defined as an alternative form of education equivalent to an existing formal general or vocational education program. This alternative education is specially designed for children and adolescents aged six to 17 years who are not enrolled in formal schools, dropped out from school or who cannot go to school.

The reasons that prevent them from attending school and becoming the target group of the EP may include: (i) difficult geographical terrain, such as minorities living in isolated areas; (ii) poverty affected persons, such as street children, rural poor and urban slum people; (iii) socio-religious factors, such as students attending Islamic boarding schools with no formal education service; and (iv) time factors, such as employment, committed to sports and those who possess special talents and cannot participate in regular fixed time schooling (Directorate General of Non Formal and Informal, 2010). The target groups can be school-age and beyond school-age populations who need to finish basic compulsory education or gain acknowledgement through the non-formal stream.

The legal basis of the EP is the National Constitution (1945), Article 31, Clauses 1 and 2 which state that all citizens have a right to education and the government is obliged to provide it. Further, the Indonesian Education System (Law No. 20, 2003, Clauses 1 and 5) mentions that every citizen should receive an education without discrimination to enhance his/her educational ability in the process of lifelong education. To ensure equal service of a highly heterogeneous Indonesia, Article 21, Clause 2 in the Indonesian Education System Law further mandates providing special education for citizens living in remote, less developed and isolated areas, victims of natural disadvantage, suffer from social deficiencies and those who are economically disadvantaged.

Indonesia's evolving vision of non-formal education was influenced subsequently by the Report of the International Commission on Education in the 21st Century, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (UNESCO, 1996). The conceptualisation of non-formal education has shifted in that it now covers education for children and

adults who are outside the formal education system. The Jomtien World Declaration (1990) and the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All (2000), which Indonesia signed, show the commitment of the Indonesian government to achieve EFA goals and targets. Indonesia provides the EP to meet education for all, especially for children who had no access to formal schooling.

The Indonesia EP is part of the non-formal education subsystem. According to Education Law, No. 20, 2003, there are three education subsystems in Indonesia: (i) formal education system (consisting of six years elementary school, three years junior secondary school and three years in senior secondary school and higher education); (ii) non-formal education; and (iii) informal education (family education). In Article 26, Law No. 20, 2003, non-formal education in Indonesia replaces, complements and/or supplements formal education in the frame of supporting life-long education. Non-formal education is provided for community members who need education services. Non-formal education comprises of life skills, early childhood, youth, women empowerment, literacy, vocational training and internship, EP and other kinds of education aimed at developing a learner's ability.

EP grading is equivalent to the formal general and vocational secondary level, as shown in Figure 3.1. Hence, transfers should be able to occur between the formal system and its non-formal equivalent. The content standard of the EP is legalised through Ministry Decree No. 14/2007, which contains a basic framework and curriculum structure. The curriculum of these programs includes: (i) school curriculum equivalent to minimal competency in primary and secondary education; and (ii) school curriculum stressing the acquisition of functional skills and abilities to

create one's own work. The functional skills in the curriculum are optional (UNESCO, 2013b); they cover subjects such as a work ethos, home economics, local economics and income generating skills (Directorate General of Non Formal and Informal, 2010).

Usia/ Age	Pendidikan Sekolah <i>School Education</i>		Pendidikan Nonformal dan Informal Education <i>Non-formal and Informal Education</i>	
			<i>Non-formal</i>	<i>Informal</i>
>22	Perguruan Tinggi/ PTAI Pascasarjana	<i>Higher Education/ Islamic HE Post Graduate</i>		
19 - 22	Perguruan Tinggi/ PTAI Sarjana/Diploma	<i>Higher Education/ Islamic HE Graduate/Diploma</i>		
16 - 18	Sekolah Menengah Atas <i>General</i> MA <i>Islamic</i> General	Kejuruan <i>Vocational</i> SMK <i>Vocational</i> MAK <i>Islamic</i> <i>Vocational</i>	Magang <i>Apprenticeship</i> Paket C <i>Package C</i>	Kursus Pendidikan Keluarga
13 - 15	MTs <i>Islamic Junior</i> <i>Secondary School</i>	SMP <i>Junior</i> <i>Secondary School</i>	Paket B <i>Package B</i>	
7 - 12	MI <i>Islamic</i> <i>Primary School</i>	SD <i>Primary School</i>	Paket A <i>Package A</i>	
4 - 6	BA/RA <i>Islamic</i> <i>Kindergarten</i>	TK <i>Kindergarten</i>	Kelompok Bermain <i>Play Group</i>	
0 - 3			Taman Penitipan Anak <i>Childcare Center</i>	

Source: Curriculum Centre, MOEC (as cited in UNESCO, 2006b)

Figure 3.1 Educational system in Indonesia based on Law No. 20, 2003

The EP is flexible in terms of time, period, curriculum, pedagogy, venue and language (UNESCO, 2013b). Flexible learning strategies are inclusive interventions

that support children educationally excluded from acquiring learning experiences and competencies that meet their needs and circumstances. The flexible aspect can include mother-tongue instructions and adopting teaching methodologies, such as mobile teaching, distance learning, multigrade teaching and flexible hours of teaching and learning. Under specific student circumstances, such as children who work, it can be highly appropriate to their living or work condition because it is designed to maximise contact time between teachers and learners. The multiple entry system also provides greater flexibility for transferring to an EP after dropping out from formal education. It enables learners to leave an EP and re-enter it after submitting their portfolio and achievements are reached during their absence. This system provides opportunities for those who have not achieved academically to join an EP by taking the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) test. This assesses the current knowledge and skills of the candidates. Based on successful test results, candidates can join the relevant level of the EP.

Learning evaluation can be carried out by a tutor (teacher) through a written test, portfolios, projects and performances. The Assessment Centre, Office of Research and Development, MOEC conducts the national examination (*Ujian Nasional Pendidikan Kesetaraan/UNPK*). Subjects tested in the national examination include: (i) *Package A* (Civics, Mathematics, Social Studies, Indonesian Language and Science); (ii) *Package B* (Civics, Mathematics, Social Studies, Indonesian Language, English and Science); (iii) *Package C Social Studies* (Civics, Indonesian Language, English and Science); (iv) *Package C Science* (Civics, Mathematics, Indonesian Language, Physics, Chemistry and Biology); and (v) *Package C Language* (Civics, Indonesian Language, English, Anthropology,

Indonesian Literature and another foreign language (optional)). The purpose of the national examination is to authorise the equivalency of non-formal education qualifications of graduates with qualifications of graduates from the formal education system.

In previous years, the UNPK was held in May and October, and learners who take the second schedule can find it difficult to re-enter formal schooling due to the formal academic school year starting in July every year. However, to provide for easier re-entry into mainstream education after completing the EP starting from the 2015 academic year, the UNPK is now held after the *Ujian Nasional/UNAS* (formal school national examination). The new consideration also aims to accommodate mainstream school students who failed the UNAS but want to re-sit the national examination through UNPK (Pranyono, 2015). To provide an easy transfer, the EP curriculum needs to fulfil the elements of *comparability* and *credit transfer* to provide an equivalent standard between the EP and mainstream school (UNESCO, 2012). The former relates to EP curricula that must be comparable or equivalent to formal education curricula in all aspects, for example, in learning outcomes, content areas, forms of teaching and evaluation and certification, which is related to the need for knowledge, skills and learning experiences obtained from the EP to be readily transferable to formal education or other non-formal education programs.

Community learning centres (CLC or Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat/PKBM) implement the EP. The five CLC characteristics in Indonesia are: (i) *Balai Pengembangan Kegiatan Belajar* (BPKB), a technical service owned and managed by the Department of Education at the province level; (ii) *Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar* (SKB), a centre for learning activities, owned and managed by the

Department of Education at the district level; (iii) *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat* (PKBM), a non-formal education institution belonging to and managed either by local government at the sub-district level or by the local community through social organisations, religious institutions and other community-based organisations; (iv) *Pondok Pesantren* (a religious boarding school), an Islamic institution that provides formal and non-formal education under the supervision of the MORA; and (v) *Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat* (LSM), a non-government organisation.

Non-formal educational institutions have different characteristics from government-owned or community initiatives that influence the characteristics of teachers and tutors of the EP. In many CLCs, tutors belong to the local community, however, they usually have limited training and preparation. Some may be volunteers who lack formal qualifications, receiving minimal compensation. Most training courses for tutors are short-term, which affects their performance of teaching. However, in government institutions, tutors are government employees who are well paid and have more responsibility in program implementation.

3.3 Equivalency program in the regions

Since the UNESCO APPEAL in 1993 emphasised the EP as an alternative education program equivalent to existing formal or vocational education, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region share their experiences in this type of education. The rationale for developing the EP in the Asia-Pacific region is that many countries have large populations of low literacy rates and limited access to formal education (UNESCO, 2010).

In most countries in Southeast Asia, the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) administers EPs to be used as a less formal method of education than the formal school system. The characteristics of non-formal approaches adopted by most EPs differ from the more traditional practice in formal secondary or vocational schools. However, every country has its own policy on education and legislation relating to EPs. For example, Indonesia and Thailand recognise the right to education and enact specific legislation for the provision of EPs, while others only have the latter, such as Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Cambodia. Malaysia, on the other hand, has yet to place an EP within a constitutional or legislative framework in which the program is to be developed by local NGO with government support.

The level of education offered in the EP among Southeast Asian countries shows variation. For example, in countries that have not attained universal primary education, the EP exists at the primary school level. However, some countries provide the EP to the secondary school level because this is where they are most needed by the majority of UNESCO members from Asia and Pacific countries. Some EPs prepare learners for formal school examinations, while others establish their own national examination outside the formal school national examination (UNESCO, 1993).

In **India**, the EP is implemented through the Open Basic Education (OBE) program to reach people who cannot access the formal school system. Since 2002, the Government of India has recognised the OBE as a program that is equivalent to formal schooling from primary to senior secondary level (UNESCO, 2006a, p. 7). The program has Levels A, B and C, which are equivalent to formal school classes 3, 5 and 8 respectively. Similar to Indonesia EP, the OBE program has fewer rules than

formal schools in terms of prerequisite and student ages, as well as a fewer number of subjects taught. Furthermore, the teaching and learning process can be delivered through the use of mother-tongue languages. Target learners of the OBE program are disadvantaged groups, such as women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, daily wage earners and those living below the poverty line. OBE learners are adults and children. Adults attend the program after dropping out of formal schooling, while children take part as their first choice of schooling. Thus, learners are divided into two age groups: (i) children 6 to 14 years; and (ii) adults 15 years and older (UNESCO, 2006b, p. 224).

The curriculum for children up to 14 years of age is similar to formal school education to ensure a move to a formal school once students complete the OBE program. However, to accommodate the different backgrounds of learners, the OBE curriculum adds specific topics for adult learners, such as good parenting and vocational skills. Other basic learning subjects consist of language(s), mathematics, science and social science as an academic subject in order to qualify for a certificate. Each subject is allocated a study time of 100 hours, which consists of 50 hours for guided learning conducted at continuing education centres, including non-governmental organisations, government bodies and government-aided institutions, and 50 hours for self-learning. Furthermore, the OBE program has been designed to allow flexible times for the final examination. If learners are ready to take their final examination, they can do so under the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The Indian government recognises an OBE certificate is equivalent to a mainstream school for entering secondary school, higher education and employment.

Most OBE programs are run by accredited NGOs. In 2012, 410 NGOs conducted the programs in local communities (Morpeth & Creed, 2012, p. 206) for many out-of-school children and youth. Children and youth enrolled in the programs increased from 186,000 students in 2000/01 to 419,000 in 2009/10. They also completed the OBE courses. Between 2004 and 2009, 245,473 students completed the programs and transferred to formal school and the NIOS secondary provision. However, it attracted some criticisms when some organisations tried to obtain extra funding from students for tuition fees or examination costs (p. 207).

Non-formal education programs in **Thailand** are supported by the National Education Act 1999, Article 10, which states that people have equal rights and opportunities to receive at least 12 years of basic education. Thailand's Ministry of Education began regulating non-formal education in 2003 when applying the national basic education curriculum for support (UNESCO, 2013a). The EP in Thailand includes primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. Similar to India, EP learners in Thailand come from various underprivileged backgrounds, such as industrial workers, members of hill tribes, homeless children and teenagers, conscripts, prisoners, people with physical disabilities and Thai people living overseas (UNESCO, 2006a). In terms of the curriculum, the EP in Thailand distinguishes three groups of subject areas (UNESCO, 2013b, p. 35). The foundation subject is similar to that which is offered in the formal school system (e.g. Thai, mathematics, science and foreign language). The experience-based subjects relate to life-skills development and quality of life improvement activities.

Thailand has a number of organisations that support non-formal education programs; these include education centres, district education centres, border

vocational centres, special target group education centres and adult education centres. However, CLC is the most popular organisation that serves the EP, which it set up in villages throughout the country. Learners can select their subjects in the classroom based in the CLC or formal school, and choose whether the study method is through distance learning or self-study. Whatever study method is decided by the student, credits earned are transferable. Learners can take their final learning assessment in 21 non-formal education evaluation centres at the provincial level which covers five regions of the country.

In the **Philippines**, the EP has been implemented as an alternative learning system (ALS), previously known as non-formal education (Guererro, 2007). The ALS is a parallel system designed to provide a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction and encompasses both non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills (Panaligan, 2012). The Philippine constitution recognises the role of an ALS as complementary to its formal education system although it is still exploring and maturing in order to achieve its stated goal of ‘quality education for all’. The institutionalisation of the ALS is known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 where the State is mandated, among others, to:

... promote the right of all citizens to quality basic education and to make such education accessible to all, providing all Filipinos children a free compulsory education at the elementary level and free education at the high school level. (Villar, 2001, p. 1)

There is a central emphasis to include ‘alternative learning education system of out-of-school youth and adult learners’ (Villar, 2001).

The ALS serves out-of-school youth aged 11 and over who have been unable to complete formal education. In order to gain equivalency in terms of standards and

competencies of the formal system, the ALS focuses on teaching core knowledge, skills and competencies that are delivered in formal schools while emphasising its ‘functionality’. The programs prepare learners for the accreditation and equivalency examination to re-enter formal schooling and post-school education (UNESCO, 2010). Thus, if an elementary or secondary level learner passes the examination, the government hands out a diploma equivalent to an elementary graduate in the formal system. However, for learners seeking certification at the secondary level, a greater number of hours are required. In the Philippines, studies of the ALS indicate that, in general, ALS learners have sufficient knowledge of fundamental subject areas. However, the ALS program faces some issues, such as the lack of permanent CLCs, inappropriate use of instructional materials, and students finding difficulty in attending classes and difficulty with their lessons (p. 55).

In **Bangladesh**, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is a popular non-formal primary school program that is similar to the EP. The BRAC basic school program was initiated in 1985 for disadvantaged and out-of-school children, particularly girls. It began with 22 one-room schools, providing school programs up to Grade III. Students transferred to state schools after completing the BRAC. In 2000-2001, the BRAC covered the entire five-year primary school curriculum through a four-year catch-up program. Currently, over 22,000 BRAC primary schools are operating (Yasunaga, 2014, p. 16). Flexibility in school timing is key to the success of the BRAC program. Class schedules are flexible for students to allow them to help their family with chores and harvesting.

With support from an international agency, BRAC develops its curriculum and certification with government legislation. Apart from the core subjects, the

curriculum covers confidence building, teamwork skills, gender rights, nutrition and hygiene. The learning material is prepared and delivered in minority languages for ethnic minority students to understand the lessons. Therefore, BRAC recruits teachers from the local community, all of whom are female⁶ who receive training from BRAC. Nevertheless, BRAC has the capacity to attract disadvantaged children with high success rates and positive results in comparative tests. Therefore, the Bangladesh Government allows BRAC students to take the national Shomaponi Examination at the end of primary school. In 2009, BRAC students successfully passed the examination with an average passing grade of 97% (increased to 99.54% in 2010) (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, 2012).

In the **Kingdom of Cambodia**, the alternative learning system is divided into two non-formal education programs, namely, an EP and re-entry program for school drop-out students (Vanna, Kannara, & Sophat, 2012). The EP is designed by the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) in 2008 to respond to the learning needs of all citizens, in particular out-of-school children and youth, civil servants from all institutions, armed forces, workers and factory employees. The program is characterised as part-time and flexible at the primary and secondary school levels. The flexible approach provides learners with the opportunity to study and make a living. The curriculum content for the primary level is 70 per cent formal education and 30 per cent life skills. The learning time for the EP is 700 to 750 hours, which gives less time for child labourers/working children and youth.

⁶ Teacher females are deliberately recruited to encourage the enrolment of girls, since the participation rate of girls in school is lower than boys. This is because many parents do not send girls to school where there are male teachers (Sukontamarn, 2003, p. 3).

The re-entry program provides remedial training for students who drop out from primary or secondary schools in order to gain additional learning opportunities and return to formal schooling after completing the course. The non-formal education re-entry course is held every year during the vacation period for a period of two months. Targeted learners in this program are children and youth who have dropped out of primary education for less than three years at Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6. By continuing their study to secondary education, they contribute to reducing the dropout rate. Students who pass their final examination at the end of the course are sent to a formal school where they can be promoted to the next grade. This uniquely designed program of non-formal education provides a 'bridge' for students to transfer to formal education, as well as complements the existing formal education system. However, the program does not always meet the minimum requirement of 15 students in the class, particularly in remote areas. Most dropouts are older children who had been out of school for over three years. In order to accommodate them, the government has set up an alternative learning program called 'Accelerated Learning'. The accelerated learning program involves three years of schooling, equivalent to six years informal schooling for over-aged children who never attend school.

Unlike Thailand and Indonesia, **Malaysia** has yet to recognise an EP as an alternative for its existing formal education (Sabah Task Force, 2012). However, since 2011, Malaysia has initiated an education project in collaboration with United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to provide basic education for out-of-school children, especially refugees and undocumented, stateless children in Sabah (mainly from the Philippines). Under the Sabah Special Task Force and the Ministry of Education, the learning centre designs education programs for primary

school children, with an emphasis on reading, writing, arithmetic, Islamic studies and life skills. However, the program is currently only provided at the primary level, and most children do not have access to the EP at the secondary level (Sabah Task Force, 2012).

In addition, another EP is established in Sabah, especially for children in palm-oil plantations. They mainly originated from Indonesia, therefore, the curriculum is developed based on the Malaysian and Indonesian syllabus. This government to government agreement will benefit its graduates as the Indonesian government will recognise the degree. Until 2012, the Human Child Aid Society (HCAS) manages 120 learning centres, providing primary education to more than 12,000 children. As this educational program is located in the palm-oil plantation area, the program's budget and resources are mainly supported by plantation companies, such as Sime Darby, IOI, Genting, IJM, Hap Seng as part of their social responsibility (Sabah Task Force, 2012).

This literature review on the impact of the EP in Southeast Asian heavily relies on UNESCO Bangkok, specifically from Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education publications. Based on the impact of studies conducted in several countries, such as India, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, the EP plays a positive role in accelerating the achievement of the Education for All goals (UNESCO, 2010).

The impact report in India reveals that the majority of surveyed learners (95.45 per cent of 308 learners) report enjoying their study in the EP because it gives them an 'opportunity for education' (UNESCO, 2010, p. 29). Almost half of learners (49.68 per cent) attended the OBE program because they dropped out of formal

schooling, however, others made OBE as their first choice of schooling. The program is favourable for enrolled learners who cannot afford the ‘high fees’ of formal education. Sixty-three per cent of students are girls, of which almost half are from the Muslim minority group and the majority are from families of low socio-economic backgrounds. The learners receive benefits from vocational courses, such as arts and crafts, technical courses and computer related courses that the centres offer.

From the same study conducted by UNESCO (2010, pp. 39-40), the EP in Thailand made an impact on learners in the areas of self-development, such as moral behaviour, work punctuality, generosity to others, adjusting to a changing world, and social interaction. Using the survey method, UNESCO asserts that the EP makes an impact on the ‘quality of life’ of learners and their families, particularly in the areas of personal and household cleanliness, and confidence-building (especially confidence about the ability to engage in further education). Furthermore, EP learners believe that graduating from an EP will lead them to obtain better job opportunities and the ability to adapt to work practices. All these impacts become visible because participating in an EP is not at a great cost to learners and their families. In addition, those who are employed during their studies receive extra benefits, both through achieving an educational qualification and retaining the same working hours and salaries in their employment.

A similar study is conducted in the context of the ALS in the Philippines (UNESCO, 2010). Based on the survey method, EP learners indicate that they have developed favourable attitudes to particular practices, such as positive behaviour and cooperating with the community. Furthermore, in an in-depth analysis through focus group discussions, ALS learners indicate a belief that the program enables them to

increase their knowledge, develop skills and improve their self-esteem. They acknowledge that the ALS was instrumental for re-entry into formal schooling through its certification if they pass the examination test. Like other countries, benefits are from programs that enable student free access to education by eliminating tuition fees and other school-related fees.

The impact reports conducted in India, Thailand and Philippines are part of the national assessment to measure the quality of EPs in each country. Under UNESCO's guidance, all studies have utilised surveys as a data collection method in pursuit of national data to provide insight into the impact of the EP. In this sense, the theoretical perspective that guides these studies is positivism, in order to measure the impacts of the EP in relation to learners' social behaviour towards it. This measurement provides information about the attitudes of learners. However, it does not provide a wider and deeper explanation based on individual learner perceptions and experiences. In fact, there are complexities of a learner's learning experiences being worth gathering as it cannot be assumed that a single reality is encountered by all learners.

3.4 Notions of non-mainstream educational provision

Section 3.4 examines the notions of non-mainstream educational provision, including non-formal education, alternative education and second chance education. Non-mainstream educational provisions carry significant differences in terms of functions and goals. They may include schools largely for dropouts and/or schools oriented to elites. However, all educational provision are established outside of the mainstream schooling system.

Non-formal education is the first educational provision to be discussed. The notion of non-formal education refers to broader educational activities outside the formal system. The terminology is often used in developing countries, such as Asia and Africa, to refer to educational programs that accommodate the various needs of learners. The EP in Indonesia is developed under the notion of non-formal education, where the program emphasises flexibility and open-admission as strategies to accommodate a diversity of learners. Alternative education is the second term examined that relates to the provision of globally comparable educational programs. The alternative education movement seeks to provide educational programs outside mainstream schooling and deliver an innovative and more democratic experience of learning. The last notion is second chance education, which refers to educational programs designed specifically to provide a second opportunity of schooling for people who failed in their first attempt. It provides opportunities for all people to find success in their second attempt. These three non-mainstream educational provisions are discussed with reference to definitions, characteristics and studies of young people's experiences in each area.

3.4.1 Non-formal education

The concept, non-formal education, was introduced for discussion in the 1970s and 1980s after Phillip Comb wrote a chapter entitled 'Non-Formal Education: To catch up and get ahead' in his seminal book *The World Educational Crisis: A Systems Approach* (A. Rogers, 2005, p. 2). This publication initiated massive interest in non-formal education in North America and developing countries, where the distinction between 'formal' and 'non-formal' education was used as a guide for educational planning, funding and evaluation.

What is non-formal education?

The concept of non-formal education refers to:

... any organised, structured and systematic learning service delivered outside the framework of the formal school system to a specific segment, group or sub-group of the population for a specific objective, at low cost in terms of both time and resources. (Thompson, 2001, p. 37)

It can be hierarchically organised but it is not rigidly structured. The setting is flexible to accommodate the needs of the learner. Non-formal education activities are largely implemented in developing countries, but the approach is from a Western context through the creation of Western agencies assisting to improve educational achievements in the developing world. For example, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) leads non-formal education in at least 15 countries in Africa, including Botswana, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya (A. Rogers, 2005).

Hopper (2006) differentiates between the North and South when discussing the notion of non-formal education. In the North, the term 'non-formal education' is rarely used, thus, when referring to educational activities outside the school system, the term 'lifelong learning' is popular (Field, 2006). In the South, the term 'non-formal education', as defined by Coombs et al. (1974) in early 1970, tends to be used. Both in the South and North, the notions of non-formal education tend to vary according to national realities (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991). For example, in poorer countries in the South, non-formal education covers community schools, functional literacy programs, programs for street children and youth skills development projects. However, in developed countries, such as Australia, that has a well-developed formal education system with relatively high participation rates, non-

formal education tends to be in the domains of adult, community and youth service agencies with stability in funding from local and federal governments (Campbell & Curtin, 1999, as cited in Shrestha, Wilson, & Singh, 2008). Non-formal education programs in the South tend to be mandatory for children who cannot access mainstream schools. However, in the North, they tend to be non-mandatory, a supplementary activity that supports the development of young and adult people through art, music, sport and life skills.

In the North, non-formal education activities concentrate on post-secondary school as part of lifelong learning. Common features of non-formal education, such as flexibility, open entry and immediate relevance are appropriate elements to fulfil the need to improve people's employability and adaptability to the labour market and to counter problems of high unemployment (Field, 2006). In contrast, non-formal education provision in developing countries is more concerned with providing basic education to all its citizen, including children, youth and adults.

Non-formal education activities seem different to formal education in term of objectives, processes and curriculum. They include education for young people attending compulsory education outside of formal structures. Some scholars, such as Carron and Carr-Hill (1991), Hoppers (2006) and A. Rogers (2005) identify and classify non-formal education as five categories: (i) para-formal education; (ii) popular education; (iii) personal development; (iv) professional and vocational training; and (v) literacy with skills development. I will briefly describe each category to guide the positioning of the EP in providing non-formal education.

Para-formal education is an educational program that is a substitute for full-time schooling. This form is similar to what is offered in alternative and second

chance education. Such programs include evening classes, distance education, private tutoring, and vocational and technical training. *Popular education* provides activities that explicitly stand-alone from the formal school system (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p. 23). The main elements are seen as concentrating on the poor, a learning-by-doing approach, and a high level of structural flexibility. *Personal development*, which is developing in Western countries, defines programs that are predominantly individualised and privatised for leisure-time activities, such as study visits, short courses and self-therapy programs. *Professional and vocational training* includes on-the-job learning, artisanal or informal sector apprenticeships, agricultural or industrial extension services, and all forms of in-service skills development (Hoppers, 2006, p. 27). Literacy with skills development provides integrated support services for disadvantaged youth and adults that combine functional literacy training with life skills, orientation to self-employment and income-generation skills.

Non-formal education includes adult education, lifelong education, skills training and literacy programs. The following discussion will focus on non-formal education for basic and/or secondary education for children and youth. Para-formal education is a term that explains the EP in Indonesia. The Indonesian EP can be viewed from two non-formal educational approaches: (i) ‘compensatory’ provision; and (ii) ‘alternative’ provision (Ruto, 2004, p. 12). The EP with its compensatory approach provides curricula similar to formal school curricula because it is aimed at rerouting students back to formal schooling after they have completed Packages A, B or C. Within this approach, the goal of the EP is to compensate for a lack of, or little, access to formal schooling. On the other hand, alternative approaches are intentionally designed at creating education suited to the needs of target populations

(e.g. athletes or artist students who made the deliberate decision to choose the EP rather than attend formal schooling based on specific reasons, such as time constraints between personal and study schedules). In the current situation, the Indonesian EP uses a compensatory approach rather than an alternative approach. The EP curriculum tends to become a miniature of formal schooling to ensure children are able to transit from one system to another, rather than provide innovative alternative programs.

In the next section, I continue to explain the differences between the basic/equivalency education program offered by formal and non-formal approaches to providing an understanding of the characteristics offered by each educational system.

Dynamics of formal and non-formal education

Formal education is recognised as an instrument of government administrative control, and more recently, common pedagogical practices and legitimised knowledge is practised at local, national and global levels (Hoppers, 2006, p. 33). In this sense, the core characteristic of a formal system is around a national standard curriculum and national systems of examination, qualification and certification. The non-formal position remains outside the boundaries of state control. Its practice is flexible and diverse, but lacks a formal structure. However, this form of non-formal education is constituted as part of the central national system (Popkewitz, 2000).

Formal and non-formal education can exist side by side, but it depends on the historical conditions and socio-political forces that influence policy formation. Carron and Carr-Hill (1991) record two ‘waves of diversification’ of education systems in existence since World War II in the North. In the first wave (1945-1975),

the structure of out-of-school and adult education was to supplement formal education. Non-formal education is a supplement to formal education because formal education proved unable to respond to the social, economic and political context of its target groups. Non-formal education is designed as lifelong learning enrichment activities (e.g. skills training) to add the value and role of formal education. Many non-formal education programs are provided as supplementary education systems by the private sector, targeted at particular groups that need to add knowledge or skills in areas such as language, computer, technology and hospitality (Brennan, 1997, pp. 193-194). In Indonesia, non-formal education programs act as supplements to formal education and are implemented within government and private sectors. Non-formal education local government institutions, such as BPKB, SKB and PKBM deliver life skill education, for example, computer and entrepreneurial skills, to provide vocational competencies for young people and adults. Private institutions that provide life skill education are growing rapidly in urban areas to fulfil the additional needs of children and youth in the areas of foreign languages and other skills. However, an additional cost is involved, therefore, middle and upper-class families often become a target of literacy and numeracy skills programs for remedial purposes.

The second wave (1975) is characterised by a weakening of the formal characteristics of the supplementary education system. Socio-political forces strongly influence perceptions about the ‘inferior’ status of non-formal education in the minds of policymakers and the public. Consequently, people associate non-formal education programs with poor and marginalised populations. Coombs (1976, p. 288) argues that non-formal education is not thought to become a separate subsystem

within education; rather it is to be viewed as a ‘diversified flow of learning inputs’.

According to Hopper, some features of non-formal education can be identified:

... in term of an *institutional format*, in accordance with learners having other responsibilities; in term of *technologies*, in accordance with the need to bridge distance; in terms of *content and pedagogies*, in accordance with extra learning needs or different philosophies of education; and in terms of *location*, in accordance with effective organisation of learning. (Hopper, 2006, p. 96)

Such diversity in education is a response to the diversity of the learning needs of learners. Therefore, non-formal education is not as *complementary* to formal education, but it is as *compensatory* for its diversity and challenge.

Empirical studies in non-formal (basic) education

In Section 3.3, the impact of the EP in the region of Southeast Asia is examined. These programs are similar, especially those operating under the supervision of UNESCO Bangkok. In this section, I examine the empirical studies of non-formal education programs in Asia and Africa to provide a broader comparison between programs. The review of non-formal education studies focuses on non-formal education services for children and youth in basic and secondary non-formal education rather than non-formal education for adult education. Most of the studies focus on the effectiveness of providing non-formal education as part of governmental or program evaluation (Adewale, 2009; Sud, 2010; Thompson, 2001; Weyer, 2009). There are limited studies that concentrate on the experiences of students in these education systems.

The effectiveness of non-formal education for basic education is evaluated in relation to opportunities for participation in education. Sud (2010) argues that non-formal schools effectively provide an alternative to formal primary education and successfully increase the participation rate of education for working children in

Punjab, India. Regardless of the student labour status, the programs help poor children attend school. In addition, for remote Indian rural communities, the non-formal education approach has succeeded in retaining poorer students (Chowdhury, Nath, & Choudhury, 2002; Muskin, 1999). A study conducted by Mfum-Mensah (2002) in sedentary pastoral communities in northern Ghana concludes that flexibility, in terms of attendance and study mode, is important for enabling students to engage with the program. The non-formal basic education program has fostered over 700 children in northern Ghana who would not have entered formal school due to poverty and access. Many of these students successfully made a transition to a formal school. A multigrade approach that includes peer tutoring (older children tutoring younger children) is used to foster student development and learning progress. A flexibility mode helps students to balance household duties with their schooling.

A study of non-formal education provision and participation rates in education was also conducted in Kenya. Thompson (2001) examined 88 non-formal education schools/centres in urban Kenya (cities of Kisumu, Mombasa and Nairobi) to provide an understanding of the program's effectiveness. The study has a 'top-bottom' approach in that it sought to capture the views of providers, teachers and the education office. It found that non-formal education curricula are diverse and respond to the learning needs of learners who are poor, homeless, child labourers and former street children. However, the dropout rates was high, especially among female learners. This is because some schools and centres are temporary and makeshift and because they receive only minimal support from the government. This

study has not addressed qualitative data on the ways that non-formal education programs are meaningful for students or addressed student learning needs.

Non-formal education plays a critical role in providing access to education, as well as opens up employment opportunities for out-of-school youth (Weyer, 2009) and increases life skills (Adewale, 2009). The non-formal education graduates reported have successfully transferred to the formal system (Morpeth & Creed, 2012). However, as non-formal education has a different approach to the teaching and learning process, it is reported that some students face problems when they sought to transfer to formal schooling (S. Nath, 2002). S. Nath (2002) conducts a study on the BRAC education program in Bangladesh to understand if BRAC graduates who enrol in formal schools find success in their new educational culture. He argues that even though BRAC is not a settled and permanent institution, many graduates manage to enrol in formal schooling after completing the BRAC course. However, many students drop out from formal schooling for many reasons, for example, boys may become child labourers because their income is necessary for their family's survival. The Bangladesh government does not have a stipend policy for boys, only girls. Girls would get married before 18 years of age, and would receive remuneration from the government. In this regard, formal schools have strict regulations in term of flexibility in attendance, which working and married students find difficult to adapt to, compared with non-formal schools. As a result, many young people drop out from formal schooling. However, S. Nath warns that this study does not give the complete picture of the situation of BRAC graduates in schools (p. 522).

In Indonesia, ILO (2011) evaluates graduate students from the EP in the South of Sulawesi and the Papua province. It is reported that EP graduate students find it difficult to obtain better jobs compared to students who completed formal education. Some employers argue that even though graduate students from the EP possess good motivational skills in working, mainstream school students acquire better academic skills. It is clear that the outcome of the EP in this study shows limited impact for people gaining a better life. Moreover, vocational training as a benefit in this type of education is also limited in practice. Although the government set the graduate student benchmark for Package B to incorporate preparation for work and Package C for entrepreneurship, the skills from the training itself did not match market demand (International Labor Organisation, 2011).

3.4.2 Alternative education

The term ‘alternative education’ is often used to describe non-mainstream approaches to teaching and learning. In the broadest sense, alternative education covers all educational activities outside the mainstream school system but it often focuses on schools using innovative curriculum and flexible programs to meet student needs and interests (Aron, 2006; Raywid, 1988; Sliwka, 2008). The origins of alternative education can be found in the new education movement in Europe and the US during the twenties (Nagata, 2007; Raywid, 1999). Educational theorists and practitioners, including Dewey, Steiner, Montessori and Neill, influenced the movement and orientation of alternative education into a ‘child-centred’ practice, placing value on individuality and democratic governance of school life.

In the sixties, alternative education emerged as a response to social crises. Alternative education grew into a social movement (Sliwka, 2008). Ivan Illich (1971)

in Europe and Paulo Freire (1993) in Brazil question the values and methods in public schooling through their publications. In this period, the alternative education movement split into two broad categories: (i) alternatives outside of public education; and (ii) those within the public school system. The first category refers to opposition to the existing educational system (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In the US, *Freedom Schools* and the *Free School Movement* are included in this category. The *Freedom Schools* provide high quality community schools for minorities to counter the oppressive educational process and the *Free School Movement* aims to ensure individual achievement and fulfilment. The second category, education within the public school system, uses characteristics of alternative education offered outside public education to set up *Open Schools* (Young, 1990). The Open Schools have some characteristics, such as a child-centred approach, autonomy in learning and pace, and non-competitive evaluation. These schools include; (i) *a school within a school*, that is, a small school designed to meet the educational needs and interests of students; (ii) *school without walls*, emphasising on community-based learning; (iii) *continuation school*, a schooling option for students who drop out from the mainstream school system; and (iv) *learning centres* designed to meet the particular needs of student, such as vocational skills in the school setting (Young, 1990).

In the eighties, the movement of alternative education narrowed to educating students who were at risk of failure (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Nagata, 2007). Young (1990) notes that during this period, a variety of alternative schools increased to accommodate the growing number of students who were disruptive or failing in mainstream schools. As a consequence, alternative schooling became concerned with teaching basics instead of innovative programs (Raywid, 1983). Furthermore, some

alternative schools focused on vocational training, some established connections with colleges, and some chose no-grading course formats in order to engage at-risk youth in schooling. The spirit of alternative education continues uninterrupted until present day and includes schools largely for dropouts but also includes schools that provide innovative and holistic approaches oriented to elite students (Nagata, 2007, p. 6). In the Asian context, alternative education emerged in the nineties under the influence of Western educational ideology (Nagata, 2007). The Summerhill Schools in Thailand and Japan, and Waldorf education in South Korea and Taiwan are examples. The growing number of dropout students, immigrant children and children who refuse to attend school results in the increased number of alternative schools in these countries.

Currently, alternative education is distinguished by two approaches: (i) passive; and (ii) active (Nagata, 2007, p. 3-4). The passive approach tends to view alternative education as an inferior program compared to the mainstream one. It also acts supplementary to mainstream education. An active approach views alternative education as superior to mainstream education in that the program and curriculum are created to mark a difference to the mainstream approach and to create a specific character.

To capture those distinctions, Raywid's typology of alternative education provides a picture of how the characteristics of alternatives are superior and inferior to mainstream education. Raywid (1994) groups alternative education into three types: (i) Type 1 alternatives are 'school of choice' that often emphasise innovative programs or strategies to attract students. These innovative alternative schools may position themselves as superior to mainstream schools due to innovative curricular or

pedagogical approach (Gregg, 1999; L. King, Silvey, Holliday, & Johnston, 1998; Raywid, 1994); (ii) Type 2 alternatives are ‘last chance’ schools where the emphasis is on modifying student behaviour before expulsion; and (iii) Type 3 alternatives provide therapeutic settings for students with academic and/or social-emotional problems. Types 2 and 3 are clustered as inferior to mainstream schools because they function as complementary to mainstream education or home schools (Raywid, 1994).

The function of Types 2 and 3 as complementary to the mainstream school is different to the concept of complementary in the EP. In the alternative school, the concept of complementary refers to the function of an alternative school as a balance to a mainstream school in a way that mainstream schools send ‘at risk’ students to ‘fix’ their behavioural and academic problems. These ‘at risk’ students will return to mainstream schooling after they pass the program. By contrast, the strategy of the EP is complementary to the education system because formal/mainstream education is not evenly distributed geographically or culturally throughout the nation. Therefore, the EP provides another pathway in education, including for the dropout group.

Similar categories are generated by te Riele who views the alternative education movement in Australia from two different perspectives; (i) youth *at risk*; and (ii) *learning choice* (te Riele, 2007, p. 55). The former aims to ‘fix’ young person with problems, including family dysfunction, pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, physical and emotional abuse, aggressive behaviour and criminal activity, or family breakdown. These students are often viewed as ‘unsuccessful students’, those who do not succeed or have not succeeded in mainstream schools and are disadvantaged, marginalised or at risk. From this perspective, alternative schools can

be viewed as a ‘dumping ground for bad and dangerous adolescents’ and often offer their services ‘too little, too late’ (McGee, 2001, p. 566; Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

‘Learning choice’ refers to alternative projects for empowering students and schools to engage social change through the curriculum and pedagogy. This model is based on a key assumption that mainstream education is inappropriate to many young people’s needs. For this reason, the alternative education sector is rapidly growing in Australia (te Riele, 2012).

Innovative alternative education, such as described in Raywid’s Type 1 and te Riele’s second concept, are outside the area of focus of the present study. The present study focuses on alternative education that is not designed for innovative curricula. Indonesia has innovative alternative schools for individuals (most of whom are talented) or parents who feel dissatisfied with the mainstream school system. A growing number of alternative schools exist, such as SekolahRumah Kak Seto, *Prodigy* and Argowilis Cilongok, that provide individual assistance based on the interests and needs of learners, as well as different from what is available in Indonesian public schools (Sriyati, 2013). However, as this present study focuses on disadvantaged youth in alternative education, the following literature will focus on this category only.

Youth experiences in alternative schooling

Historically, alternative schools serve a wide variety of students with varying background and abilities, but the movement has moved its attention from alternative at-risk and otherwise marginalised children (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In the current situation, youth attend alternative schools after leaving the mainstream school voluntarily or are officially excluded from it (Guerin & Denti, 1999, p. 76). They

appear to exhibit behavioural difficulties, become pregnant or parenting teens or experience academic failure. These youth are disproportionately poor, disabled, bilingual (in most Western context) and from ethnic minority groups (Lehr & Lange, 2003; Raywid, 1994). In term of academic achievement, young people in alternative schools have poor literacy and academic skills, as well as inadequate social, emotional and behavioural skills (McIntyre, 1993). The average age of youth attending alternative schools is 15 years (Carpenter-Aeby, Salloum, & Aeby, 2001; Escobar-chaves, Tortolero, Markham, Kelder, & Kapadia, 2002), however, the number of younger youth is increasing (Kleiner, Porch, Farris, & Westat, 2002).

Some studies are conducted to examine the effects of alternative schools on disadvantaged youth (Jan & Evguenia, 2007; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Williams & Sadler, 2001). Three outcomes map general conclusions about student engagement in alternative schools; (i) students' sense of flexibility; (ii) students' sense of belonging, satisfaction and change in self-esteem; and (iii) academic achievement. Students' sense of flexibility arises from the teaching and learning approach that is practised in alternative schools. It is central to disadvantaged youth making decisions about their educational path through the alternative system and is often the reason for their persistence at the program (Lange & Lehr, 2000). For example, Watson (2011) argues in her research that the alternative school culture is unique in many ways, especially in term of its flexibility. The students in her research (SEI alternative school in the US) mentions that they can engage in alternative school environments because the school practices 'different ways of learning' through the flexibility of schoolwork, and the school did not 'make you learn the way they want to teach you' because the learning process is based on the student's interests and pace of learning

(p. 1507). In Australia, youth are able to engage in alternative schools because the school offers a different culture and environment (Mills & McGregor, 2010). The students in Flexi School mentioned that the school culture and environment, such as small classes, teacher-student relationships and flexible rules provide learning opportunities that is unavailable in mainstream schooling.

However, other empirical research show that students in alternative school settings need to adjust to the different culture of learning. For example, Jones (2011) conducts a study in Murray High School in the mid-Atlantic region in the US which is designed as a dropout prevention program. He found a moment or point of determination where most students need time to engage in a different culture of learning, whether it be a few days, weeks or even months for them to adapt to and enjoy learning in alternative schooling.

Other studies mention the student's sense of belonging, self-esteem and satisfaction as outcomes of alternative schooling. Daugherty and Compton (1996) report that alternative school students in urban areas for at-risk students in the US have more self-confidence and positive attitude toward their school experience, schoolwork and vocational skill. Positive peer and student relationships highlight the success of alternative schools in meeting student needs (Lange & Lehr, 1999). Kim and Taylor (2008) also highlight that alternative schools provide a caring environment for students where trust can be gained. This research was conducted in Prairie Alternative School in the US, which found a positive experience for all students. They changed their perceptions of the alternative school from a 'dumping ground' to a 'safety net' and a good place from which they wanted to graduate. However, studies documenting academic outcomes for students attending alternative

schools have also indicated mixed results. Researchers in the US report little or no change, or a decline on standardised tests over the course in which some students left the alternative programs (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Lange & Lehr, 1999), but the other school reported that many students successfully graduated due to the school providing support (Williams & Sadler, 2001).

Mckee and Conner (2007, p. 48) highlight that alternative schools cannot compete with mainstream schools, but students have an important advantage over traditional schools because it is flexibility. The flexible structure helps students with time management problems, especially when the majority of them are working or have other responsibilities. As a result, students can adjust their study to address personal issues, and academic and social engagements. For many disadvantaged students, they would not be able to attend to other responsibilities if attending a mainstream school because they generally do not accommodate students' special circumstances. In this sense, alternative schools are often viewed as 'goodies for baddies'. Debate over equity between alternative and mainstream schools are difficult to sustain in what Parson's terms 'the struggle for rare goods' (C. Parsons, 1999, p. 19).

3.4.3 Second chance education

Inbar illustrates the meaning of second chance education:

Twelve times he tried to pass the test and failed. Only at the thirteenth attempt, when he felt ready, did he make it through. He received his driver's license, achieving the same driving status as anybody else. However, when he failed his final exam in math in the ninth grade, he was not allowed to enter the advanced math class in the tenth grade. The second chances he got for attaining his driver's license he couldn't receive in school. (Inbar, 1995, p. 26)

This above quotation provides an understanding that every person deserves to try again once he/she fails in their first or second attempt. A basic belief is also applied outside the educational field, such as a second chance in several social institutions, adoption of children, divorce, remarriage, and the rehabilitation of criminals (Rinne & Kivinen, 1993, p. 115).

Concept of second chance education

The EP offers a second opportunity for young people and adults who failed in their first attempt at schooling (i.e. mainly from formal schooling). The notion of a second chance stresses the value of equal opportunity (Inbar, 1995) and fairness (Cuban, 1990) derived from the belief that everyone has the right to try again, to pursue success and mobility, to follow a different path, and to ensure that their failure cannot be regarded as final. The second chance mechanism has its own ideological character: it is derived from the openness, flexibility, mobility and equality present in a social system (Inbar, 1995). For Courtney (1992, p. 146), second chance programs are primarily designed for those who need them most, both as an expansion of the current form of education and as a consequence of social problems anchored in the economy. The second opportunity that is given through this education program is based on the following premise:

If they (students) fail to become contributing adults, these people represent a very substantial loss of potential to the country, to the economy, to communities, and individual lives. (Morris, Nelson, Stoney, & Benefield, 1999, p. 1)

Inbar (1995) elaborates three basic principles on how second chance education becomes important in education policy: (i) temporariness of failure; (ii) right to change; and (ii) open-ended time. Failure should be considered as a temporary

setback that can be overcome. Formalised failure tends to institutionalise the boundaries of student choices and opportunities, whereas it could otherwise be seen as an indicator of potential ability and the possibility of a more successful future. In this sense, failure does not necessarily represent the whole individual, but only a response to a certain task.

The right to change comes from the right of the individual to try again and choose another option as a basic educational principle. The opportunity to change in the second place is based on young people's 'desire' and 'resolve and hope' (M. Rose, 2012, p. 84). The notion of a 'second chance' is highly supported by theories of transition in the field of youth research (Ross & Gray, 2005), which suggest that re-entry into second chance education is a personal act to arrive at a personally successful educational identity. Despite the fact that families and society enforce some EP students in Indonesia to re-enter a second chance education, many decide for themselves.

The principle of unlimited time is based on the premise that a second chance opportunity cannot be bound by time constraints. Individual opportunities occur at unlimited times, therefore, the idea of 'too late' does not exist when a person is seeking a second chance opportunity. This idea is similar to Shavit et al. (2002) who argue that individuals who missed or failed at their first attempt can actualise him/herself in second chance education that is organised more appropriately for their circumstances. It means that students who failed in formal schooling can be given another chance to complete their education through re-entry via another educational portal. In this sense, education is an 'unfinished business' (Munns & McFadden,

2000) and second chance programs often provide new opportunities for many people (Asín & Peinado, 2008).

The concept of second chance education may differ from alternative education, especially when compared with the initial birth of the alternative education movement. Alternative education delivers a form of democratic and innovative education that mainstream education cannot provide. Therefore, young people considering alternative schooling may make a deliberate decision (i.e. self or parental decision) to enrol due to being unsatisfied with the mainstream school approach. Some reasons include: '*We did not like the study load ... (material studied) was boring*', and '*The teacher did not pay attention to me*' (Asín & Peinado, 2008). In this sense, second chance education has a different meaning to alternative education. Inbar (1995, p. 38) argues that an individual who is defined as a 'second chance' student would access programs of a 'second chance' type through institutions that would be defined as 'second chance' schools.

However, Asin and Peinado (2008) argue that second chance programs have been seen as a 'last resort' for those who participate. Therefore, to overcome this educational deficit, the programs need to be strengthened and grow to become more than a second opportunity, but rather a unique opportunity for young people involved to recover their own feeling of worth and to awaken the desire to proceed with a learning process that enables them to situate themselves in the society. Furthermore, to challenge the negative expectation around young people involved in the program, students should be empowered with the capacity to control their learning (Brogian, 2002, as cited in Asín & Peinado, 2008). Learning activities should be managed

based on the student's work rhythm and accompanied by a constant mentoring process with the tutor (teacher).

Some educational programs are established based on the philosophy and concept of second chance in education. In Australia, Ross and Gray (2005) mention TAFE (technical and further education) and ACE (adult community education) as second chance programs for non-completers. In the US, the General Education Development (GED) aims toward second chance education that offers credentialing programs to dropouts (Boudett, 1998). Individuals with adequate maths and reading skills who drop out of school shortly before graduation can focus on the GED examination administered by the American Council on Education. For others, they need remedial work and GED preparation classes to pass the test. The EP in Indonesia also offers formal school students who did not pass the formal school national examination to take their examination or remedial programs as a means to gain a second chance.

Why do youth take a second chance?

Dropping out of school is not necessarily a permanent high school outcome (Barrat et al., 2012). There are reasons why students who drop out of school return to school or second chance programs. In spite of many studies documenting the self-reported reasons why they drop out of school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Lehr et al., 2004; Rumberger, 2011; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009), less research has examined those who return to school (Barrat et al., 2012; Ross & Gray, 2005; te Riele & Crump, 2002).

Berliner and Barrat (2012; 2009) discuss 'push and pull' factors for dropouts, as well as those who re-enter. The experiences that push students to leave school are academic struggles, boredom and limited ways to make up failed course credits. The

pull factor, on the other side, relates to life circumstances such as family crisis, employment, pregnancy, untreated mental illness and peer pressure. Similarly, non-school experiences push young people towards their dropout situation and school factors pull them back to high school.

The motivation for returning to school can be explained in two ways. Firstly, students who re-enrol expect to increase learning, obtain useful skills and ‘get ahead’ (Marshall et al., 2005; Umansky et al., 2007), as described through human capital frameworks (Schultz, 1963). For these returnees, the focus of motivation is more about the experience rather than the future economic return. Secondly, students focus on actual skills and the future economic return, and their motivation concerns obtaining school certificates or credentials (Marshall et al., 2005). Within a human capital framework, the decision to take another chance in education is reflective of a preference for moving ahead and/or not staying behind (Inbar, 1995). Glorieux et al. (2011) provide an example of the profile of young people in Belgium who enter second chance education programs. In Belgium, the number of young people enrolling in the second chance school system, Exam Broad (a flexible system in which students prepare themselves to do exams) and the Secondary School for Adults (part of the regular educational system that organises courses, however, with an adult approach), is growing every year. Dropout youth, with an average age of 24 years, are enrolling in both second chance pathways after dropping out from mainstream schooling. The possibility of continuing their study in higher education was the major motivation to enrol. Although there is a group that successfully found its way to second chance education, Glorieux et al. (2011) highlight a considerable

group not attracted to the second chance route. This group has a lower socio-economic status compared to those who enrolled in the second chance system.

Within the framework of economic return, the second chance school offers students increased opportunities to obtain a job after completion (Dwyer, 1995; Metzger, 1997). However, Phan and Ball (2001) argue that even after completing an enabling course or second chance program, there is no guarantee of a job, although it does not mean the program was not effective in assisting individuals to gain employment. One example in the US for second chance option is the GED. For an academically able student with a solid set of basic cognitive skills when leaving school, there is little advantage in acquiring a general education except to move into post-secondary education. However, for those who leave school with limited ability in academic performance, pursuing a general education could increase marketable skills, making the GED a valuable second chance option (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009, pp. 93-94).

In Australia, te Riele's (2011) study explores the experiences of early leavers who moved on to a 'second chance' school that offered education from Year 9 to Year 12 for dropout youth. The students pursue a qualification, namely, the School Certificate at the end of Year 10 and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) at the end of Year 12. They comment that a second chance school is a better approach than coercion to stay in a mainstream school. Based on student experiences in the study, they do not receive economic benefit from instrumental outcome, such as credentials, but the process enhances their self-esteem, positive disposition towards learning, literacy and communication skills, and provides additional social and personal benefits.

Metzer (1997) extends the explanation by arguing that in addition to the two reasons mentioned above, a critical incident encountered by ‘dropouts’ can motivate them to return to school. A pivotal event, such as a loss of employment, graduation of a friend and a sense of responsibility associated with the birth of a child can provide motivation and lead to changes in personal views and attitudes about returning to school. In this sense, there is a relationship between a critical incident and growth of understanding that formulates the decision to return to education. A school factor, such as the effort of a school leader who provides caring and persistence, can also facilitate dropouts to come back to school. A significant person’s guidance and encouragement (Metzer, 1997), such as a school leader or teacher can also influence a dropout to return to schooling. A school that provides an ‘adult environment’ contributes to decision-making about returning, especially for young adults returning after a long absence (te Riele & Crump, 2002).

In spite of attending schooling being the norm in adolescence, returning after having dropped out is considered difficult. Therefore, barriers or challenges exist upon re-entry (Barrat et al., 2012; Berliner & Barrat, 2009; Dwyer, 1995). For example, Dwyer (1995, p. 275) identifies four barriers to successful engagement with a second chance program and successfully completing education: (i) placement in classes with younger less committed students; (ii) troublesome dynamics associated with age discrepancies; (iii) lack of individual autonomy and responsibility; and (iv) finding the school and curriculum less relevant. In addition, Barrat et al. (2012) mention obstacles to be faced upon re-entry, such as credit deficiency and capacity limitations. The former relates to the need of students and schools to provide additional courses to make up credit (especially for students with a long gap year

before re-enrolling in a second chance school). Often, schools provide summer classes, after-school classes and Saturday school programs in preparation for remediation or examination. The latter concerns a limited enrolment capacity that inhibit young people's opportunities to re-enrol. In addressing these challenges, Barrat et al. suggest the district and school leader should increase the capacity to offer credit recovery options and advocate for academic, behavioural and social interventions to assist re-enrollees to the schools.

3.5 Conclusion

The discussion in Chapter 3 suggests that the Indonesia EP is comparable with other non-mainstream educational systems. For example, through alternative education that offers democratic educational experiences, the Indonesia EP is an alternative education system (based on the belief that people can make their own choices regarding mainstream or alternative schooling). The school-age population may take advantage of the EP as an alternative pathway to education due to the different school culture that is practised in the EP. For this population, the EP means a new form of schooling for school-age children. Other groups may position the EP as a second chance education because these groups of students failed at their first attempt. The aims of participating in the EP can be varying, from seeking remedial support in order to return to mainstream education, passing the equivalent School Certificate to help in getting employment, or pursuing lifelong learning, especially for older people. Thus, participating in the EP is a voluntary action. The notion of non-formal education has the potential to explain the learning and teaching approach in the EP, which is different from formal education. However, the synergies between formal

and non-formal education allow for an easy transition for students who move between these two systems.

The EP design and approach to schooling is strongly supported by similar non-mainstream educational system providers throughout the world. Even though they have different purposes in the initial movement, it is clear that these non-mainstream educational provisions share similar goals, that is, to provide a different approach to education to fulfil the demands of diverse learners. The literature also suggests that many students experience transformation in their learning and lives during and after schooling in non-mainstream education. Non-formal education for basic and secondary education opens the opportunity for participation in education, as well as opportunities for employment for the disadvantaged population. The alternative school culture increases self-esteem and academic achievement for ‘at risk’ students, and second chance schools enhance motivation for those who failed in their first attempt and want a second opportunity. In addressing the research question in this study, proven examples of ‘best’ practices support the significance of current research to examine student learning experiences in the EP through using the lens of transformation to uncover the change based on their perspectives.

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The choice of the research methodology is interrelated with research questions that drive the study, the researcher's philosophical perspective, and the reasons why the research is conducted. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to understand how disadvantaged youth re-entering education through alternative schooling engage with learning in the EP. Student experiences are investigated under the framework of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973). Both theories concern change or transformation in learning.

Perspective transformation lays out the engagement in learning as a process of change in which, through reflection on experiences, the students encounter personal change, whether consciously or unconsciously. The specific questions this research explores in order to address the more important questions are:

1. Why do Indonesian disadvantaged youth choose to re-enter education through alternative schooling?
2. What is the process of re-engagement in learning in the alternative school culture?
3. How do these students believe their experiences were improved?

Chapter 4 commences with situating the research within an epistemological stance and theoretical perspective, and continues with detailing how the research methodology is practised. Research practices include choosing the participants, data

collection and data analysis techniques, considering ethical matters and addressing concerns around validity. Crotty's (1998) four elements in developing research study: (i) epistemology; (ii) theoretical perspective; (iii) methodology; and (iv) methods are adopted to identify the theoretical framework for this study.

Table 4.1 Four elements of research process

Epistemology	Theoretical perspective	Methodology	Methods
Objectivism	Positivism	Experimental research	Sampling
Constructionism	Interpretivism	Survey research	Questionnaire
Subjectivism	Symbolic interactionism	Ethnography	Observation
	Phenomenology	Phenomenological research	Interview
	Hermeuneutics	Grounded theory	Focus group
	Critical inquiry	Heuristic inquiry	Narrative
	Feminism	Action research	Theme identification
	Postmodernism		Document analysis
			Content analysis

Adapted from Crotty (1998).

Crotty begins with suggesting that it is important to propose methodologies and methods, and justify these choices when developing a research project. He also questions the importance of linking the four elements of the research process (Table 4.1), as follows: (i) What *methods* do we propose to use?; (ii) What *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods?; (iii) What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question?; and (iv) What does epistemology inform this theoretical perspective? (p. 2). To answer these four questions, we can refer to Table 4.1 and make an arrow from right to left to form connections between the research problem and the strategy to solve it. To justify the chosen methodology and to recognise the work as valid research and outcomes of the research as convincing, a theoretical perspective and epistemology need to be established.

Taking into account the research processes that are outlined by Crotty, I use the schema of epistemology, theoretical framework and methodology for this research. Instead of drawing an arrow from right to left, I go from left to right. Referring to the purpose of this study and the questions posed, this study takes constructionism as epistemology and interpretivism as a theoretical perspective.

4.2 Epistemological stance: Constructionism

Epistemology deals with ‘the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis’ (Hamlyn, 1995, in Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) outlines three epistemological constructs: (i) objectivism; (ii) constructionism; and (iii) subjectivism. Objectivist epistemology is explained as ‘meaning, and therefore, meaning reality, exists as such apart from of any consciousness’ (p. 8). Based on this perspective, meaning is inherent within the object, that is, the object can be measured and quantified. In social research within objectivist epistemology, the argument is that the social world is ‘value-free, and that explanations of a causal nature can be provided’ (Mertens, 1997, p. 7). However, to discover an objective truth in the social world, it is difficult to control variables in investigating social behaviour. The epistemology of constructionism and subjectivism rejects the idea of objective truth.

Constructionism considers truth or meaning coming into existence out of our engagement with the realities (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Meaning, based on this perspective, is constructed, and different people may construct meaning of the same phenomenon in a different way. However, in subjectivism, the meaning does not come out of interplay between the subject and object, but is imposed on the object by the subject. The object takes on the meaning through collective unconsciousness, for

example, from dreams or religious beliefs. Here, the object makes no contribution to the ‘generation of meaning’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). In other words, subjectivism meaning is created out of nothing, whereas constructionism meaning is constructed out of something. Thus, constructionism can be applied comfortably to understand the learning experience of a student in this study, because the experience is ‘reality that is socially constructed’ (Mertens, 1997, p. 11).

In a constructionist’s viewpoint, meaning or truth cannot be described simply as ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’, because there is *no* true or valid interpretation of meaning. Indeed, there are liberating, fulfilling and rewarding interpretations that are useful. A research into an epistemology of constructionism invites me to approach the subject of the study in a spirit of openness. The result is the potential for a new or richer meaning.

Therefore, in approaching this study, I focus on gaining an understanding of student experiences and interpretations of their learning by interviewing them as a primary resource rather than through a third party. To discover their interpretations, I consider the particular social/cultural context in which the experience is encountered. In this respect, I provide details related to the background of the participants and the context of their school.

4.3 Theoretical perspective: Interpretivism/symbolic interactionism

A theoretical perspective relates to a researcher’s philosophical assumption of the human world and the social life within it. A theoretical perspective closely linked to constructionism is interpretivism (in contrast to positivism). A central tenet of

positivism is that research can take a 'scientific' perspective when investigating social behaviour, enabled by methods objective analysis (Travers, 2001).

Interpretivists tend to view the world differently by observing and seeking patterns that could be used to explain wider principles (Babbie, 2005). In the interpretive paradigm, there is no single reality, thus reality is based on an individual's perceptions and experiences (Robson, 2011).

An interpretive position is adopted in this research. It is considered in this study that there are multiple realities of student participants' lives and experiences, and the researcher may better understand the real-world phenomena of participants by studying them within the context they occur. The researcher, as Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest, can act as a 'passionate participant' rather than maintaining an independent position from the subject of the study. This will 'create knowledge' or construct the outcome through interactions between the researcher (interviewer) and participants.

Interpretivism is not a single paradigm because it has three historical streams as a philosophical base: (i) hermeneutics; (ii) phenomenology; and (iii) symbolic interactionism (Crotty, 1998, p. 71). Phenomenology and symbolic interactionism explore human attitudes toward culture. However, symbolic interactionism examines the understanding of society and human action and behaviour within a social cultural world, while phenomenology lies only to go 'back to the things themselves' (Crotty, 1998, p. 78), referring to what we directly experience. This study aligns itself to interpretivism under the particular banner of symbolic interactionism. The framework indicates that individual experiences is influenced by a historical social cultural journey and interaction with others (Manis & Meltzer, 1972). The three basic

assumptions underpinning symbolic interactionism are: (i) people act on the basis of the meanings they have for things; (ii) people's meanings of things are derived from the process of interaction among individuals; (3) meanings can be modified through an interpretive process (Blumer, 1969, in Benzie & Allen, 2001).

Symbolic interaction provides a theoretical perspective for studying students in the EP, individually or collectively, through reflecting on how they interpret their learning experiences and how this process of interpretation leads to behaviour in specific situations. Past experiences of individual students and the history of collective groups shape current interpretations that also need attention. Thus, research conducted through a symbolic interaction perspective places participants at the centre of experience with consideration on the lives and circumstances of those involved (p. 545).

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism views the world as complex and not reduced to a set of observable 'tools', thus, interpretivism uses a qualitative approach, which aims to understand the human experience inductively and holistically in context-specific settings. To understand human experience, interpretivism often uses meaning-oriented methodologies rather than measurement. The choice of research methodology for interpretivism is also influenced by phenomenon maturity (Merriam & Kim, 2012). This refers to how deep the researcher understands the phenomenon being studied. Research on the EP utilising perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) has not been conducted in the Indonesian or Southeast Asian context. Impact studies of these programs use positivism as a theoretical perspective. This approach is also widely used in government reports. A qualitative design based on Creswell (2009) can provide

important insight variables that have not yet been identified, therefore, they are worth employing to identify the additional insights they can provide.

4.4 Research methodology

The interpretive paradigm involves qualitative research methods that are best applied when the purpose of the research is to understand people's experiences and events (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The focus of this study is to gather disadvantaged students' experiences in alternative school cultures, therefore, the case study method is suitable for understanding the phenomenon within local contexts. Merriam (1998) outlines that the case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. She also argues that a case might be selected because it is intrinsically interesting (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Through this concept, I find that examining a disadvantaged student's experience is personally appealing as it benefits educators because it will discover meaningful information from the student's perspectives.

4.4.1 Multiple case studies

In this study, a number of cases are examined to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition, termed by Stake (2000) as a *collective case study*. Each case has important atypical features, happenings, relationships and situations. According to Stake, individual cases in a collection may be similar or dissimilar, therefore, redundancy and variety are important. However, some cases are chosen because it is believed they will lead to a better understanding, and perhaps better theorising, about a larger collection of cases (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

Merriam (1998) explains that the important aspect of case study research is the object of study: the case. The case is a unit, entity or phenomenon with defined boundaries that the researcher can demarcate or 'fence in'. The case is 'a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries' (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). It may be a concrete entity, such as an individual, small group, organisation or a partnership. At a less concrete level, it may be a community, relationship, decision process or a specific project (Yin, 2014). In other words, the choice of what is to be studied can be a case within a bounded system bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

In this study, I select three different characteristics of the EP. Stake (2000) states that the cases may be similar or dissimilar, and redundancy and/or variety are each of importance. The cases are chosen because they draw attention to what can be specifically learned from a single or collection of cases (Stake, 1994) in which they often show different perspectives on the issue. Therefore, in this study, I select the cases based on a geographical terrain to show the differences of each context. In the study, the EP is based on an urban school (DKI Jakarta city), suburban location (Depok city) and rural areas (Pandeglang city).

4.4.2 Sites and participants

In qualitative methods, the intent is not to generalise the population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Thus, to understand this phenomenon, a qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects sites and individuals. In this study, I select the sites and participants through using a purposeful sampling method. Creswell (2013, p. 100) states that purposeful sampling is used in case study research in order to select cases that show different

perspectives of a problem, process or event, however, ordinary cases, accessible cases or unusual ones can also be selected. There is no set number of cases, but the standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are *information-rich cases* (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Information-rich cases are those from which one can acquire information central to the research.

According to Patton, there are 16 strategies for purposefully selecting information-rich cases (Patton, 1990, p. 169-186): (i) extreme or deviant case sampling; (ii) intensity sampling; (iii) maximum variation sampling; (iv) homogeneous sampling; (v) typical case sampling; (vi) stratified purposeful sampling; (vii) critical case sampling; (viii) snowball or chain sampling; (ix) criterion sampling; (x) theory-based or operational construct sampling; (xi) confirming and disconfirming cases; (xii) opportunistic sampling; (xiii) random purposeful sampling; (xiv) sampling politically important cases; (xv) convenience sampling; and (xvi) combination or mixed purposeful sampling. In this study, maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990, p. 172) is applied.

Maximum variation sampling aims to capture and describe the central themes that cut across the variation of cases and participants. In order to purposefully select the case, Patton (1990) suggests that it begins by identifying diverse characteristics or criteria for constructing the sample. In this study, the cases are selected by using geographical variations among the sites. The school sites selected represent urban, sub-urban and rural areas. Each school, whether government and non-government owned, include a diversity of learners. Below is a description of the selected sites (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Selected sites

Location	Name of School	Characteristics
Urban area	Wijaya Learning Centre	Wijaya is located in an urban metropolitan area of Jakarta, capital city of Indonesia and its largest city. The school is located in a middle-class residential neighbourhood, which is growing due to internal migration. The majority of students are migrant workers, such as a housemaid, babysitter, office boy, office cleaner, security, shopkeeper and construction labourer. The local government of Jakarta province manages the school to facilitate urban youth.
Suburban area	Mandiri Learning Centre	Mandiri is located in the heart of a huge suburban bus and train station. It facilitates street singers, hawkers and scavengers who became independent from their families at a young age to survive for a living. The school is operated by the local community.
Rural area	Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre	Nusantara is located in a rural area to serve students from low-income family backgrounds. The majority of students are from the school-age population who are unable to enrol in formal schooling due to a lack of family finances. Nusantara is a centre for non-formal education, owned and managed by the Department of Education at the district level.

Table 4.2 indicates two schools, Wijaya Learning Centre and Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre, belonging to the local government, but at different levels, provincial and district level respectively. The third school specified in Table 4.2, Mandiri Learning Centre, belongs to the local community and has a specific purpose of serving out-of-school children in the area. The three schools cater to different learner types. The majority of Wijaya students are young migrant workers without qualifications who came to Jakarta for a job. Mandiri accommodates predominantly street children who live in areas close to bus and train stations, while Nusantara is populated by rural poverty-stricken youth who turn to the EP as the only affordable educational pathway.

Unlike formal schools, the EP is more independent and less structurally linked to the local government, especially those belonging to the community. Therefore, to

access the schools, permission from the local Department of Education is not necessary. Despite this, in Indonesia, the majority of school leaders are generally willing to participate in research processes. At my first school visit, I explained the purpose of the study, including the plan of the research activities. I visited the first schools, Wijaya and Mandiri, during the three months from mid-August to mid-November 2012. Wijaya operates three days weekly, therefore, I spent Mondays and Wednesdays at the school. On Thursdays and Fridays, I visited Mandiri. From mid-November 2012 to mid-January 2013 for three to four days a week, I visited Nusantara, situated in the rural area of Pandeglang City.

The same strategy is also applied in selecting participants from each school for the study. This study seeks to gather student voices, rather than interview teachers or parents because student perspectives are seldom represented. The students at EP are regarded as marginalized in society and are excluded from educational policies and practices. Thus, this study presents the opportunity to begin redressing this and placing young people in a central and meaningful way in this research project. It also aims to locate young people as active social agents to recognise and facilitate the student's 'voice' and 'agency', as well as the constraints they act within (Holland, Renold, Ross, & Hilman, 2010; Baker & Plows, 2015). In other words, this research authentically listens to the lives, experiences and educational aspirations of young people.

Research that starts out from the perspective of the student or 'student voice' covers a range of activities that encourage reflection, discussion and dialogue on matters that primarily concern the student, but also by implicating school staff and the communities they serve (Fielding, 2004a, p. 199). There is recognition that not all

voices are the same. Some students are more privileged and more able to articulate their needs than others (Rubin & Silva, 2003). Furthermore, Fielding (2004b) is also reminded of the plurality of voices that inevitably and properly need to be heard so as to include the voice from a different ethnicity, gender or class. Reflecting on the wider issues raised by the experiences of the students in the EP, the participants were selected from different social categories, such as gender, age, school grade and their activities (e.g. working or non-working).

A total of 48 students were selected for this study, comprising of 11 female students and 10 male students for individual interviews, and 14 female students and 13 male students for focus group discussions. Collectively, the students are aged between 14 and 25 years and studying Package B and Package C. The sample size or number of participants in this study corresponds with Creswell's (2012) suggestion that in a qualitative study the number of participants may range from one or two to 30 or 40.

Profiles of each research participant are drawn from three EPs. Before selecting and approaching the participants, I sought permission from the school leader or tutor (teacher), referred to as a *gatekeeper*. A gatekeeper is an individual who has an official or unofficial role at a site, provides entry to the site, helps the researcher to locate people, and assists in the identification of a place to study (Hammersley, 2007). The research participants are assessed through inviting students to participate in interviews and focus group meetings voluntarily. They are asked to choose their own anonymous name. Table 4.3 presents a summary of the demographics of each research participant.

Table 4.3 Participant profiles

School site	Pseudonym name	Sex	Age	Grade	Employment status	Research activity
Wijaya School	Indah	F	17	7	Unemployed	Interview
	Sinta	F	17	11	Shopkeeper	Interview
	Widi	F	18	9	Housemaid	Interview
	Eva	F	18	12	Unemployed	Interview
	Raka	M	25	11	Office cleaner	Interview
	Dimas	M	23	11	Office cleaner	Interview
	Dwipa	M	16	9	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Erwin	M	14	7	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Tedjo	M	14	7	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Rama	M	16	9	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Risma	F	22	11	Housemaid	FGD – female
	Aminah	F	17	10	Housemaid	FGD – female
	Laili	F	17	10	Housemaid	FGD – female
	Neneng	F	22	11	Housemaid	FGD – female
Siti	F	21	11	Housemaid	FGD – female	
Mandiri School	Rita	F	17	11	Unemployed	Interview
	Ajeng	F	20	10	Housemaid	Interview
	Iman	M	17	11	Toy seller	Interview
	Rizal	M	15	8	Snack peddler	Interview
	Deni	M	17	8	Street singer	Interview
	Rosyid	M	17	8	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Mansyur	M	17	8	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Iqbal	M	16	7	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Jajang	M	18	9	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Mae	F	17	11	Unemployed	FGD – female
	Sri	F	17	11	Works at internet café	FGD – female
	Ria	F	17	11	Toy seller	FGD – female
Anti	F	17	11	Unemployed	FGD – female	
Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre	Susi	F	16	10	Unemployed	Interview
	Andin	F	17	11	Unemployed	Interview
	Lila	F	18	12	Unemployed	Interview
	Rara	F	17	11	Unemployed	Interview
	Syahdan	M	16	10	Unemployed	Interview
	Umar	M	16	11	Unemployed	Interview

School site	Pseudonym name	Sex	Age	Grade	Employment status	Research activity
	Ridwan	M	18	12	Unemployed	Interview
	Hisyam	M	18	12	Unemployed	Interview
	Ivan	M	16	10	Unemployed	Interview
	Irfan	M	18	12	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Hendrik	M	18	12	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Syarif	M	18	12	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Sujana	M	18	12	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Dedi	M	18	12	Unemployed	FGD – male
	Upi	F	17	11	Unemployed	FGD – female
	Cicih	F	17	11	Unemployed	FGD – female
	Irma	F	17	11	Unemployed	FGD – female
	Mutmainah	F	18	11	Unemployed	FGD – female
	Nining	F	18	11	Unemployed	FGD – female

4.5 Data collection methods

The qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Barbour (2007, p. 44) states that some researchers have successfully combined one-on-one interviews with focus group discussions. An in-depth interview method records students' personal experiences. Liamputtong (2007, p. 96) states that in-depth interviews aim to elicit rich information from the perspectives of particular participants and selected topics under investigation. Similarly, Schoenberg (2005, as cited in Liamputtong, 2007) argues that the in-depth interview method allows participants to freely articulate their worldviews while allowing the researcher to remain focussed on the research topic. With this in mind, EP students speak about their experiences in an alternative education program, including negative and positive feelings of engagement, and of their transition from traditional to non-traditional learning. They also tell of their situation, such as working, helping the

family or struggling with the community that might affect the process of their engagement in learning.

The focus group discussions, on the other hand, facilitate access to research participants who may find one-on-one or face-to-face interaction ‘scary’ or ‘intimidating’ (Madriz, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 835). The group interview offers participants a safe environment to share ideas, beliefs and attitudes with people from the same gender, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. The focus group method can contribute to correcting individualistic bias by offering an opportunity to study individuals in their social context (Barbour, 2007) and allowing the researcher to receive spontaneous responses from participants that may not be uncovered in the interview process. Thus, the group becomes an appropriate tool for reconstructing individual opinions (Flick, 2009). Freire (as cited in Barbour, 2007) argues that a focus group is a dialogical research method. The interviews and focus group discussions are conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia*, because *Bahasa* is the first language of the participants and myself.

4.5.1 Interview process

One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview (Yin, 2014). The individual interview process allows me to focus directly on the personal views of student experiences in alternative schooling. It also allows me, as a researcher, to understand the interviewee’s own sense of meaning of perception and attitude of an event as the material to be understood (Merton, Lowenthal, & Kendall, 1990) and to find out what is ‘in and on someone else’s mind’ (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Patton explains the main purpose of an interview:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe ... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

Individual interviews are conducted with 21 students from three schools. The interview process seeks information about four main topics: (i) student background; (ii) experiences of dropping out of mainstream schooling (if relevant); (iii) reason for re-entering schooling through the EP; and (iv) the learning experience in the EP culture (Appendix A – Interview Questions). The individual interviews are conducted three times with the working students, each lasting 30-45 minutes and audio-recorded. However, for non-working students, especially in rural areas, their single interview extends to 60-90 minutes because they allocated more time to the researcher. The different time periods correspond with Yin's (2014, p. 110) suggestion that the interview process may take place over two or more hours, either in a single session or multiple sessions. The interviews are conducted in school hours at recess time or after school.

The majority of participants are easy to approach and eager to tell their stories, including those about personal difficulties (i.e. family backgrounds and daily life experiences). For example, several female students cry when they tell their stories about arriving in Jakarta to work as housemaids. There is sadness and disappointed expressions in their stories, but at the same times, their faces express happiness because they feel that someone is listening to their stories. Overall, there are no obstacles to conducting the interviews. However, one young student did not show up at the second round of interviews, and I did not see her at school for two

weeks thereafter. I wondered if something happened to her. Then one day, she approached me and told me that the interview process frightens her because she is afraid that I would tell the police about where she previously sang to raise money. I did not continue the interview process with this student, as the research has to be conducted without causing any harm to participants. To allow participants to freely share their stories, semi-structured interviews are utilised rather than structured ones.

The approach to semi-structured interview builds the interview process as a conversation between interviewee and interviewer. Semi-structured interviews allow the complex behaviour and perspective of the individual to be expressed without imposing any a priori categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry (Fontana & Frey, in Stake, 1994, p. 366). In order to avoid bias, such as ‘an interviewee gives what the interviewer wants to hear’ as a weaknesses of the interview process (Yin, 2014, p. 106), two procedures are applied in the interview process: (i) asking question based on the interview inquiry; (ii) probing (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner. In other words, the interview process leads to a mutual and subtle influence between interviewee and interviewer, as well as leads to the process of reflexivity of the participant’s experience.

4.5.2 Focus group discussion

The second phase of data collection is a focus group discussion conducted in order to obtain the views of a larger group of participants. Focus groups allow a comparison of participant views involved in the process where ‘the synergy of the group, the interaction of its members, can add depth or insight of an interview’ (Wellington, 2000, p. 125).

The focus group discussions were conducted in school areas after school hours. Each group consists of four to five students. It is suggested that the minimum number of participants in a focus group is three or four with a maximum of eight (Barbour, 2007, p. 60) in order to obtain in-depth participant perspectives. Since gender can play an important role in determining the dominant voice, because men tend to dominate and talk more than women (p. 97), a number of group discussions segregate females from males to allow all students to feel comfortable among peers of the same gender when articulating their views and stories. As a vehicle for crystallisation, Richardson (2000) argues that focus groups allow for obtaining another angle of the research, to gain multidimensionality of data when information from the first phase of data collection might only provide a partial point of view. Similar to the interview process, focus groups are also conducted three times in each school in the urban areas and once in the rural area. Each group interview lasts one-and-a-half to two hours (Flick, 2002, p. 385) and are audio-recorded. While the questions in the personal interviews consisted of personal backgrounds and perspective, the focus group allows participants to find common and broad perspectives and experiences through prompts that guide the process, for example: (i) aspects of the EP that attract students to come; (ii) learning experiences in the EP; (iii) elements of the EP that serve student needs; (iv) community perception of the EP; and (v) aspects of the program that need to be improved. The process of group discussions began with the researcher's personal and research introduction, followed by participant discussions that include their personal backgrounds. This strategy allows the moderator to create an atmosphere in which groups of students are free to express their perspectives (D. W. Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

There is a different dynamic of discussion between female and male groups. From my view, female groups tend to express their opinion more freely than male students, especially when the topic relates to personal stories. However, when the topic of conversation is about the school and their opinion of it, male students dare to express their views among themselves. I handled the process very carefully and expressed concern if one participant influenced another participant's contribution. I use probing questions to eliminate the domination, personal bias or silence voices. I also notice one or two occasions when the group went off track. However, since I know that my participants are committed to the time given (i.e. most allow me additional time or rounds of discussion, if necessary), I allow the conversation time to get back on track. At the end of the group discussion following the final question, I ask if anyone has anything else to add. Mostly, in the closing conversation, the participants express their happiness because the conversation is releasing their worries and inner thoughts.

4.5.3 Crystallisation

This study is based on a qualitative case study research approach that uses in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The aim of combining two methods of data collection is to provide in-depth and complex understanding of the issues. Generally, in qualitative studies, there are standardised instruments to ensure reliability and validity of research data. The construct of reliability and validity mainly comes from the positivist paradigm and quantitative methodologies, thus are not necessarily applicable to qualitative research (Merriam, 1998, p. 199). However, trustworthiness of qualitative research findings is essential to ensuring the validity of the research. Triangulation, an approach that utilises multiple data sources and multiple methods,

can be used to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings, as well as used to compare data, to see if data is inconsistent or contradictory, or if it corroborates (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Furthermore, triangulation is used to assure that all different methods return equivalent results (Denzin, 1989, as cited in Hemming, 2008).

Triangulation is often used as an important way for ‘validating’ qualitative research evidence. Much critique exists as to whether triangulation is a satisfactory method of verifying research findings. Richardson (2000, p. 934) argues that triangulation processes bring the assumption that there is an ‘object’ that can be triangulated with ‘a rigid, fixed and two dimensional object’. However, to see the ‘truth’, qualitative research has to combine multidimensionality and angles of the approach. The concept of ‘crystallisation’ on the issue of validating the research findings is more relevant than triangulation. The use of ‘crystallisation’, based on Richardson’s argument, is more suitable to apply because the employment of mixed methods can only produce a partial view of the research topic.

This study uses crystallisation to measure the validity of research findings. Two data collection methods, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, are worked with to complement each other rather than to clarify the same findings from different methods. Using crystallisation can build up a more holistic picture of a participant’s perspective, rather than duplicate findings (Darbyshire, 2005). It allows me to produce deeper insight and a more complex view of the research topic. This can be achieved through using mixed methods for data collection in which the research question can be answered through a different way.

4.6 Data analysis and representation

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of data, which involves ‘consolidating, reducing and interpreting what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). Four steps on data analysis are introduced in this case study research: (i) analytical framework; (ii) category construction from all data and information from the interview and focus group process; (iii) specific analysis in a single case study or site; and (iv) cross-case analysis in which all case studies are brought together in one level of analysis.

4.6.1 Analytical framework

Yin (2014, pp. 136-142) suggests four analytical strategies in conducting case study analysis: (i) initial theoretical prepositions; (ii) working your data from the ‘grounded up’; (iii) developing a case description; and (iv) examining plausible rival explanations. The purpose of an analytical strategy is to link data to a theoretical framework or concept in order to give a sense of the direction in analysing data. The *first* strategy is to follow the theoretical prepositions that led to a case study. The theoretical preposition shapes the data collection plan and, therefore, yields a procedure for data analysis. The *second* strategy is inductive analysis in which the researcher can build concepts from noticing a pattern of the data. The *third* analytical strategy is to organise the case study according to a descriptive framework. A descriptive approach helps to identify the appropriate explanation of the data. The *fourth* is a combination of the previous three analytical strategies in which the researcher is trying to define and test plausible rival explanations of the data. These strategies are not mutually exclusive; rather, an appropriate strategy can be developed by selecting one of the strategies or a combination of them.

Referring to those strategies, I combine the first and third strategies by analysing the theoretical proposition and developing a case description. In Chapter 2, I set up the theoretical framework that underpins the study, namely, the theories of transformative learning and critical pedagogy. The key concept to be harnessed from the two theories is ‘perspective transformation/change.’ This study is developed from the assumption that EP students have the capacity to encounter transformation in learning through critically examining assumptions and values, and liberating themselves from oppressive experiences of reality. To identify and shape data based on the theoretical proposition, Mezirow’s phase of perspective transformation (1991) is used as pre-assigned process codes (Chapter 2). A case description strategy shapes the logic of students’ learning experiences, starting from the point of entry to the EP and while learning. It aims to identify the processes that create the student’s transformation. To analyse data, Section 4.6.2 describes analytical techniques relating to how data is organised and categorised before being reported.

4.6.2 Organising data and category construction

Creswell (2013, pp 182-188) provides general analysis procedures in preparing and organising qualitative data. He asserts that it is best represented in a spiral image. The activities of data analysis include: (i) organising data; (ii) reading and memoing; (iii) describing, classifying and interpreting data into codes and themes; (iv) interpreting data; and (v) representing and visualising data. In analysing qualitative data, I begin by manually using techniques such as ‘cut and paste’ and coloured pens to categorise data and develop theoretical explanations. A set of information (e.g. audio files and transcriptions) from three sites is organised and distinguished into different groups to maintain the context of each case and to make the information

easily retrievable (Merriam, 1998, p. 194). This process, also suggested by Patton (1990) which he terms 'case record' means the case record pulls together and organises the voluminous case data into a comprehensive primary resource package. The case study database (or record) benefits the researcher in that it is able to locate specific data during the intensive analysis process (Merriam, 1998).

After organising the data, analysis takes place to get a sense of how the case study is recorded. Agar (as cited in Creswell, 2013) suggests that the researcher 'read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts' (p. 183). In this regard, I carefully read all the individual transcripts and use a coloured pen to make notes in the margins of the transcripts as an initial process of exploring the database. Then I write comments for each transcript where it is important, interesting and potentially relevant to the study. This systematic process is applied to all transcripts in the case study database or record. The next step is to classify and interpret the data, especially important and relevant information, through coding or categorising. In qualitative inquiry, a code is 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3).

Initial coding framework

The process of coding involves aggregating text or visual data into 'small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code' (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). The initial coding construction begins with reading the first participant's interview transcript and field notes, followed by making thematic extraction from his/her transcript. The

works of Morrisette (2011) inspired me to develop, in tabular form, the participant's experience. Therefore, I developed tables for each participant to make an initial coding framework from their story, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Example of initial coding framework of participant 'A' (Site A)

Excerpts from transcribed interview	Paraphrase	A priori code	Empirical code	Initial coding
When I entered this school, I was 17 years old. Even though I only graduated from Elementary School, the school principal placed me in Grade 9 instead of Grade 7.	The student jumped up from Grade 6 to Grade 9 because of age consideration	✓		Accelerated program
As a housemaid, I never had the idea to continue my study after a few years not in school anymore. But one day, my employer asked me to continue my education at an alternative school, and I agreed. I felt happy at the time.	The role of other contributes to making a decision for re-entering education	✓		Role of other
After such a long time not attending school, I did not get an idea of how a schooling process was like. For the first time, I did not understand at all what the teacher said. I felt shame at school. I feel like I need more than two months to get involved in the learning process, as well as with school community. For instance, when I have difficulties in understanding <i>Physics</i> , I feel embarrassed, but I was trying to ask the teacher if I was stuck on understanding learning material.	Student integrates into school community and learning process	✓		Self-examination with feelings a shame

I use a priori or empirical codes (additional codes) that guide the coding process in order to distinguish categories from theoretical models or the literature and codes from the views of participants. It is accepted in the field of health sciences to use 'prefigured' codes. By distinguishing the codes as a priori and empirical during the analysis process, the codes can represent the following: (i) information that researchers expect to find in the study; (ii) surprising information that researchers do

not expect to find; and (iii) information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to researchers (and potentially participants and audiences) (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, during the coding process, hundreds of codes appear from the data. Huberman and Miles (in Stake, 1994) suggest that researchers may make preliminary counts of data codes and determine how frequently they appear in the database. However, Creswell (2013) mentions that the researcher may look at a number of passages associated with each code, but it is not necessary to count them because the passage codes may represent contradictory views. In this manner, I sorted the codes that appeared from each participant's initial coding and made a list of grouping to check if they were also present in the second participant. These patterns became the categories or themes from which subsequent items are sorted (Merriam, 1998, p. 181).

Categories and themes

The codes are developed and similar codes are organised into themes or broad categories of idea from the data. Themes or categories are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013).

Merriam (1998) adds that the categories are abstractions derived from the data, not the data themselves. It is conceptual elements that 'cover' or span individual examples of the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Merriam, 1998). The name of themes or categories can come from at least three sources: (i) researcher; (ii) participants; or (iii) outside the study, such as literature. Several guidelines are recommended by Merriam (1998) on how to determine the efficacy of categories:

- (1) Category should reflect the purpose of the research. In effect, categories are the answers to the research question(s);
- (2) Categories should be exhaustive, that is, the researcher should be able to place data that important or relevant to the study in a category or subcategory;
- (3) Categories should be

mutually exclusive. A particular unit of data should fit into only one category. If the same unit of data can be placed in more than one category, conceptual work needs to be done to refine the categories; (4) Categories should be sensitising. The naming of the category should be as sensitive as possible to what is in the data. An outsider should be able to read the categories and gain some sense of their nature; and (5) Categories should be conceptually congruent. This means that the same level of abstraction should characterise all categories at the same level. (Merriam, 1998, pp. 83-84)

Merriam (1998) further suggests that one of the best strategies for checking all criteria against the category scheme is to set categories in the form of a chart or table. There is no rule about the number of categories; it depends on the data and focus of the research. However, Merriam argues that ‘the fewer the categories, the greater the level of abstraction, and the greater ease with which the researcher can communicate the findings to others (Merriam, 1998, p. 185). Separate themes or categories are developed for each site or school in order to formulate a detailed description of the particular case or site that represents the data in the report. Table 4.5 represents the categories and themes in Site A.

An inductive analysis approach is used in order to develop categories and themes. It is an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by ‘the study’s purpose, the investigator’s orientation and knowledge and the meanings made by explicit by the participants themselves (Merriam, 1998, p. 179).

Table 4.5 Examples of categories and themes in a school (Site A)

Research question	Theme	Category	Coding	Quotes
Why does Indonesian disadvantaged youth choose to re-enter education through alternative schooling?	Returning to school	Social pressure	Self-improvement	<p>Extract: I promised myself, also to my Mom that even though I had been dropped out, and it was five years ago after I didn't attend schooling, but I want to continue my study. Therefore, I re-enter schooling through Package A. (<i>Indah, female, 17 years old</i>)</p> <p>Extract: I always have frictions with my mother, I feel like she always humiliate me, she always blame me that I did wrong things. In this matter, I want to her know that I love her, and I want to show her that I will succeed in the future. (<i>Siti, female, 21 years old</i>)</p>
			Future job expectation	<p>Extract: I enrol to Equivalency Education Program in Package C based on my life experience which in young age I was forced to become a young worker, working as a construction labourer, which is when I'm 16 years old. This job is hard for me. So, after six years, I decided to enter this program because I want to have a better job in the future, job with soft skill. (<i>Raka, male, 25 years old</i>)</p>
		Barriers	Bored	<p>Extract: I have no choice, if I only stay at home, watching a movie, playing with my mobile phone, it made me bored. So I come here because I want to chat with my friends. (<i>Tedjo, male, 14 years old</i>)</p> <p>Extract: Yeah, me too. I don't have any activity at home. So it is better to come here, to study. (<i>Erwin, male, 14 years old</i>)</p>
			Formal school's barrier	<p>Extract: My school transfer certificate from my previous high school at Lampung is difficult to manage. It needs a long time for preparing it. Unfortunately, my father does not have enough time for managing my school transfer certificate because he had to move to his new office soon. Consequently, I have to re-enter schooling through EPs rather than to similar senior secondary school (formal school), here in Jakarta. (<i>Eva, female, 18 years old</i>)</p>

In developing categories and themes, I begin with raw data from the interview and focus group transcripts, followed by several codes (e.g. self-improvement, future job expectation, bored, formal school barriers) and then onto the general categories and themes. The themes connect to each other to display a chronological structure based on the research sub-questions. After the procedures are completed on the three sites, I approach the final step, which is representing and reporting the findings.

Yin (2014, pp 183-187) outlines four formats for representing and reporting case studies. The first is the single case study, which presents a single narrative to describe and analyse the case. The second format is a multiple case report that contains multiple narratives, as presented in separate chapters about each of the cases singularly and containing a chapter that covers the cross-case analysis. The third type covers multiple or single case studies that follow a series of questions and answers in the case study database. The fourth format applies to multiple case studies only; there may not be any separate chapters for individual cases. Furthermore, Merriam (1998, p. 194) suggests that in a multiple case study, there are two stages of analysis: (i) *within-case analysis*; and (ii) *cross-case analysis*. In this study, I provide a detailed description of each school as a case and themes within the case, a *within-case analysis* followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, a *cross-case analysis*.

4.6.3 Within-case analysis

Each site or school is treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. A chronological structure (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014) presents the case study in a sequence. This is guided by the research question: *How do disadvantaged students engage with alternative schooling?* and framed by theoretical propositions. Six core themes are organised from the previous stages of analysis (i.e. coding, categories and

themes) to make a set of different domains of student learning experiences. The structure in one case study repeats the same case study, but different in the content and story embedded in each theme.

- Leaving mainstream school
- Entering the equivalency program
- Initial learning experiences
- Integration into learning
- Self-identification of learning outcomes

The structure begins with describing the setting, followed by themes that emerge from the previous stage of analysis. An appropriate balance of describing the stories in the case study is made with regard to the amount of analysis and interpretation or assertion. This consideration is based on Merriam's (1988, as cited in Creswell, 2013) suggestion that in comparing description and analysis, it might be 40-60% or 30-70% in favour of the descriptions. In the detailed description, I avoid revealing the name of the schools by leaving out the school name, address or any information that might disclose it. All people involved in a case (or cases) remain anonymous.

4.6.4 Cross-case analysis

Once the analysis and findings report for each case are completed, cross-case analysis begins. Multiple case studies seek abstraction across the cases (Merriam, 1998, p. 195). This method attempts 'to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details' (Yin, 1994) or it will have 'unusual features' (Stake, 2006, p. 40). However, I have to consider carefully the complex configuration of processes within each case and its context

before noting the pattern of variables across the cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as cited in Merriam, 1998). In this matter, I carefully review the details of each case to identify patterns and the whole stories. The results of this process can lead to ‘categories, themes or typologies that conceptualise the data from all cases, or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases (Merriam, 1998, p. 195). In my cross-case analysis, the findings report based on themes emerges from abstractions or patterns across each case. It is also suggested by Stake (2006, p. 41) that a theme-based description of the *quintain* (an object, phenomenon or condition to be studied, which in a multiple case study, is the target of collection) is fit for a cross-case analysis approach.

In a theme-based description of cross-case analysis, Stake (2006 pp 33-77) suggests three cross-case procedures: (i) *Track 1*, emphasising case findings; (ii) *Track 2*, merging case findings; and (iii) *Track 3*, providing factors for analysis. Track 1 in a cross-case analysis emphasises the various situations and findings of the cases. I begin with establishing several themes, either from the research questions or from case reports, followed by describing the findings in each case that have relevance to each theme. In this procedure, the researcher needs to place attention on the *situationality* of the case through its findings. Track 2, on the other hand, is used if the researcher wants to move towards generalisation. The procedures begin with creating a set of findings based on each case, rather than on the cross-case themes, then merge the findings across cases and name those merged findings. However, some findings will not merge because they only occur in one case, and will be isolated (Stake, 2006, p. 60). Furthermore, the merged findings are a basis for developing themes. The last procedure, Track 3 is in quantitative mode, which is to

convert themes or findings into variables or factors to be measured, compared or correlated. The use of factors is usually more helpful if the researcher has a larger number of cases because the situations surrounding the cases become blurred and abstract.

Referring to Stake's technical procedures, my cross-case analysis and report refer to Stake's Track 2. Findings from all case studies are merged under the same themes, initially by mentioning the *quintain* and its themes, and then supporting merged findings and assertions as a whole element of the cross-case report. I make 'assertions' from the case study evidence to show sameness or disparity of their characteristics. The context and particular activity of individual cases/sites become important features in cross-case analysis. In doing so, I keep in mind the multiple case studies as a whole, while at the same time, concentrate on each case's story in its situation.

Furthermore, in merged findings, I make comparisons in a search for similarities and differences in each case, but it has only a minor role to play in presenting case studies. Stake (2006, p. 83) stresses that a multiple case study is not a design for comparing cases. The cases studied is a group chosen to enable a better understanding of the phenomena of the study. In this sense, the researcher compares one case to others to identify the different details of each case, but without giving emphasis to attributes for comparison. Furthermore, collective practice from each case provides generalisations for guiding policy for future recommendations of the study.

4.7 Ethical issues and consideration

In considering ethical issues during the study, I took action to address them by applying for ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Western Sydney University (Appendix B). It was granted before the research process commenced. Ethics approval is aimed to ensure integrity in research, therefore, commencing any research without ethics approval may constitute misconduct. The ethics approval also aims to ensure the safety of the research participants. The critical issue is to ensure the research process does not harm young participants. However, in the Indonesian context, a research process might have a less negative impact on participants. The Indonesian culture is based on mutual trust and responsibility to serve the other person. Originating from a different academic culture, I believe that participants should not feel threatened during the research process. Nevertheless, I am now part of the dominant research culture in which ethics practices construct international research students as unwitting objects of Western socialisation (Reid, Alsaiari, & Rosmilawati, 2015). From this experience, I also learnt that the process of ethical approval leads to the reliability of the research.

Furthermore, Creswell (2013, p. 56) reminds researchers that ethical issues do not only surface during data collection, but arise during several phases of the research process. Weis and Fine (2000, as cited in Creswell, 2013) lists ethical considerations as involving:

... researcher's roles as insiders/outsiders to the participants; assessing issues that we may be fearful of disclosing; establishing supportive, respectful relationships without stereotyping and using labels that participants do not embrace; acknowledging whose voices will be represented in final study; and writings ourselves onto the study by reflecting on who we are and the people we study. (p. 56)

From this point, I came to appreciate the critical issues related to ethics and consideration; it includes the respectful relationships with research participants through informed consent and using anonymity and confidentiality to respect the privacy of participants, and personal reflectivity of the researcher in the study process.

4.7.1 Informed consent

Research involves collecting data from people and about people (K. F. Punch, 2005).

I respect the participants and the sites. Therefore, I undertook to obtain informed consent to avoid misconduct and impropriety that might affect the research participants. With informed consent, the subjects of research ‘have the right to be informed that they are being researched and also about the nature of the research’ (M. Punch, 1998, p. 170). By applying informed consent, the researcher and participants understand that the participants may ‘withdraw from the research project at any time’ (Weppner, 1977, p. 41, as cited in M. Punch, 1998). The participants are able to make voluntary decisions to participate or not. However, as previously mentioned, the Indonesian culture is based on mutual trust, which culturally influences the necessity of the consent form for participants. Indonesian researchers rarely give consent forms as proof of confidentiality, therefore, participants in this study initially rejected the form. In fact, many students wanted to become my research participants. The participants voluntarily sign the consent form after I explain the purpose of informed consent.

The participants sign the informed consent forms before they engage in the research. Vulnerable participants, that is, those under the age of 19, are given two forms to be signed, one for the participant and the other for his/her parent or

caregiver. Information sheets about the study are also given in conjunction with the informed consent form. Both documents provide the following details: (i) identification of the researcher; (ii) identification of the sponsoring institution; (iii) how participants are selected; (iv) purpose of the research; (v) benefits for participating; (vi) level and type of participant involvement; (vii) notation of risks to the participant, if any; (viii) guarantee of confidentiality to the participant; (ix) assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time; and (x) names of persons to contact if questions arise (Sarantakos, 2005). The informed consents were given in *Bahasa Indonesia*.

4.7.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants are utilised in disseminating the findings in this study. The participant's identity and the name of the schools or sites are not revealed or identifiable in print to promote confidentiality. This action is enforced, as suggested by Bulmer (1982, p. 225, as cited in M. Punch, 1998) that 'identities, locations of individuals and places are concealed in published results, data collected are held in anonymised form, and all data kept securely confidential'. This also may retain participants' ownership of their voice and exert their independence in making a decision. In deviant or disadvantaged group, 'it can be used to control those who one studied, or to explain differences between them and the majority' (Cassell, 1978, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 224), thus providing a rationale for withholding assistance (Cassell, 1978, as cited in Merriam, 1998).

4.8 Conclusion

Chapter 4 presents the study's epistemological stance, theoretical perspective and its relationship to research methodology and design. The four elements of research are used to address the research questions. These questions provide the basis for the investigation of student learning experiences in alternative schools in Indonesia in relation to the process of students starting at the point of entry, following through experiences upon entering school and while learning. Interpretive approaches that involve qualitative research methods are best applied when the purpose of the research is to understand people's experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Furthermore, the case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning of the process of understanding students' transformation. The chapter also provides information about the research participants, their profiles and the process of data collection.

Throughout Chapter 4, the study establishes a supportive theoretical framework (Chapter 2). It uses 'perspective transformation' as a key concept, derived from the theory of transformative learning and critical pedagogy. These serve the aims of the study, that is, to identify the processes that create students' transformation. The research of student experiences in non-mainstream education systems, such as alternative education, second chance education and non-formal education has been conducted throughout the worlds (Chapter 3). The literature suggests that many 'at-risk' students encounter transformation in learning and lives during and after schooling in non-mainstream education, especially those in the area of alternative education. However, the majority of impact studies in non-formal education provision rely heavily on quantitative methods, as this is part of

government assessments. The current study utilises qualitative methods to uncover what learning engagement means through the lens of transformation in providing non-formal education. Data is collected through interviews and focus group discussions with the principles of ‘crystallisation’ informing the validity of research, especially during the process of data collection. Data analysis is conducted under the guidance of theoretical prepositions and a case description approach, as displayed in single case and cross-case analysis. Findings are presented in the following four chapters: (i) Chapter 5 – Wijaya Learning Centre case study; (ii) Chapter 6 – Mandiri Community Centre case study; (iii) Chapter 7 – Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre case study; and (iv) Chapter 7 – Cross-case study.

CHAPTER 5:

CASE STUDY – WIJAYA LEARNING CENTRE

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 cover the following three case studies: (i) Wijaya Learning Centre in the urban-metropolitan area of Jakarta (Chapter 5); (ii) Mandiri Learning Centre in the sub-urban area of Depok city (Chapter 6); and (iii) Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre in the rural area of Pandeglang municipality (Chapter 7). As mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.6.2, five core themes are constructed to identify a set of learning experiences. These themes are organised around a chronological structure (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The structure in one case study is repeated in subsequent case studies, but is different due to the content and story embedded in each theme. The *first* theme relates to students' life events associated with experiences of failing out of the mainstream school setting, the *second* relates to student decisions to enter the EP, the *third* relates to students' initial experience in the EP, the *fourth* relates to student integrating into the learning environment, and the *fifth* theme relates to students' self-identification of learning outcomes in alternative schooling.

The aim of Chapter 5 is to analyse and interpret student learning experiences at the Wijaya Learning Centre (hereinafter referred to as Wijaya). It begins with a description of the school and continues through the five themes that describe student learning experiences at Wijaya. Of the 15 students who participated in the interview and focus group discussions, nine are female and six are male.

5.2 School profile

Wijaya is located in an urban-metropolitan area of Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia and its largest city, in a middle-class residential neighbourhood that is rapidly growing due to internal migration. Although Wijaya's main target is the community of the Pesanggrahan district in South Jakarta, Wijaya attracts young people from other areas to participate in its non-formal education programs due to its accessibility by public transportation. As Indonesia's capital city, Jakarta attracts people from outside the area to settle, therefore, the population continues to increase. As at November 2011 (Dinas Kependudukan dan Catatan Sipil, 2012), Jakarta population has grown to 10,187,595 in an area of 661 square kilometres, and consists of five *Kotamadya* (cities – former municipalities) and one *Kabupaten* (regency). In South Jakarta where Wijaya is located, it was planned as a satellite city with a large upscale shopping centre and affluent residential areas. Wijaya students are a fusion of young migrant working-class, middle-class and adult learners returning to schooling.

Wijaya was established in 2004 under the management of the local Department of Education, Jakarta province. The school is funded by local government, but it is permitted to draw a tuition fee from students, if required. As a public community learning centre, Wijaya's main target is urban learners in the Pesanggrahan district. The purpose of the learning centre is to give young people an opportunity to participate in schooling processes through the EP, as well as to those who want to gain educational experiences through non-formal education programs such as literacy and training. As a major function of Wijaya, the EP runs every year with modifications due to its flexibility based on the demands and needs of learners.

For instance, school days and hours of operation can change every academic year depending on the number of students and availability of teachers.



Figure 5.1 Wijaya Learning Centre students

Wijaya had an enrolment of 177 students at the time this study was undertaken. The 2012/2013 student enrolment consisted of seven Package A students, 65 Package B students and 105 Package C students. The school has one head officer and two administrative staff. Eight tutors (teachers) support all levels of the EP from Package A to Package C. Student demographics at Wijaya consist of school-age students, young workers and mature aged migrant workers (e.g. housemaid, babysitter, office boy, cleaner, security officer, shopkeeper and construction labourer). Although the majority of students are young workers, the demand for PS and JSS levels from middle-class families appears to be increasing. The main reason for school-age students enrolling in the program is due to failure in their previous schools. With a combination of those characteristics (middle-lower class, school-age and post school-age students), the school must be dynamic in accommodating the learning needs of its students.

Despite the moderate number of students, the school has only three classes to provide all educational levels. When we entered the school gate, a huge sign announces ‘Welcome to WIJAYA Jakarta: My School is My Identity’ (written in English). The school consists of one small main building, consisting of three classrooms for Packages A, B and C, and another class for the life skills program. The school also has a room for the teachers and a small room for the canteen and toilet. A prayer room is located separately from the main building. The library is located at the front of the classroom. It comprises of two medium sized bookcases with books or manuals for students. No facilities related to other school activities, such as science laboratories, computer room and sports facilities are present. While there is a lack of resources, Wijaya has an adequate number of teachers compared to other EPs. The majority of teachers are full-time government workers with graduate qualification who are committed to their work with rarely any absences from class.



Figure 5.2 Wijaya Learning Centre building

As a community learning centre, Wijaya opens five days a week. However, the study hours for the EP are three days per week, from Monday to Wednesday. By utilising two classrooms, the school hours are split into three time periods for the first classroom: (i) 10 am to 12 noon for Grades 5 and 6 (study in the same group); (ii) 1 pm to 4 pm for Grades 7 and 8; and (iii) 4 pm to 6 pm for Grade 9. The second classroom is split into two time periods: (i) 1 pm to 4 pm for Grades 10 and 11 (study in the same group); and (ii) 4 pm to 6 pm for Grade 12. The average number of school hours is six to seven hours per week for all grades. On Thursdays and Fridays, the classrooms are used for other programs, such as literacy education and training. However, those programs depend on financial support from the local government and cannot always be scheduled. Thus, the resources will be under-utilised if funding for these programs is terminated.

Section 5.3 describes the research findings in Wijaya based on five themes that emerged from the single case analysis: (i) leaving mainstream school; (ii) entering the EP; (iii) initial learning experiences; (iv) integration into learning; and (v) self-identification of learning outcomes.

5.3 Leaving mainstream schooling

Wijaya students are a combination of school-age and post-school-age students ranging from their early teens to twenties. The young people at Wijaya report a diverse range of personal and social circumstances as influences to failing to complete traditional schooling. The first category includes dropping out ‘because of school’ and the second category dropped out ‘because of family context.’

5.3.1 Social exclusion

Although there are only a few cases, some Wijaya school-age students leave mainstream schooling because of their resistant behaviour in the classroom and the school. This challenging behaviour sets such students up for cycles of conflict with schooling authorities, leading to absenteeism, suspension or dropping out. Juvenile delinquency happens for a variety of reasons, ranging from difficult teacher-student relationships to students feeling the school environment is uninteresting and uninspiring. For example, Sinta says her previous school experience in an Islamic boarding school was too strict for her. The students are not allowed to use the internet and mobile phones. This uninteresting school experience challenged Sinta to move away from school because the situation did not connect with her educational needs and passions. Another case is Erwin, who was excluded from the mainstream school because of truancy. Erwin says his peers influenced him to neglect his studies at school:

One day, my friend asked me to join with him to go to another school. I have no idea the first time why I fight with other student because of my friend's problem. Now, this is like a habit. When we saw our enemy, I mean other students from another school; I joined with my friends to brawl. Since that, instead of attending the class, I like to truant with my friends ... until the teacher gave me a letter of exclusion from school because of behaviour infractions. (Erwin, male, 14 years old)

A mainstream school with its traditional classroom environment is also reported as a factor contributing to student exclusion. Hierarchical, structured and formal relationships between teacher and student become factors that students find difficult. Competition among students that results in the achievement of a school's performance lead some students to feel they do not have 'a place' at school. Furthermore, the study load becomes a factor that leads students to not enjoy the

school community. Tedjo shares his experience of dropping out of mainstream schooling because of absenteeism. For him, mainstream school treats young students as ‘little kids’; the teachers and others in the school community always told the student what they should do:

Skipping from school in the first experience is just for fun. But, day after day, it feels enjoyable. That is why after so many days, weeks, or maybe months got truant from school; my teacher gave me a letter to my parents. I was expelled from school. But it is ok because I also feel the same with the other, I feel like too many things to do at school. For example, after school hours, I have to join with after school activities. It made me feel like only a short time for rest, at home. (Tedjo, male, 14 years old)

It is clear that the characteristics of the traditional school influence students to drop out either directly or indirectly. The indirect way creates conditions that influence student engagement, which can lead to students voluntarily withdrawing from school due to boredom, poor attendance or low achievement. The direct way is through the school’s environment and explicit policies that lead to students involuntarily withdrawing from school (Rumberger, 2011). A school may enact rules and take action in response to low grades, poor attendance, misbehaviour or exceeding the compulsory schooling age that lead to suspension, expulsion or forced transfer. This form of withdrawal is initiated by the school and contrasts with the student-initiated form, as mentioned previously.

5.3.2 Family and socioeconomic context

As social exclusion from the previous school usually happens in middle-class students, lower class students tend to fail at their previous school because of their family’s financial problems. Families with financial difficulties contribute greatly to students’ inability to continue their academic studies. Dimas shares his story of

discontinuing from JSS because his mother could not provide the enrolment fees to attend the vocational secondary school (VSS):

About seven years ago, I never forget about this. I was enrolled in a VSS and had been accepted, but when I asked my mother for the 1.6 million rupiahs enrolment fee, she only gave me 400,000 rupiahs, which was not enough. Sadly, because my mother was unable to pay the rest of fee, I quit school after one month. (Dimas, male, 23 years old)

More importantly than financial problems, low socioeconomic status (SES) families often lack a commitment to education. They force their children to enter the workforce. After graduating from middle school, many young people travel to the big city to earn money, and this culture is happening as a natural process for many rural communities. Raka is one example. He comes from a small village in Pemalang, Central Java Province. Raka realises that after he graduates from middle school he will not continue his education because, like most of his peers, he will need to migrate to Jakarta and seek work. He follows this tradition as part of his life experience. Many families insist that becoming successful is not due to attaining educational qualifications, but due to work hard from a young age. Indeed, education is not an important contributor to people's achievements. Such a family environment can considerably influence a student's schooling progress, including how he/she values education.

5.4 Entering the equivalency program

There are several reasons why students return to education through an alternative pathway. For example, the decision is influenced by self-motivation, or students feel that the EP fits with their situation. Surprisingly, students who also work identify

themselves as being motivated by their employers, who encourage them to re-involve themselves in the education process.

5.4.1 Social pressure

Some students report difficulties when they fail and leave their mainstream school. They are forced to become young workers, and life is as not easy for them at that particular time. However, after being away from school for several years and subsequent difficulties in life, these young workers think about and approach their academic responsibilities. There is a sense of increased accomplishment and maturity. For example, Risma and Indah sum it up by saying:

This is like my ambition, graduating from school, but three years ago, I forgot it. (Risma, female, 22 years old)

I promise to myself that even if I am too old to be a Grade 7 student (17 years old); I am not ashamed at all. I will stay at this school until I graduate from it. (Indah, female, 17 years old)

Another common factor pertains to the opportunity to prove to others (particularly family) that they can persist and succeed. Siti explains that she wanted to prove to her mother that she could succeed in the future by coming back to school. After being humiliated by family members, she struggles with the thought of being looked down upon by society. This humiliation seems to influence young people's decisions to return to school and helps students to redeem themselves and experience a sense of psychological freedom and empowerment.

I always have frictions with my mother; I feel like she always humiliates me. She would always blame me when I did wrong things. In this matter, I want her to know that I love her, and I want to show her that I will succeed in the future. (Siti, female, 21 years old)

5.4.2 Future job expectations

More mature students at Wijaya report that their eventual return to school is influenced by their life and work experiences without a high school diploma. Because it is impossible for post-school-age students to re-enter mainstream schooling because stringent assessment procedures relate to the age requirement, the EP offers the means to attain the necessary employment qualifications. For these young and more mature students, future job expectations and career opportunities are the major reasons why they choose to return to school after a long break. Thus, the high school credential is the instrument for satisfying those expectations.

I do not want to be a housemaid all my life; I want my life to get better in the future. (Neneng, female, 22 years old)

I was forced to become a young worker, as a construction labourer. It is hard to have a working experience like this. Therefore, after six years of physically tired, I decided to enter this school because I want to have a better job in the future. (Raka, male, 25 years old)

An opportunity to help themselves is valuable for young people. The students express their belief that they would not be able to find better employment if people do not have academic qualifications, particularly in a major city such as Jakarta.

5.4.3 Barriers

Students choose to re-participate in education through the EP because they have nothing to do after failing their first attempt at education, and they cannot re-enrol in formal schooling. These two issues are identified as personal and institutional barriers. Staying at home without challenging activities creates boredom for young people. Therefore, they decide to enter the EP because there is no other choice. Erwin said that it was not 'too bad' to attend the EP as he can meet other students, which is preferable to staying at home all day.

In Indonesia, a formal school has strict regulations related to the re-enrolment process and requirements. For example, if a student has to migrate from one city to another in Indonesia, he/she requires a school transfer certificate from the previous school as part of the re-enrolment process. Unfortunately, some students have difficulties in acquiring it. Eva, who migrated to Jakarta with her family, found difficulty in arranging the issuance of the school certificate. Consequently, she is enrolled in an EP that is very different from her previous school in terms of the schooling system. In her previous formal school, she attended natural-science classes, while in the EP, she studies social-science disciplines, because Wijaya does not provide science as a specialisation at Grade 12:

My school transfer certificate from my previous high school at Lampung is difficult to manage. It needs a long time for preparing it. Unfortunately, my father does not have enough time for managing my school transfer certificate because he has to move to his new office soon. Consequently, I have to re-enter schooling through the EP rather than to a similar senior secondary school (formal school) here in Jakarta. (Eva, female, 18 years old)

5.4.4 Encouragement by employers

Jakarta has long been the main destination for many people seeking a better life, including youth from across Indonesia. Youth migrants, who leave school early, move to Jakarta without their parents because they believe that economic opportunities are unavailable in their village or city of origin. Most arrive in Jakarta with their peers with the hope of gaining employment. Typically, young females establish themselves in jobs as domestic servants, while males often start out as workers in small-scale factories or as street sellers. In general, they work casually or as self-employed, working long hours for low wages because they are working in low-level occupations. Many of these young migrant workers are prepared to work hard, and there are employers who recognise this. They work hard because they have

a responsibility towards their families who remain in their village, or because they need to survive due to a lack of family support in Jakarta. Many young migrant workers are committed to their jobs, and their employers respect them and encourage them to enrol in further education. Widi shares her story about how shocked she was when her employer asked her to find an alternative school:

As a housemaid, I never had an idea to continue my study after few years not in school anymore until one day, my employer asked me to continue my education in the EP, and I was agreed. I was so happy to have a chance like this. (Widi, female, 18 years old)

Another student, Dimas, points out that when he decided to enrol in the EP, his employer rescheduled his activities in his office as a custodian. Dimas was given longer working hours, but he was happy because he believed the chance that was given to him by his employer meant he will never be treated miserably.

5.5 Initial learning experience

In this study, the re-engagement process is defined as a student connecting to the learning process. An analysis of participant descriptions of re-engagement is described as a process of movement along a continuum. The process of student re-engagement in learning and the school culture is from an exploration stage to a disorientation stage and terminates in students' feelings of integrating into learning and school society.

5.5.1 Exploration stage

Taking a second chance

At the beginning of attending the EP, students express that they value their participation in a non-traditional school pathway. The majority of post-school-age

students value their participation into the EP as a second chance at education after failing their first attempt. This is in line with the philosophy of second chance education that ‘everyone has the right to try again’ and ‘to attempt success and mobility’ (Inbar, 1995, p. 26). By contrast, younger students or school-age groups describe their participation in the EP as a ‘pathway to re-entry into mainstream schooling’.

Being early school leavers, the life prospects of youth may diminish. Students can stay at home or work in low-paid jobs. The opportunity to improve life ends after becoming a dropout. These students find themselves being given another chance to rebuild their future through what they call a ‘second chance’.

I do not know what will happen to me if there is no alternative schools like this. Maybe I will never go back to school again until my entire life. Having the experience of dropping out made me look like an uneducated person.
(Sinta, female, 17 years old)

The students here are very diverse. Some of them dropped out from formal school because of truancy or brawling and they were expelled from formal school. Many of them are from good families and rich but did not succeed in formal schooling because of tight regulation and sometimes because they hated it. However, when they re-enrolled at this school, it gave them a second chance to get an education experience, they seem never make a good effort, always talk in the class, or just stay in school canteen without attending the lesson. For us, because we are from a low-income family, having no opportunity to stay in formal schooling is very irritating. So we feel like this school gives us another chance, including a chance for better life. (Group of female students)

Shavit, Ayalon and others (2002, p. 2) state that second chance education is based on the idea that ‘through an organised structure an individual can actualise an educational opportunity missed or failed the first time around.’ Furthermore, Yogev (1997, p. 469) stresses that the philosophy underpinning second chance education are ‘errors made by the selection mechanisms of the educational system or by individuals who terminated their educational career could be corrected at a later

stage'. In this sense, students who are unsuccessful on the main road are given another chance via a parallel pathway. For Munns and McFadden (2000), the notion of a 'second chance' is linked with the desire for people to change the circumstances of their lives by returning to education.

For most school-age students, the EP is a pathway to a 'regular' way. These students come to see themselves as failures and mainly are shamed by their peers at their previous school, as well as by family members and neighbours for becoming an EP student. Feeling shame as an EP student motivates them to continue with the EP until they achieve the school certificate for re-entry into mainstream schooling, the accepted form of education. Mainly, these students are identified as Package B who hope to enter the SSS via the mainstream education pathway after they graduate.

Soon after I graduate from Package B, I will enrol at Vocational High School.
(Dwipa, male, 16 years old)

Yes for me, I do not make any friend here. I dropped out from my previous school; that is why I am here now. My aim is to get the Package B certificate to enrol at a formal senior secondary school. (Tedjo, male, 14 years old)

Reconstructing educational identities is important for young non-completers whose experience failing at their first attempt. Peers and family expectations, as well as society's dominant value of education, also shape this construction as part of motivating factors. The first chance is not necessarily the last chance, and mobility may be achieved through non-traditional routes (Munns & McFadden, 2000; Wyn, Stokes, & Tyler, 2004).

5.5.2 Transition stage

Unpreparedness for learning

A student's level of learning starting at the EP is not as high as education at a mainstream school. Many problems are associated with these students who failed at their previous school, such as low motivation, difficult behaviour and low academic achievement. The length of absence from school also contributes to unpreparedness for learning at a new school. Students report their break from school varied from four months to eight years before enrolling into a new school. Students who report less than one year away from school, in this study, are those who experienced academic or behavioural problem due to the failing factor. However, students who had a break of more than three years from school were forced to leave the mainstream school because of poverty and having to gain employment.

Returning to school is difficult for these students, especially for those who have been away from the school environment for a long period. The issue is mainly about how to re-engage in learning when commencing further study. If a break from school affects the preparedness of students to re-engage with learning, students need to be taught how to study and learn in a transition period. A transition is perceived to be a fluid state of always becoming, of arrival and departure, of leaving and re-entering education (Wyn, 1997; Wyn et al., 2004).

I have been studying for more than one year here, but until now, I still could not concentrate on what I am studying. Because I have been such a long time not attending school anymore, it is not easy for me to understand what the teacher taught, especially for Math. It is a most difficult subject for me. I do not like it much. (Indah, female, 17 years old)

After such a long time not attending school, I did not get an idea how the schooling process looks like. For the first time, I did not understand what the teacher said. I felt shame at school. I feel like I need more than two months to get involved with the learning process, as well as with school community. For instance, when I had difficulty in understanding Physics, I felt embarrassed,

but I was tried to ask the teacher when I was stuck on understanding learning material. (Widi, female, 18 years old)

Maths is a subject I do not understand. I am too old for learning Maths. (Raka, male, 25 years old)

When young people re-enter school, they often feel nervous, but want to be successful with their education. Although students comment on uncertainty and feelings about ‘walking right in the line or not’, the EP system helps them to adapt to the process. A lesser study load in the EP, compared to what is expected in a mainstream school, makes them degrade their expectation of the learning process. Consequently, students do not exert themselves to study harder. Concerning these student problems, Polidano et al. (2012) note that time out of school has both negative and positive effects on the chance of re-engagement. On the one hand, it may have a negative effect if time out from school depreciates knowledge and skills. While on the other hand, time out from school may have a positive effect if it gives early school leavers the chance to mature and develop a plan for their future, which may help them to better weigh up the benefits and make some effort accordingly.

Working constraints to learning

Challenging life circumstances often leads to interruptions to student engagement. Although this study reports that most students who participate in this research feel connected with learning and school, some conditions may limit the depth of engagement. As most of Wijaya students are students who are gainfully employed, working obligations challenge them to manage their time and concentration:

It is not easy working and studying at the same time. I do not want to lose my job because I am making money. Therefore, even though I work until the night after school hours, it is ok to me. (Laili, female, 17 years old)

Can you imagine that I start work in the early morning before family members wake up and finish in night-time? So I feel like I do not have a good time for studying. (Aminah, female, 17 years old)

As a marginalised youth, income is a need and desire. Nevertheless, they also have to commit themselves as students. Consequently, they have to work harder than before and working hours are expanded due to adjustments to school and work responsibilities.

Teaching and learning practices

School characteristics, teaching and learning practices are identified as hindering the re-engagement of many students. These include multigrade class/teaching, narrow curriculum and teacher's attitudes toward students. In Wijaya, students argue that multigrade class/teaching provides a class of study that contains several levels or grades of learners that is not effective, especially if all students attend the class, which creates overcrowding. As a multigrade class requires two grades of learners in the same classroom, different subjects and levels are being taught, therefore, some students cannot study properly. Students also noted that the teachers have difficulty in distinguishing teaching instructions based on class grade or level of learning:

When I am at Grade 11, we are in the same class with students from Grade 10. For me, it is ok. The classroom is full of students and makes a class more alive! Unfortunately, sometimes I have to repeat the lesson, which is I have to study the lesson for Grade 10. It is making me bored. (Sinta, female 17 years old)

The class setting is unrepresentative. When the teacher merges students from two different grades (Grades 10 and 11), the class is full of students. Sometimes the student cannot find a chair. In other days, sometimes only a few students come to school. In our opinion, merging two different grades in one class is not a good idea. What will happen if all the students come? The class is very crowded. (Group of female students)

Another sizable challenge is to establish a curriculum that conforms to student needs and academic standards. Most students comment on how narrow the EP curriculum is. Although the EP curriculum links closely to the mainstream education curriculum, the government limits the number of subjects. Most students report that they are limited to studying *Bahasa* Indonesia, civics, maths and social sciences. For school-age students, this limitation creates boredom because there is no subject that challenges student creativity, such as music or art. However, a restricted curriculum is suited to worker students because it allows them to manage their time between schooling and working.

When I was in Grade 10 here, we studied four days a week, but now only three days a week. The teacher said that the student could only focus on subjects that will be included for the national examination. However, these new rules make the students feel bored. I want to learn more about other subject just like at the formal school, such as art, language and computer. Because most of the students here are working students, they seem to agree with this limited subject. (Sinta, female, 17 years old)

I agree with the narrow curriculum, so we only study the subjects that are included in the national examination. (Neneng, female, 22 years old)

The EP curriculum does not include extra-curricular activities and elective courses, such as art, music and physical education. Its contents are condensed, however, the certificate of graduation needs to be equivalent to mainstream education at certain levels. The community is expected to recognise the EP qualification adequately. A big concern about the narrow curriculum with concise context is to bring the test into line with what students require when they enrol in further education.

Instead of narrowing the curriculum, students hope that schools can revise and improve the EP, including elective subjects and extra-curricular activities, so that students can engage with the school and its learning choices. To achieve this,

students are pleased if the school can expand its school hours. So the time they spend at school is more beneficial, especially for school-age students.

Times of learning are too short, only three days a week and only two hours a day. I wish the head of school gave more time for the student to study at school. Therefore, we will get more from here. (Dimas, male, 23 years old)

The last issue that arises from Wijaya student comments about challenging factors contributing to re-engagement concerns teacher cares or interests. Although the primary interview question did not specifically explore questions about teachers, many students refer to it as an inseparable part of student experiences in learning. The majority of students argue that teachers being concerned about them is important to help students be interested in learning in the classroom and engaging with the school as a whole culture. te Riele (2006b, p. 64) states that teachers supporting a friendly attitude is not a minor benefit for students, but it makes a genuine difference to their education. Nodding (2003, p. 244) added, ‘It matters to students whether they like and are liked by their teachers.’ However, the students argue that their teacher does not respect and care about them. They comment that their teachers give more emphasis on the academic dimension of schooling, such as delivering lessons and completing their mission, and they pay less attention to the emotional dimension of students. Moreover, it is reported that few teachers have poor perceptions of their students, as some of these students do not perform well in learning. Such unpleasant attitudes from teachers clearly affect a student’s motivation in learning as he/she is seen as a ‘bad student’. Below is example of a student’s comment:

I do not like what teacher said about us. Some of them said that EP students come only for getting the certificate. So, some teachers do not teach seriously. But I think many students come here not only for the certificate; they want to study, for their future. I want these teachers to change their perception about

us, about the students. Therefore, they can focus on teaching, teaching us seriously. (Widi, female, 18 years old)

Being unsupportive and a teacher's misconception about his/her students seem to be a central influence on a student's connectedness to learning. Student success in re-engaging with learning in an alternative school setting relies on recognising teaching as a caring profession, especially the relationship between teacher and student (te Riele, 2006b, p. 64). In this context, students state they want disciplinary approaches of the teacher to show care for students and that a more sympathetic approach needs to be implemented for a positive relationship between teacher and student to be exchanged through relevant and meaningful pedagogy.

5.6 Integration into learning

Students develop more confidence about learning and try to integrate their learning and school after passing the transition stage. Informed by perspective transformation, students report that they begin to identify themselves as learners as they witness changes in how they value their learning and schooling experiences in the EP. The forms of re-integration into learning imply a fundamental change in the learner, an improved version of individual progress and a shift of thinking of their view about themselves and their learning.

5.6.1 Student efforts

Learning is not a passive act; it requires time and active involvement of the learner. The level of school commitment and involvement displayed by students is a form of effort towards educational attainment. After passing the transitional period that is characterised by unpreparedness for learning, students said they started to integrate

their learning amidst the school community. This re-integration is identified by efforts that have been made by students participating in the classroom and through making interpersonal connections with teachers and other students. The teachers interpret student efforts as indicating willing participation in the pursuit of school-based achievement, including trying hard, asking for help when needed, participating in class, and the like (Brookhart, 1993). Students said that this process takes time, as student characteristics at Wijaya are very diverse from young to more mature students. It is not easy for young students to connect with mature-worker students, and vice versa. The students said it could take several months for them to integrate or change how they approach their learning and schooling. Such effort takes the form of students motivating themselves to come to school, managing and balancing between school and work, and connecting with peers and the school environment.

As a housemaid, my employer also asked me to accompany their children to study – seems like a nanny also. So, I know what the learning process looks like. In that case, I feel like I do not have any difficulty to engage with the learning process here. Besides, I got used to the internet at my employer's home, so even though I feel like the learning material is difficult to understand (sometimes). I enjoy myself looking for something related to the material from the internet. I never push myself to study hard; learning for me is like a process, a never-ending process. (Risma, female, 22 years old)

Many students gave up on completing school but are now able to make an effort towards developing intrinsic motivation for the next stage of life, whether it is to continue education at the higher level or gain better employment. Those who made those efforts and changes start to see the transformation. They develop confidence based on knowledge and emotional understanding. Concerning this, some researchers show that efforts made by students affect their academic outcomes (Carbonaro, 2005; M. K. Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Marks, 2000; E. B. Stewart, 2008).

Students also report that they made efforts in learning that are influenced by the convenience of the learning environment at Wijaya. A small school size approach creates a positive atmosphere to be 'friendly' and 'enjoyable'. For worker students, the school provides a different atmosphere to the workplace. For them, having a different environment contributes to relieving the burden of work and gives them an enjoyable experience, so they can make good connections with peers and teachers, as well as participate in class as part of those efforts.

5.6.2 Personal commitment influenced by long interest

Over time, many students report that they find themselves more interested in learning at Wijaya. The accumulation of experience over time affects the student's sense of belonging to the school. Personal commitment to learning and schooling grows as they validate their goals and perspectives on attending second chance education. For example, Risma reports that she is changing her educational goal. When she first enrolled in Package B, she just wanted to finish it and attain the middle school certificate so she could apply for a job at a small factory. She changed her goal and decided to continue her education at Wijaya.

I got a certificate from Package B after one and half years in this program. At that time, my aim of attending Package B was for gaining the education certificate ... As my friends work at the factory at Karawang, I also want to join them ... But, after I passed Package B examination and got the certificate, I changed my mind. I feel like I am happy to be here in this school. I was thinking it would give me more benefits if I continued to attend Package C and stay at this school, as I like it. It might be that after I finish the Package C program I can apply for university and work as a kindergarten teacher, not as a factory worker. (Risma, female, 22 years old)

Re-engagement can happen as a result of changes in understanding oneself, including an understanding of self-needs and interest that come along from gradual processes through everyday experiences. Pugh (2002) defines this transformative experience as

an ‘experiential value’ that refers to the valuing of content for its usefulness in immediate, everyday experiences. Experiential value overlaps with the intrinsic and utility aspects of a task value (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992) and the feeling and value components of actualised personal interests (Schiefele, 2001). For marginalised youth, limited life goals are part of their thinking system as they become aware of their social origin. Positive experiences of the EP potentially forms a solid foundation for academic or life development in the future. It is clearly here where transformative experience arises; some changes are gradual.

The school climate influences the development of personal commitment. Young students report that they engaged in learning in Wijaya after they found that the school experience is convenient and peaceful. After experiencing difficulty in their previous mainstream school setting, young students struggle to build relationships with other students and teachers. However, they feel it is more convenient for them to study the EP. One advantage of a small sized school is that students disassociate from juvenile delinquency. This situation allows some young students to commit to education, as evidenced by several who said they did not want to go back to mainstream school because the EP prevents them from being drawn into behavioural problems, as Dwipa comments:

This school is convenient. The students do not fight each other; they do not have an enemy. So I feel like this school environment is suited for me. It is a relaxed environment actually. It may be because of the small school community. I do not want to go back to my previous school. I promise myself that even though I am studying the EP, I will stay here until I graduate from high school. This school suits me – peace, quiet, and most importantly, I do not have any problems with other students. (Dwipa, male, 16 years old)

It is clear that school influences the social and academic development of their students through structure, organisation and climate. However, not all young students

fit into Wijaya's school climate. For students who intend to go back to mainstream schooling after obtaining the Package B certificate, Wijaya is not a 'real school' as they had imagined and expected. The mainstream school and its formal process of learning is part of what these students expect from a 'real school'. Freiberg (1999) points out that schools influence student attachment, commitment, involvement, and most importantly, academic achievement through the school's resources and climate. Freiberg and Stein (1999, p. 11) state that the 'school climate is the heart and soul of a school'. The school climate can either facilitate or constrain classroom instruction and student learning.

5.6.3 Student responses to the education system

Frequently, students argue about the differences between mainstream education and the EP in the interview process. In the initial conversation, the students value the mainstream school more than the EP. However, they now assess that the EP equates with mainstream schooling. In this context, students report that different types of schooling do not affect their feeling of attachment to the school, because they are already examining, questioning and revising their previous perceptions about the education system. Two female students said:

What I am thinking about this school is useful for us, is because its system helps worker-student in managing their time. In the formal school, the learning hours are too long. Furthermore, they are not flexible on the learning process. Therefore, this school support me so much better. (Neneng, female, 22 years old)

As I said, it depends on the person. No one can rely on the school status; even those students who study at school with a good reputation. If I can say that the school certificate is only a proof of experience, but the experience itself will take an action. I mean, if you have made a good attempt and are competent, you have to be confident, even if you graduate from the EP. (Risma, female, 22 years old)

Re-engagement as a transformative experience may be simple as young students look at friends wearing their mainstream school uniform, but they do not feel disappointed at having no school uniform. Alternatively, re-engagement as a transformative experience maybe as profound, as EP students develop their identity as part of an effort to influence society's beliefs about EP students. As Mezirow (2000) suggests, transformative learning takes places in settings and among learners who experience the opportunity to reflect critically on their assumptions and to engage in coursework and interactions that prompt complex understandings.

5.7 Self-identification of learning outcomes

Some students report that they are connected with learning at Wijaya through their learning efforts, personal commitment and response to the education system. The outcome to this involvedness means students share their self-changes, including decreasing student behavioural problems and valuing school experiences.

5.7.1 Decreasing behavioural problem

As mentioned earlier, Wijaya students report becoming school leavers due to behavioural problems at mainstream schools. Specifically, a large high school is frightening to some young people, therefore, they skip classes which leads to failure. When they enter Wijaya, they feel the small school climate is conducive to learning, so they experience a more positive attitude towards schooling.

I also can say that since I am here, I never fight with other students. I think I have changed now, and have become a better student. It is a good school environment, though. (Dwipa, male, 16 years old)

For me, no one has changed. If I want to skip from school, I will do it. However, three school days influence me so much. If I skip, even for just one day, I only have two days left for school. Another thing is I had experienced becoming a bad student, expelled from school. I feel like I do not want to do

the same thing now. I have to think about my future. (Tedjo, male, 14 years old)

Transforming conduct from disruptive, truancy and threatening behaviours during school to obeying school rules is evidence that students are changing. However, Wijaya never set up the curriculum and its programs concerning behavioural intervention services to overcome disruptive behaviour. It appears that the Wijaya school climate influences students to transform rather than its programs. For example, Dwipa comments on student numbers being small, and the school environment dissociates students from fighting at school. Furthermore, Tedjo adds that the school's characteristics influence him into valuing the school experience. The significant progress that students demonstrate at Wijaya is a result of their capacity to transform themselves and to enact positive forms of behaviour.

5.7.2 Changing the value of the educational experience

As students continue their schooling at Wijaya, they explain how they have changed the value they place on their educational experience. Some students do not regard the education experience at Wijaya as likely to shift their goals. As Dewey (1938) explains, students view education as a process that is invitational in nature. When the interview commenced, the younger students indicate their involvement in the EP as mandatory, such as a requirement of their family, while mature students seek the high school credential to apply for employment. In their journey, self-beliefs and expectation are changing. These students now have greater value on their education journey, from mandatory to elective, and for acquiring instrumental outcomes to increase self-development. For example, Siti shares how she changed her purpose for

attending the EP from when she first arrived to schooling processes at Wijaya she is now experiencing:

That is happening with me too. My first purpose when I came to this program is for a certificate. Now, it has changed. If I only graduate from Package B, later I might find a similar job like a housemaid. My ambition now is graduating from this program and going to university and applying to become a teacher. I have told my employer about my plan; she said that if you go to university, you can stay here, work with me, and you will not pay for accommodation. I feel like it is a good life-step for me. Now I am saving money for the university. (Siti, female, 21 years old)

Siti's expression shows how obtaining education is precious because disadvantaged youth education is not a right but more of a privilege. Therefore, once these students discover themselves enjoying their new journey, they come to expect more. In this context, these students have constructed their own knowledge as learning agents, able to achieve their goals (Ainley, 2006; Schütz, Ursprung, & Wößmann, 2008; Yorke & Knight, 2004).

5.8 Conclusion

Chapter 5 analyses and interprets student learning experiences at Wijaya Learning Centre about the process of re-engagement in learning and schooling. Specifically informed by perspective transformation as an analytical framework, the process of the student re-engagement movement reflects Mezirow's thoughts on the transformative experience (Mezirow, 2000). The transformative experience could be identified through two crucial processes: (i) encounter with disorientation; and (ii) encounter with critical self-reflection. Mezirow argues that disorientation is an unsettled sensation that is part of the process of the transformative experience. This 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) often brings an emotional charge, but

it will be resolved by the learner's critical self-reflection in which the learner examines his/her assumptions and seeks to justify his/her beliefs.

Wijaya students encounter such disorienting experiences in the early stages of their involvement in the EP. Post-school-age students, among whom are young migrant workers, often find difficulties in reconnecting with the learning process as the majority of them have had a long hiatus from learning before re-entering education. These students need to be taught how to study and learn in the transition period. School-age students, on the other hand, identify aspects of the EP learning culture, such as multigrade class/teaching and the narrow curriculum, as hindering factors to re-engagement.

However, new learning arises following the transition phase. Students start to show their commitment and effort in learning in the EP and gradually come to change their way of thinking about learning (Mezirow, 2000, p. 5). Those changes can be informed by student's subjective reports about their learning outcomes. These include decreasing behavioural problems and re-evaluating the significance of the educational experience. The transformation of urban youth behaviours from being disruptive and inattentive to becoming more respectful of the school rules is evidence that they are able to make positive changes. One stimulating factor for the new behaviour is that these urban youth students have positioned the EP as a bridge to engaging future learning. This means that they believe that the EP can re-open their opportunities to participate in further education once they complete this stage of learning.

There are some lessons from the above stories of transformative learning experiences that deserve further discussion, especially the implication for EP design

and pedagogic framework. The EP needs to respond to students' challenging experiences, especially at the transition stage, to ease the re-engagement process and to facilitate a learning environment that fosters opportunities for students to achieve personal and social transformation. Chapter 6 presents the findings of Mandiri Community Centre.

CHAPTER 6:

CASE STUDY – MANDIRI COMMUNITY CENTRE

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 presents and discusses student experiences at Mandiri Community Centre (hereinafter referred to as Mandiri) about their re-engagement in learning and the school community. Similar to Wijaya, five major themes are examined: (i) students leaving mainstream school; (ii) entering the EP; (iii) initial learning engagement; (iv) integrating into learning; and (v) self-identification of learning outcomes in the EP. The chapter begins with a profile of Mandiri and continues with an explanation of the five themes that describe student learning experiences at Mandiri. Of the 13 students who participated in the interview and focus group meetings, six are female and seven are male.

6.2 School profile

‘Mandiri’ means independent. The word represents an image of Mandiri students, also known as street singers, hawkers and scavengers, who at a young age are forced to become independent from their families to work for survival. Mandiri is located at the heart of a huge suburban bus and train station. Noise, pollution and overcrowding are part of the school environment. However, many people do not acknowledge the school as its buildings are spread among bus station facilities, shops and houses. People may recognise the school if they pay attention to the huge green school board that announces ‘School for Free’ (*‘Sekolah Gratis’*, as originally written in *Bahasa Indonesia*) when they pass the Iskandar Muda Bridge. Another way to discover the

existence of the school is when people get lost in the bus station area as the school has four ‘unofficial’ gates.

Mandiri is located in Depok city, part of Jabodetabek (‘De’ for Depok), an urban area in the surrounds of the Indonesia capital city, Jakarta. Situated 25.11 kilometres from central Jakarta, Depok is a growing urban area that is attracting migrants from regional areas wanting to live in the Jakarta region. Depok city is also the location of the biggest public university in Indonesia, as well as private universities, where students from all over Indonesia come to study. Moreover, the residential area is growing rapidly, offering a variety of options to middle and upper class societies. As the town is directly adjacent to the capital city, Depok has various urban problems, in particular, the pressure of population migration leading to increased numbers of people in residential areas, education, trade and services. For example, in 2013, 25,569 people migrated from other cities in Indonesia (Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil Kota Depok, 2015). This number is expected to rise as operational activities and commercial services move into the area and those already in existence continue to grow rapidly. While middle and upper-class societies are given various choices of residential and town facilities, lower class families who also migrate to the town cannot afford such choices and are usually only able to hire small transient housing. In addition, poor migrant parents cannot afford education for their children. As a result, school-age children who are discharged from their previous school in their home city or village have to locate themselves in another educational institution in their new place of residence.

Mandiri assists people across all ages, especially poor migrant children, to participate in non-formal educational activities. Pak Nurrohim founded the school in

2002. He is now a Mandiri school leader. At that time, he had 20 *warteg* (small traditional restaurants) around the bus station, but the Indonesian monetary crisis of 1998 forced him to foreclose his *warteg*, however, four restaurants still remains. Many lower class parents in the Depok area were fired from employment during that time, and their children came to the bus station area to raise money for the family through selling newspapers, food, drinks, toys, and some were beggars. This meant that they did not attend school. Pak Nurrohim and colleagues observed the difficulties of these children and then organised non-formal education activities around the area to accommodate 30 children and young people. The school started in 2002, utilising a bus station mosque in the station area as a classroom, and all students were divided into age groups from primary to high school-age students. After two years in 2004, the school received donations from individuals and companies to develop a school building.



Figure 6.1 Mandiri Community Centre building

Mandiri provides free EP classes from kindergarten to SSS and other non-formal education programs, such as life skill training and functional literacy for illiterate

mature-age people. In total, across all programs, at the time this study was undertaken, Mandiri has approximately 2,000 disadvantaged students who travel from Depok and other cities surrounding Depok, such as Jakarta, Tangerang, Bekasi and Bogor. There are 337 primary school students, 381 junior secondary school students and 553 senior secondary school students. The remaining students are in kindergarten and other non-formal education programs. Mandiri also provides lodgement for 200 orphans. With the number of students it supports, Mandiri has 18 management staff members and 60 volunteer teachers who are seasonal university teachers and individuals who willingly donate their time. In fact, the school cannot rely on seasonal staff as they can leave after one semester due to personal or school-related factors, such as an uncomfortable school culture and environment.

Supporting 2,000 students in one educational institution is difficult. Mandiri has 15 small buildings spread over an area of 3,700m² around the bus station. There are small shops and bus station facilities, such as toilets, a barber shop, internet cafe and a children's play store in the area. From donations, Mandiri has built many temporary classrooms from second-hand truck containers painted with bright colours and pictures. Although the classrooms are colourful from the outside, most do not have chairs and desks for study, therefore, most students are required to sit on the ceramic floor, working on short legged writing tables, with three students to each table. When students feel weary they can freely straighten their legs under the table. The school also provides offices for tutors and management staff to be used during schooldays when staff are busy with students who come with questions and needs, and parents come to enrol or seek information about school programs. To extend the educational programs, the school has an abundance of rooms and space for life skill

activities and training, such as cooking, basic automotive and screen printing. Mostly, these programs are non-regular activities, and their implementation is dependent on the availability of funds from donors or the local government that contribute to school funding. Only programs such as the screen-printing workshop are part of the Mandiri's income. Facilities for extracurricular programs, such as sport and music are provided in the middle of the school area where students can utilise the soccer field for a range of activities such as playing soccer, badminton and street music.



Figure 6.2 Teaching and learning process at Mandiri Community Centre

To accommodate the huge number of students with a limited number of teachers and classrooms, there are three sessions of the learning process: (i) morning class 8 am to 12 noon for kindergarten, Package A and Package B; (ii) afternoon class 1 pm to 5 pm mainly utilises the same classrooms for the senior high school level. All morning and afternoon classes operate on Monday to Saturday; and (iii) evening

class for full-time worker Package C students held on Friday to Sunday, 8 pm to 10 pm. The programs offered to the middle and senior high school students include English, History, *Bahasa* Indonesia, Islamic Studies, Sociology, Maths and Economics. Due to a limited number of science teachers, students rarely learn science. School programs integrate with Islamic values. One day, one verse becomes a daily student activity before class when every student is asked to read one verse from the Quran. The purpose is to develop spiritual intelligence for Muslim students. For non-Muslim students, being the minority, there is a choice to do other activities such as reading. Islamic values are part of Mandiri's effort to enhance street children's awareness for valuing their life. With many street children having experienced bad treatment from their family, peers or other people in the street or community, including government that influences their behaviour, school values aim to influence positive change in that behaviour.



Figure 6.3 Street music performances by Mandiri Community Centre students

Despite students' backgrounds and their large numbers, Mandiri has made some achievements in academic subjects and creative subjects. For instance, one Mandiri student is the winner of a Maths contest, writing a letter to the president, the best alternative school student in West Java for academic achievement, and a winner of music, art and sports contests. Furthermore, Mandiri graduate students have also successfully enrolled in public and private universities, some with scholarships from government and private companies and some received scholarships from donor countries to study abroad. Section 6.3 describes the research findings of the case study. The themes are developed based on evidence that emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions.

6.3 Leaving mainstream schooling

Student characteristics at Wijaya differ from those at Mandiri. At Wijaya, the majority of students are internal migrant workers, while at Mandiri, they are known as street singers, hawkers and scavengers. Some students have experienced failing traditional schooling because of social exclusion, but most are present due to changing residences from rural to urban. Because of their family's relocation, young people have to transfer to another school in the new area.

6.3.1 Social exclusion

Feelings of exclusion from the formal education system is evident in the students' stories when they were asked about their experience in the formal school sector. A different pattern of exclusion was identified through this study, namely: (i) exclusion from entry into a school; (ii) exclusion from continuing participation in school; and (iii) exclusion from meaningful learning experiences in the mainstream education

system. These kinds of exclusion present themselves when young people lose the opportunity to experience learning at a formal school.

The family structure is one predictor of dropping out. In this study, students from large families have a greater risk of discontinuing their education. In this regard, parents have to prioritise and decide which child from the family will stay at school if the lack of family income becomes a problem. The most challenging situation is enrolling in a new school, especially a high school. No doubt many large families are unable to pay the entrance and tuition fees. As a result, their children are excluded from entry into the school as they are categorised as being outside the eligibility criteria for entry.

I am the third child of eight siblings. I enrolled in the EP because of a lack of family financial. When I graduated from junior secondary school, my mother gave birth and she needed more money. Instead of enrolling at a mainstream high school, I enrolled in the EP because it was free of cost. Before enrolling in the EP, I was hoping to apply for mainstream schooling. I got a two weeks job at that time, and the money was enough for the enrolment fee. Unfortunately, it was too late to enrol at the mainstream high school that I wanted to apply. (Mae, female, 17 years old)

I am the youngest child of six siblings. My father works as a '*tukang becak*' (*becak* rider – *becak* is a traditional three wheels mode of transportation) and my mother is a housemaid in our neighbourhood. After graduating from elementary school, I got difficulties to enrol at the mainstream JSS because my father had to spend more money for my old brother who studied at Vocational High School at the same time. One of my friends suggested that I enrol in the EP because it was free of cost. After graduating from Package B, I also pursued to continue my education at a mainstream high school, but again I had to accept a difficult condition – my older sister needed money for the SSS national examination. Therefore, I continued my education in the Package C program. (Sri, female, 17 years old)

Mae's and Sri's stories are examples of the requirements for entry into educational programs in Indonesia. For some students, the requirement procedure limits their participation and opportunity. Indeed, this sort of exclusion cannot be separated from life's circumstances. Poverty limits access to schooling because education has a cost.

If school entry fees must be paid, children in families that cannot afford the fees drop out of school or, in most large families, parents will select one or two children to stay in the mainstream of education, which is at a mainstream school. For instance, Sri admits that she is unable to study at the JSS and SSS levels.

Apart from being unable to pay the entrance fee, students are excluded from mainstream schools because they cannot continue to pay for participation. In Indonesia, this mostly occurs with students in private schools. As a private organisation with limited or no financial support from the government, private schools frequently charge school fees for intra- and extra-curricular activities. Indeed, these school expenses are often much higher than monthly tuition fees. For young students with limited financial support, requesting money from their parents is a dilemma. Iman expresses his emotion when he shares this experience:

I moved to this school because the school leader in my previous school always requests for school fees from the students. I knew that the school leader and teachers corrupted school fees, because they are from one big family. Every month, the students are asked for school fees for extracurricular and other activities. It made me angry and so I quit from the school. (Iman, male, 17 years old)

School exclusion also occurs when students have no meaningful learning experience. One student reports that he witnessed negative and discouraging experiences at a mainstream school because of teacher prejudice towards student from low socioeconomic status. Deni felt embarrassed when his teacher accused him of things he did not do. In addition, female students in the focus group discussions also argue that some young students are excluded from mainstream schools because they feel that the teaching and learning process made available to them do not match their

learning style. These young students informed that the study load and strict rules estrange them from meaningful learning experiences at the mainstream schools.

I dropped out from school because the teacher incriminated me, that I grabbed my friend's money. Since that, I never came to the school again. (Deni, male, 17 years old)

Yeah, but I also found that some of the students felt bored to study at formal school, too much study load, strict regulation, and finally they moved to here. There are a few boys also coming to this school because they want to have long hair but that is forbidden at a formal school. (Group of female students)

6.3.2 Residential mobility

Residential mobility is assumed to be a voluntary opportunity-related, economically rational behaviour as a means of improving individual or household level, social and economic status (Cadwallader, 1992; Chusing, 1999). However, families in economic distress often find this mobility difficult. The inability to pay rent in a new place, unsafe and unaffordable or otherwise unacceptable living conditions, can be consequential for such families (Schafft, 2006). This can have profoundly negative effects on their children's academic achievement (Pettit & McLanahan, 2003; Rumberger, 2003). Rita tells of her experience when she and her family moved to Depok a few years ago:

I moved from Padang when I was 10 years old. My mother decided to move to Depok because she has many siblings. My grandmother had a financial problem at that time, my mother too, so we moved to the big city like Depok to get a new life. Here in Depok, we do not have a family, only our neighbours. In Depok, we rent a small house in a slum area. My house only has one room, so I sleep in the living room in front of the TV. We spent 400.000 rupiahs (equal to A\$40) for one month's rent. (Rita, female, 17 years old)

Rita speaks of insecurity in the household that resulted in her academic dislocation in a place where she had limited information about the school and educational programs. It is not easy for Rita to find a new school because limited information is

available and she is in a difficult life situation. Rita had to be out of school for several months before she found out about an alternative school from her mother's friend.

Rizal also shares a similar experience. He dropped out from JSS at Padang, West Sumatera Province when his parent decided to migrate to Depok. It was a difficult time for him at the new city. Comparing his previous life, Rizal said that he had a good life at Padang. However, his life was changing in this new place. Rizal is forced to help his parents who became food vendors at a bus station to survive. The situation grew worse, especially for Rizal's education when he was unable to continue his education upon arrival in the new city because he had no school transfer certificate from his previous school. He also spent several months away from schooling until he found the EP.

I moved from Padang, West Sumatera in 2006, and I have to drop out from my junior secondary school at Padang. If I can say, it is better for us to live at Padang. We had a good life there. My mother does not go to work because my father has a good income. (Rizal, male, 15 years old)

Moreover, family residential mobility also hurts Rita and Rizal academically, especially the learning processes of the new school. Both students said that study at the previous school was much better compared to the EP at Mandiri. In this case, mobility is not beneficial. Students who moved from other schools are sometimes placed in classes where the curriculum differs from their previous school, a condition referred to as 'curricular incoherence'. In this matter, Rita and Rizal found differences between the mainstream and EP curriculums.

6.4 Entering the equivalency program

Compared to Wijaya, the majority of students at Mandiri spend less time out of school, ranging from four months to one year. This is not surprising as most of them are school-age students who may have left school with the intention of returning to further education (i.e. dropping out is suggested as a temporary absence from school). Personal circumstances, family mobility and temporary difficulties of a financial nature may all make it impossible to attend school for a period of time, forcing them to leave school temporarily or transferring to another educational pathway.

6.4.1 Barriers

Personal barriers are identified as factors that contribute to young people returning to education through the EP. Even though the reasons for returning to school can vary significantly depending on the time elapsed since leaving, most students who leave school after graduation are likely to return several months later. However, for young people who interrupt their schooling, many need more than one year to decide whether to re-enrol. The main reason emanating from the latter group is boredom when students have nothing to do. Therefore, students decide to return to education. Deni spends his time singing in the street. After a few years, he finds no purpose in life, as well as finds it difficult to cope with the conditions associated with being a street singer. When he heard about Mandiri from a peer, he quickly enrolled in the program:

I decided to re-enter schooling through the EP simply because I felt bored at home, no activities at all, except singing in the street. Therefore, this school is free. (Deni, male, 17 years old)

Unlike Deni, Rita encounters family-related barriers that led her to enrol at a non-mainstream school. Limited financial resources force her to enrol in free-cost education of the EP at Mandiri. Entering this program is due to a lack of educational choice for Rita, driven by financial problems. Yet, she is still hopeful that she will be able to return to a mainstream education pathway based on improved financial resources:

In the first time, I did not want to study at this school. However, because my parent did not have enough money for sending me to a vocational high school that I wanted at that time, I had no choice. A little bit frustrated, but in my resignation, I asked my mother if I could move to another school when I am in the second year here, and my mother has money, and she was agreed. It made me happy. (Rita, female, 17 years old)

It is clear that the EP is not the main education preference for some students. However, individual and family-related barriers push students to re-participate in education through non-mainstream education.

6.4.2 Flexible scheduling

Another reason for enrolling in the EP, especially for working-students is its flexibility. Although most students regard the EP as flexible, it does not mean that it is flexible in terms of its learning approaches, such as place, pace, content and mode of learning. In the EP, flexible learning is associated with flexible scheduling that is characterised by short times with a negotiable schedule depending on student circumstances. For instance, the school provides learning hours from Monday to Saturday (divided into three learning groups: morning, afternoon and evening classes) for students with special circumstances, for example, Sri is allowed to attend school for three days only because she works full-time on the other days. To

negotiate when to attend school is important for worker students because they have to balance time for study and work. There is no other choices available to them.

I never dreamt that when I came to this city, I could continue my education in high school, because at that time I just wanted to find a job. However, my employer asked me to continue my education. To manage working and studying, I chose the EP because it gives me more flexibility. Unlike my friends at the school who study six days a week, I only attend school three days. The school principal gave me permission about this because of the special circumstances, which is working and studying. (Sri, female, 17 years old)

Support from school personnel, such as the principal, teachers and peers are important for young people who enter the EP for its flexibility. Although the EP appears to have a double standard and regulation, such as non-working students attending school all day, and working students are given permission to choose when to attend school, in Mandiri, negotiated learning is common as the school community is concerned with how to accommodate student backgrounds. The school community shares common values that educational opportunities to disadvantaged youth is important and meaningful. Thus, Mandiri provides options ranging from morning to evening classes and a varied learning structure for students who require individually tailored support to re-engage with learning. However, flexibility is not necessarily ‘good’ in itself. The key issue is how it affects student participation in schooling and learning processes. It is also about maximising learner engagement with the use of appropriate flexible scheduling approaches.

6.5 Initial learning experiences

As the majority of Mandiri students are marginalised and street-involved youth, their participation in the schooling process is one of Mandiri’s biggest achievements, not

only for students but also for the school and society. It is important to understand the way students become involved with education, as other responsibilities become a challenge, such as raising money to help their families. Unexpectedly, students are aware that their involvement in learning and the schooling process are part of their responsibility for creating better options for their future.

6.5.1 Exploration stage

‘Sense of obligation’ and chance for the future

Initial stories about why students participate in the EP point to the self and family-related barriers to formal schooling, as well as a few cases that mention Mandiri’s scheduling flexibility. Nevertheless, such barriers do not impede the student’s goal of attending the EP. The students said that participating in education is their responsibility as young people. A ‘sense of obligation’ exists for students to attend schooling through alternative pathways if they cannot participate in the mainstream pathway. Willems (1967, p. 1248) describes a sense of obligation as a personal feeling of ‘I ought to ...’ or ‘I must ...’ regarding attending, participating or helping with a group activity.

I feel that study is my obligation, my responsibility. I will be doing it and never feel tired because of it. (Mae, female, 17 years old)

Willems (1967) classifies three general groups associated with a sense of obligation. The first group, ‘own forces toward participation’, indicates that it is the students’ own desires, wishes and needs to focus on educational activities. The second group, ‘induced forces toward participation’, indicates clear and explicit external pressures to attend, or feedback from the environment encouraging attendance and discouraging non-attendance. The third group is described as ‘residual and

unchallenged' in that it indicates a ubiquitous personal disposition to attend and participate in school activities, that is, a *sense of obligation*. Rizal shares his story, stating that his attendance in the EP is not only part of his responsibility, but also one of obligation as the youngest member of his family. Rizal's obligation is what Willems terms 'induced forces toward participation', belonging to his second group, 'a sense of obligation'.

If I did not come to school, my mother gets angry with me. I also like to go to school because I have many good friends. (Rizal, male, 15 years old)

In spite of being one of life's expectations for young people to partake in education, they need to also think that education is related to their chance for the better future. Many students in the EP feel their life is constrained through their involvement in the mainstream school. Equally, they attribute a relatively high value to the EP in terms of their hopes and dreams for a better life. Students view the EP as a vehicle for upward social and economic mobility, a stepping-stone towards positive future opportunities related to work plans and social participation in the community.

Years ago, I had a dream of becoming a teacher, but since I dropped out from school I never imagined the future again. However, since I enrolled in the EP, it looks like I have a new dream. I want to continue my study at university, I want to be a kindergarten teacher, and surprisingly my employer supports me. (Ajeng, female, 20 years old)

6.5.2 Transition stage

The majority of students are aware that their participation in the EP opens up opportunities. They report that during their initial engagement in the EP some problems occurred that prevented them from engaging in learning and school activities.

Unfamiliar environment

School is unfamiliar for street children who have been absent from the school community and are already engaged in the street community. It is noted that the majority of street-involved youth in this research are those who live off the street in the hope that they could raise money, not youth who were living in the street definitively. Starting school for them is a major life transition that can be challenging and exciting. The transition to return to school education after working on the street is sometimes associated with uncertainty and confusion. Students, teachers and the school principal face uncertainty on how to blend in with school entities and how to cope with routine activities at school. Moreover, confusion arises with the idea of restarting the learning process. Deni, a male student who had been a street singer for four years, shares his experience of uncertainty and confusion:

I feel I did not connect with learning because I spent many years on the street. I did not think about schooling anymore. Maths made me confused. However, I get a little connection with the Indonesian language. It is easier than maths.
(Deni, male, 17 years old)

Such students also report that they missed the freedom they had on the street and struggled with discipline and authority figures in the school. School rules also are of concern to students during the transition process. Being independent on the street and having to adjust to school rules, such as how students should act, wear the uniform and their appearance, are contradictions for these students. However, the school community, especially teachers, helps them through the transition process. Male students said that their teachers asked them to help new students, especially street-involved youth to integrate with the school environment by giving them the freedom to act based on their interests and habits. This helped these students to become aware

of their responsibility as students within the EP community. The conversation between male students in focus group discussions describes the background of students at Mandiri:

The students here come from different backgrounds. Street children with their performances can act freely based on their habit and interest. By process, they will realise and be aware that they need to change, both life performance and academic ones. The teacher said that we have to help each other to feel more comfortable with the school environment, and not to give a negative stigma to a new student who comes from the street. We must respect this student. Do not treat them badly as it has happened in the formal school. Do not give strict rules for this kind of student. With friendly help, street children can integrate easily with the school environment. (Group of male students)

It is clear that developing a sense of familiarity with a new school environment is a predominant consideration for each student. In this sense, a student's transition into Mandiri includes feeling a sense of acceptance by peers and teachers, as well as dealing with the learning process and the school environment.

Lack of motivation and means to learning

Student motivation to learning is a key factor that influences re-engagement, especially for those who have been absent from schooling. Mandiri is situated close to public spaces, such as a bus station, traditional market and the mall, which are attractions that can arrest a student's attention. Mandiri students sometimes withdraw from the classroom because they feel a lack of motivation. Boredom in the classroom is a major factor when students do not always find the learning material interesting or relevant, and listening to the teacher becomes uninteresting. Another reason is when a student feels a lack of connection between the learning content and the real world.

Below is a conversation among a group of male students:

Sometimes our friends only come to the class for the first lesson. After that they go out from the class. We think many of them get bored in the class. They do not have a good motivation, or sometimes because the schoolwork is too

difficult. However, if they are hanging out in school hours, the police will catch them and bring them back to the school or take them to the police station. (Group of male students)

A different case is that of an older student who joined a classroom of 14 and 15 year old students. Deni argues that although he feels confident in the classroom environment, it can be challenging to engage with such a diverse group of students. He states that his decision to return to school and continue his education is part of his life's goal, but he does not have the knowledge and means to do so.

I do not go to school when I get bored in the classroom, especially when there are only a few students. Yes, as I said before, my decision to return to school is because I found that my life is my responsibility. I mean my decision is not because of other people. However, it is not easy for me to find the connection between my current learning and my next plan. (Deni, male, 17 years old)

Regardless of a student's reason for returning to education after a period of absence, it is crucial to recognise that students value the school experience. If students do not recognise its value, they may not be motivated to expand the effort required in their second chance learning journey. Indeed, teachers can help students to construct their own meaning and goals that they are working toward.

Working constraints to learning

It is understood that young people believe that work is a pathway to independence. However, for Mandiri students this is not the case, because they believe that work is a way of finding independence from the family and a means to help the family cope with their limited finances. These students believe that even though their work is not taking them out of poverty, it is opening up choices about how to maintain their hopes and dreams in life.

Students who also work describe instability at school as causing some of the frustrations they experience at the workplaces, and vice versa. Workload, exhaustion and emotional uncertainty in the workplace can become major reasons for worker students to experience tension at school. In a severe case, a student becomes doubtful of his/her personal commitment to the educational process. Below is Rita's story about how to balance working and studying:

Studying and working at the same times disturb my study. Sometimes I feel sleepy after helping my mother in the night preparing the food; get tired and these things disrupt my concentration. However, I realised that this is part of my obligation as a child; no one can help my mother sell her food, except me. When I cannot help her because I am busy at school, she will become mad at me. She will not talk to me all day. I am thankful that I am studying here, which is unlike in a mainstream school where the teacher rarely hands out homework to the students. It help me a lot in managing my time. (Rita, female, 17 years old)

McInnis (2003) identifies worker student difficulties in determining the priority given to study. Furthermore, worker students expect study to fit into their lives; they do not want to fit their lives into institutional expectations. In this matter, McInnis (2003) suggests that engagement must be negotiated with students. It is essential for the school, as an institution, to understand the challenges faced by this generation of students and to respond to them.

Teaching and learning practices

The classroom environment, volunteer teachers and the narrow curriculum are factors that students report as influencing learning transitions in the EP. Community schools such as Mandiri cope under poor conditions, such as a lack of school facilities, course materials and programs, compared to wealthier public formal schools. The problem of limited resources is due to a lack of funding. Even though Mandiri receives money from the local government and donations from individuals

or private companies, it is not adequate to support the large number of students and unique problems that the school faces. Students argue that the poor condition of the school building and classrooms makes the learning environment unsafe and causes students to lose motivation.

The classroom is too small and very crowded to accommodate 40 students. Usually, the classroom separates the boys from the girls. There are only 20 boys. However, because some classrooms are renovated, the teachers put students from two classrooms into one, which is too noisy, and I cannot focus. (Rizal, male, 15 years old)

Feeling safe and comfortable in the classroom environment is important for students so they can improve their learning and emotional development. Thus, a school climate that is reinforced by its physical aspects provides preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to be successful. Overcrowded classrooms is not conducive for learning. Research on the classroom environment shows that a well-structured classroom improves student academic and behavioural outcomes (Walker, 1991, 1995). An unorganised classroom can impede functioning of the day, as well as limit what and how students learn.

Another major problem at Mandiri is the lack of teachers, whom of which are mostly volunteer or seasonal staff. Currently, there are 60 volunteer teachers. They face many challenges, such as low salaries, lack of access to professional opportunities and the responsibility to take on multiple duties (Castle, 1995). Most of these teachers are typically younger and less educated (UNESCO, 1990). A group of female students describes this condition:

Teachers become one of the school problems. The majority of teachers are volunteers, who are paid transportation expenses only. Some teachers are also university students, which apart from teaching, they are responsible for school administration activities. Therefore, it is no wonder that they are busy with other things and cannot come to the classroom to teach. The teachers usually

request students to write a lesson if this matter happen. (Group of female students)

A non-seasonal teacher will need more security in terms of income and benefits from school or teaching activities to be motivated and increase their commitment to the school. However, community schools generally hire seasonal or volunteer teachers, compared with public schools that employ *pegawai negeri* (civil servant or government employees) either at the national, provincial or municipality level. These teachers need to demonstrate a high commitment to education and obey government regulations that control their working conditions.

Students at Mandiri say that some teachers come voluntarily because they are interested or concerned for the disadvantaged community. Nonetheless, work in a vulnerable school is not easy. Some young and inexperienced teachers report surrendering to the school environment and student behaviour. Those teachers who work at Mandiri are often required to teach several classes every day due to a lack of teachers. Indeed, this situation makes evening class students feel disappointed, as teachers can lose energy after a long day of teaching.

This school has a huge number of students from morning class, afternoon to evening class. That is why if in the evening class, the teacher does not have enough energy for teaching because they are too tired. I can understand that. But sometimes I feel disappointed because I am trying my best to come to the school, but only get one lesson or sometimes no teacher is coming. (Ajeng, female, 20 years old)

Similar to students at Wijaya, Mandiri students comment on the curriculum in the EP. Most students compare their learning experiences in the mainstream school with the EP relating to subjects taught in the school. In the EP, students argue that the curriculum is narrow, because only two subjects a day instead of up to five subjects

being taught in the mainstream schools. Students are concerned with how they will build up their mastery in learning and compete with other students from mainstream schooling. Instead of having a range of subjects to choose from, such as natural science, social science and humanities as disciplines that student can take at Grade 12, they are disappointed that the only optional is social science. In other words, as mentioned above, the EP curriculum does not meet the different needs and interests of learners yet, as Iman explains:

I have 37 friends in my class. Unfortunately, in my class (Grade XII), we do not have the natural science discipline. The school only provides the social science discipline. Because I enjoy learning about science, sometimes I study it myself. Hopefully, I can enter university and take natural science as my course. (Iman, male, 17 years old)

To serve the different needs and diverse backgrounds of learners, the Indonesia government is designing (since early 2004) new academic curricula based on livelihood issues, household management, local economics and work ethics. Forty per cent of the curriculum emphasises life skills through work-oriented programs. The curriculum consists of morale-building and academically oriented subjects that are equivalent to minimal competencies at mainstream education levels, and it is enriched with life skills-oriented subjects. However, students seem to be of the opinion that even though the government has created a curriculum close to mainstream school competencies, there are several differences that affect student achievement, including the number of subjects to be taught, elective subjects and the choices of discipline study.

Indeed, it is not comparable with mainstream schooling. The EP serves the diverse needs and circumstances of learners. Thus, the EP is often conducted over a shorter period than mainstream education programs, as well as conducted over the

weekend and through night schooling. The learning strategy may be flexible in terms or time period, curriculum and pedagogy (UNESCO, 2013b). The flexibility aspects can include flexible hours appropriate to a student's living or work conditions.

Stigmatisation

Mandiri students report being stigmatised by outsiders because they attend the EP. Indeed, there exists a social view of the EP as a 'dumping ground'. Such perception can discourage students from attending school. A negative stigma is attached to the EP, as well as to the students attending the program, because it incorporates a poorer quality or lower standardised test score than formal schools (Beken, Williams, Combs, & Slate, 2009, p. 57). Furthermore, the EP accommodates different times for the school schedule that is on weekdays, weekends or night-time. This influences the perception that the mainstream school operating on working days is for 'good' students, while a school operating weekend or night classes tend to be for 'bad' students. Ajeng, a female student attending evening classes, reports negative perceptions:

I hear many people talk about something negative. It is just because I am studying in the evening class. They do not believe that this school provides the learning process in the evening. I feel like a bad student. Those opinions affect me. Sometimes I do not want to go to the school. (Ajeng, female, 20 years old)

Kidd (2009) reports that female participants do not have a greater level of social stigma compared to males, however, other researchers have indicated that female adolescents experience a greater amount of discrimination (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). In the Indonesian culture, it is likely that female students are perceived negatively because the majority of people believe that being out of the house at night is unacceptable and unsafe. This perception of attending classes at night being

unacceptable is a consequence of society setting up expectations that people use to anticipate and attempt to understand the social identities of others (Kidd, 2009).

Negative public perceptions influence personal feelings: students can feel guilty, ashamed or not as good as others. Student experiences, as reported above, indicate that stigmatisation can affect a student's judgement of him/herself as being a 'bad student'. This perception may become a stimulus to disconnect from the program. While the EP student may receive a social identity from others, the student can have different thoughts about oneself. To minimise the negative effects of social stigma, students and teachers must work together to build up student self-esteem, to distance themselves from feelings of loneliness and being trapped under vulnerable circumstances.

6.6 Integration into learning

Initially, students feel unfamiliar with the school environment, but peers and teachers can help them integrate with the school culture. After months and years, students involved in the EP said they now found the school environment or atmosphere to be 'friendly' and 'relaxed'. This positive atmosphere helps to create a sense of community and feeling of 'being different' in a positive way. Section 6.6 describes the factors that help students connect with learning in the EP.

6.6.1 Sense of community

The majority of street-involved children perceive school as a 'safe place'. It is not surprising that peers, society and social apparatus treat street children poorly. In the EP, students sense a new community that they identify school as a place for rest and peace. The school community helps to estrange them from street violence. Indeed, a

sense of community is not always in line with students integrating into the learning process. However, a positive atmosphere or environment at school helps to marginalise youth to participate in education.

The importance of an ambience of acceptance by the school community contributes to student perceptions of their learning community as a place of their own. Swaminathan (2004, p. 33) introduces the concept of place-identity and suggests that student ownership or affinity to school spaces can contribute to ‘a sense of identification, commitment, integration and alliances among students and the faculty’. Furthermore, students also feel that their school is ‘a place for socialising’ with others. In this case, migrant students who engage with new peers in the school can influence them to come to school regularly and start making connections with the learning and schooling process. One female student shares her story. Even though she attends an evening class, which for many people are characterised as being for undedicated students, Ajeng describes herself as a ‘motivated student’. For her, choosing to attend evening classes is about the opportunity to participate in schooling in the midst of her working responsibilities. Nevertheless, it does not diminish her educational purpose and goal.

Friday to Sunday are the days I am waiting for because I study on those days. It is time for me to socialise with other people at school, apart from my daily routine as a housemaid. Every weekend is wonderful; I can meet with my schoolmates. Therefore, school for me means a place for socialising with others. I also enjoy coming to the school because I want to learn something new, and of course, it is for my future as well. (Ajeng, female, 20 years old)

A widely shared sense of community among all is crucial to engaging and motivating students to learn in schools. A teacher’s treatment of his/her students, as well as the relationship between students influence a sense of connection among the school

community. Many students said that all stakeholders in Mandiri were like a family. Beck and Foster (1999) state that a collective sense of belonging for those living under these circumstances provide a psychological identity with, and commitment to, others. In the classroom context, students said that they have wonderful experiences. Compared to the formal school, the learning process at Mandiri is more fun and relaxed. Students report many teachers realising that their students adjust to the learning process because the teachers threaten them with negotiable rules.

Being in this school is like being in a family. Having a big number of students make the students not feel bored. Also, the teachers are completely different from our previous school; they are more open. We call them '*kakak*' (brother or sister), not a teacher, just like at home. We often talk personally. That is why the students and teachers have a good relationship. (Iman, male, 17 years old)

In formal schooling, the learning process is too clumsy. I sat in the same row and chair every day, which made me bored. Here, the teacher asks the student to have a different spot in class every day, and to find our own style of learning, including sitting position. Sometimes we make a 'U-style' position or line up in a row. In formal school, I hate it if I get a chance to sit in the back row because many students talk all the time and I could not concentrate. The teacher also always makes a game, which makes the class more cheerful. (Rita, female, 17 years old)

From the stories above, the relationship with adults at school has an impact on the student's sense of school community. Teachers can build strong relationships with students by creating a friendly class environment and showing the students that they care for them as individuals. Brophy (2008) stresses that teachers can make the content, activities and how they model thinking to have an impact on engagement and whether students develop an appreciation for what is taught in school.

6.6.2 Role of other students, teachers and graduated students

The majority of students who participated in the research revealed that their engagement in school is impacted by their relationship with others, especially

teachers and the principal who inspires and motivates them. Moreover, former students who occasionally visit the school are role models and a source of inspiration for current students. The relationships between students, teachers and graduated students can influence and stimulate current students to commit to the learning and schooling process. Below is the voice of Rita, a former student who decided to stay at school because her teacher influenced her in a good way:

When I was in the first year, I had a plan that after six months, I would ask my mother if she would allow me to transfer to the formal school, and my mother agreed with my plan. After one semester, I decided not to move to another school. Day by day, I am becoming more interested in this school, including the learning process. I feel like the teachers influence me so much. They share stories with the students, which are very inspiring, including stories about their family. I feel connected to them because their background is also a little bit similar to ours. Learning in this school culture also does not make me feel bored. Sometimes we tease the teacher because we are close to each other.
(Rita, female, 17 years old)

According to Rita's experience, the way that teachers approach the student contributes to making them feel valued by their teacher. Moreover, a teacher's own life journey is frequently shared in the classroom. This can motivate students, as teachers' backgrounds are often similar to those of the students. Mearns et al. (2007) state that if a teacher is perceived to be approachable and sensitive to student needs, students become committed to their work and are more willing to express their thinking during the day-to-day schooling experience. Furthermore, Taylor (1998) argues that to encourage student transformation in learning, the teacher can play the role of establishing an environment characterised by trust and care, and helping to facilitate sensitive relationships among participants. Adding to this, Boyd and Myers (as cited in Imel, 1998) state that teachers can play and develop two approaches when facilitating the transformational process among students: (i) seasoned guidance, which the teacher can provide by reflecting on his/her journey while

talking to the students; and (ii) valued compassionate criticism that assists students to question their own circumstances in ways that would promote transformation of their worldview. Teachers can act as gatekeepers and guides for students on their journey of transformation (Daloz, 1999). However, little is known about the nature of a teacher's support, as Berger (2004, p. 374) argues that support as comfort is not transformative, but is a form of 'good company'.

Establishing relationships with others is an essential factor in the transformative experience (E. W. Taylor, 1998). Many Mandiri graduates visit the school several months or years after graduation. Inviting successfully graduated students is one of Mandiri's strategies to facilitate dialogue between current and previous students to motivate current students. Students comment that many of graduate students found success by entering good universities in Indonesia, with the support of a scholarship. A few of them continued their education overseas with help from an international institution that provides a scholarship. Ajeng shares her thought about this:

I got many inspirations from graduate students. Many of them continue their education in good reputation university, even though they graduated from this program. I realise this learning experience is not enough and seems ineffective. However, the stories from graduate students and teachers motivate me to study hard. Maybe I will enrol in another academic course. I mean I will learn some subject outside this program so I can compete with other students to enter university after I graduate. (Ajeng, female, 20 yrs old)

Providing sources of inspiration or role models, such as successfully graduated students is important in developing student expectations. In a study of social interaction among people diagnosed with HIV-positive, Courtenay, Merriam and Reeves (1998) explain that the roles of dialogue and relationship enhance the transformational journey. Dialogue and social interaction lead to consensual

validation (valid by the process of discussing it). Furthermore, dialogue can be delivered by emphasising relational and trustful communication; it can be highly personal and involve self-disclosure, and not analytical and point-counterpoint-dialogue (Carter, 2002, p. 82). Taylor (1997) identifies this process as one of transformative relationships.

6.6.3 Feeling of 'becoming different'

Although the majority of students are familiar with the location of the school, studying in the middle of a bus station appears odd. Moreover, students at Mandiri also witnessed unpleasant experiences when the local government tried to evict the school building because it occupies government land. One student shares a story that when he first enrolled at Mandiri, students studied at the mosque due to a lack of classroom. However, three years later, the school received donations and started to construct the present main school building. At that time, as the majority of students were street children, the school building was developed close to the mosque in the train station to attract them to attend school. Below, a student with over five years at Mandiri tells of his experience:

In the process of my school establishment, more than three times I heard that my school would be evicted for building a mall because my school is in a strategic location, which it is close to a bus station, train station, local government office and other malls surrounding it. However, the school leader defended its existence. I am very proud of him. (Iman, male, 17 years old)

In witnessing this experience, Iman feels that his school is different from the others. The differences concern the location, historical events and the role it plays in accommodating disadvantaged youth, which traditional schooling cannot do. Clark and Wilson (1991) emphasise the importance of context and role shaping

transformative learning. Also, Scott's (2003) study of transformative learning and the exploration of social action in organisations reports that transformation includes structural changes in the psyche of the individual and its structures of society. She sees transformation of an individual's perspective (rational worldview) as a change in the surface structures of the psyche, while the 'social construction of transformation co-emerges in the learner and the setting, that is, the personal and the social in dialectical relationship transform' (Scott, 2003, p. 275).

Apart from historical context, student feelings of 'becoming different' come from the school environment and activities that lead student to a sense of belonging to the school. Female students mention that their school is unique, and its uniqueness makes them honoured to engage with the school environment:

This school is unique. The teachers and school leader do not want to build the school just like another school. Our class is made from a container. Therefore, our school building design is different if we compare it with another schools. One of the reasons is that container are easy to be removed if there is an eviction. It is because originally the school was built on land that people donated to the school organisation. This condition made us aware that this school is valuable for us and because of this, we love the school. (Group of female students)

Located in the middle of a bus station, Mandiri offers a 'different look' and environment which links between the environment and school activities. Expanding on the school environment and activities can promote transformative learning. The psychic field that surrounds and saturates the learning environment can influence the personal energy of teachers and students. One male student points out the positive sides about the school:

If we think positive about this school, this school is unique for me. Can you imagine that our school is in the middle of a bus station community? Are we having a 'real life' and feeling close to the school and community? The students and people interact with each other, just like in everyday matters.

Sometimes the student learns how to drive a minibus (if they want to be a bus driver in the future); we sell food to other people during the schooling process. The negative thing is the place (the school) is dirty. But I think that if we can make a little bit of modifications to the school building and design such as building colour, modification in the shape of the garbage bin and other facilities, this school will attract many people because we are different; it is unique. (Iman, male, 17 years old)

6.7 Self-identification of learning outcomes

Mandiri students show positive attitude as an outcome of their engagement in learning. Coming from a vulnerable social background, the students now feel a sense of self-empowerment as a result of connecting with the EP. They also have the ability to connect, share and collaborate with other students and teachers.

Furthermore, as students become aware of the limitation of the school, they are able to cope with its limited conditions.

6.7.1 A sense of hope

A positive sense emanates from students when they describe how Mandiri gives them an opportunity to empower everyone, including the marginalised youth community who engage in the EP. It is clearly evident that a sense of self-empowerment can be identified from the students' recollections that they can have a better future. A better future for disadvantaged youth might simply be employment after graduation or progressing to a better paying job with a stable income. One student expects to take part in the higher education community, something that many can only dream about. Below are stories from such students:

The valuable thing is my dream. Every student here has a dream. Our graduate students can enter higher education with a scholarship because many people and institution care about us. I believe I can get a scholarship after graduating from this program because graduate students from this school study at good public universities now. (Mae, female, 17 years old)

Me too, I do not mind what kind of university it is, as long as I am motivated.
For me I can study everywhere. I want to take economics major. (Ajeng,
female, 20 years old)

Referring to a student's sense of hope as an outcome of engaging in learning and the school community, Freire states that education could be liberating, even for those with limited means or live marginalised lives (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 72). However, Bloch (1991) warns that if hope remains 'uneducated', that is, without direction from teachers or adult people to formulate a future, it becomes a fantasy. Further, from Bloch's perspective, the role of education is to enable students to learn practice 'educated hope'.

The mainstream pathway in education is more appreciated by Indonesian people as a major education track in Indonesia. Therefore, non-mainstream schooling for many is still undervalued. In other words, society doubts that the educational outcomes of the EP are equal to educational programs in the mainstream pathway. However, for young people who are excluded from mainstream education, and who recognise and witness personal and collective changes, they value the EP and believe that Mandiri can 'make a difference' (Thrupp, 1999). In this sense, Giroux (1985) explains that 'hope' is a tool for exploring the politics of possibility in education. Adding to this, te Riele and Crump (2003) place hope in the schooling process and school credential as a useful outcome. te Riele (2000, p. 40) further conceptualises hope as practical and critical in the way it needs to be, that is, robust, focused on hopes that are attainable, and questioned in terms of its 'soundness'.

6.7.2 Ability to connect, share and partner other students

Students participating in this study often discuss how they receive benefits from the EP. They began schooling with uncertainty, because the school environment was different from a typical school, but now students happily mention that they can connect, share and collaborate with other students, as well as teachers. Moreover, comparisons are made by the students. They state that these social benefits rarely happen in a mainstream school, because the environment is more formal and the relationship among the students is based on peers in the same social status and class. In this context, being around other people with similar situations and backgrounds dissociates students from being isolated in the school organisation. Most students now have the ability to talk about daily life and school issues with each other and the teachers. Below, a worker-student explains feeling connected with his teacher, as he believes that most teachers in this school appreciate the student's circumstances:

Sometimes I am late for school, just like today. I went to bed after 12 am because my mom and I got home late after work. I know the teacher will interrogate me because I am late for school. But they didn't judge me as a bad student; I can explain to them what happened. I mean, if in my previous school, it would be difficult to have a good conversation like this between student and teacher, I can express my idea or opinion, it was too scary to share my thought with them. I do not intend to be the mannerless person in this matter, but as I feel connected with the teachers easily, I can share everything with them, which is very favourable for me to engage with the (school) community. (Rizal, male, 15 years old)

Christopher et al. (2001, p. 138) describe student connection as a transformative learning outcome. The evidence of this outcome lies in the learner's enhanced compassion for others, a new connectedness with others, and ways of knowing other than the rational. A student's ability to be around others, to talk to and learn from them, especially people with similar situations, is a social reward arising from learning experiences. Emphasising the process of sharing, connecting and partnering

with others is important for Freire (2000), as dialogue with others is a process of *conscientization* for isolated people. Knowledge is produced in interaction, and all learning is relational. Freire constantly suggests that true dialogue arises from the dialectical opposition of student and teacher knowledge, resulting in the inter-subjective 'synthesis' of new knowledge (Bartlett, 2005, p. 346).

A student's ability to collaborate with others has important, positive and long-lasting implications for his/her academic and social development. This study does not show significant evidence that the relationship among students and teachers will create high-quality academic achievements. However, experiences of frequent communication and work connections (i.e. study groups) with other students will lead to better achievement in academic and social life. Students in my study suggest that social benefits from their engagement in Mandiri is characterised by their aptitude to blend in with all students in the study group. It is not difficult for them to exchange and work with different students. The idea is for all students to engage with the overall school entity.

There is no student clique here unlike at formal schools where students only spend time with their peers and their close group. In this school, all students blend with each other. For example, in my previous formal school, when we did study group, some of my friends did not want to change their members of the group. But here we always change members, so every student can get in touch with each other. For me, it is good experience; working with different people is beneficial as we can learn from each other. Other than that, I can understand my friends' life and their situation, including how they deal with it. This kind of connection inspires me so much. At least I am not the only one who struggle with this condition. (Group of female students)

It is suggested that transformative learning at the collective level enables engagement in the emancipatory praxis. Thus, an individual student who engages with community members of the same culture or background can serve 'critically

conscious people with whom the students can identify and interact' (Darder, 1995, p. 41). The classroom becomes a place for students to find opportunities to reflect with others their common lived experience and to respond to life's problems.

6.7.3 Student's capacity to cope with limited conditions

Some students in this study became aware of their school's reputation for helping vulnerable youth, especially those from migrant families. Having limited school opportunities, these students are forced to adapt to EP conditions. However, since witnessing some oppression situations (e.g. the school building eviction process by local government and how to negotiate and cope with the situation), they came to understand themselves and school community circumstances. Iman describes his experiences:

I believe that discrimination in education still happens. Since I studied in this school from Year 7 until Year 11, I experienced many things. But one thing I will not forget is the willingness of the local government wanting to evict the school building. I heard about it at least three times. Me and my friends in OSIS (*Organisasi Siswa Intra Sekolah* – Intra School Organisation) talked about this issue, and if it is true that the local government will come here and evict the building, we will take action. Yes, the students will stand in front of the school building and make a barricade. I don't care what will happen. Do you think it is easy for us to find another school? As we can't afford anything. This school has meant a lot to me; I didn't find any discrimination among students here, as this might happen in traditional schools. Yes, I realise that there is a huge gap of school facilities between my school and others. But for me, the important thing is about the teacher, not the facility. I mean, if teachers are willing to teach us, they also consider understanding their students' circumstances. I believe that students will enjoy learning even within limited conditions. (Iman, male, 17 years old)

Students understand from experience that they are able to connect what they think and to reflect on why they think in this way. As they become aware of the experiences they have been through and reflect on them, they attain what Freire (2000) terms 'conscientization' as an outcome of those critical reflection processes.

From Iman's story, the students clearly recognise what his school has to offer, such as its limited facilities. They also recognise the differences between Mandiri and other schools and how the process of oppression is regularly enacted. Such situations do not make the student resign; conversely, they lead to strategies on how to cope with the situation. From a student's perspective, the teacher becomes a crucial factor that can influence students to engage more with learning and the school, thus challenging the conditions that limit student circumstances.

6.8 Conclusion

Chapter 6 analyses and interprets the student learning experience in Mandiri about the process of re-engaging in learning and schooling. Mandiri helps poor and migrant children and youth to participate in non-formal educational activities, especially the EP. The majority of youth come to this school because they were excluded from formal education or were subjected to residential mobility that had negative effects on their academic achievement (Pettit & McLanahan, 2003).

Mandiri is a community school that is purposefully located close to the daily activities of street-involved children. In spite of its limited circumstances, students in Mandiri recognise that the EP offers opportunities through its flexibility so that they can balance their need for schooling and other needs in their life. In the initial stages of re-engagement in learning and schooling, students sense that school is an unfamiliar environment. It is expressed that feelings associated with uncertainty and confusion as a matter of transition to engagement in learning exist.

However, after months and years, the students came to feel that Mandiri is 'a safe place' for street-involved children and that it provides psychological identity and

leads to a collective sense of belonging (Beck & Foster, 1999). The school community includes teachers, principal and graduated students influencing student commitment to the learning and schooling process. The context of the school, such as its historical event and the role it plays in accommodating a vulnerable community, has shaped the experience of transformation for each student. In this sense, students can feel that the school's uniqueness has made them feel 'different', and that can lead to a new 'identity transformation'. As a result, despite its limitation, Mandiri and its activities stimulate students' 'sense of hope' about the future. Chapter 7 presents the research findings from Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre.

CHAPTER 7:

CASE STUDY – NUSANTARA NON-FORMAL EDUCATION CENTRE

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 presents and discusses the research data from the case study of Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre (hereinafter referred to as Nusantara) under the theme of the learning experience in the EP, and interprets the findings in relation to how Nusantara students re-engage with learning. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Wijaya Learning Centre) and Chapter 6 (Mandiri Community Centre), the themes used in the study are: (i) leaving mainstream school; (ii) entering the EP; (iii) coping with the initial learning experience; (iv) integrating into learning; and (v) identifying the learning outcomes. The chapter begins with a profile of the school and continues with discussing the five themes. Of the 19 students who participated in the interview and focus group meetings, nine are female and 10 are male.

7.2 School profile

Nusantara is a centre for non-formal education, owned and managed by the Department of Education at the district level. Nusantara provides non-formal education programs, including Packages A, B and C, and serves students from rural areas around the Pandeglang district in Banten province. Approximately 111 kilometres from the Indonesian capital city, Pandeglang district is an area of 2,746.91 square kilometres and the majority of people live in rural areas. Therefore, agriculture is the dominant activity in the region and 62.25% of the community farms

for their livelihood. As a government centre of learning activities, Nusantara is part of the government's effort to improve children's participation in education. The implementation of the EP is not only at the Nusantara main office in the centre of town, but also in villages where high numbers of children out of school have been identified. At the time this study was undertaken, the Package A program was organised at Cilentung village, Pulosari sub-district and Geredug village, Saketi sub-district. The Package B program is organised at Geredug village, Saketi sub-district and Juhut village, Karangtanjung sub-district. Only the Package C program is organised at the Nusantara main office in the city of Pandeglang. Due to site accessibility and weather conditions when the study was undertaken, only Package C students were interviewed.

Adjacent to public high schools, the Nusantara alternative school has places around the area for disadvantaged students who need education because they cannot attend mainstream schooling. The school is located on the main road and is easy to access by private and public transportation. However, the majority of people do not recognise the existence of the school because the building is divided into two parts: (i) the front is for administration; and (ii) the school building is in the back. A sign for the school identifies the government organisation rather than the school itself. Since the school building is located behind the learning centre office, a visitor has to pass the first building, which houses the organisation's leader, administrators and tutors. The students have their own entrance to the school, which is a footpath between the houses.



Figure 7.1 Teaching and learning process in the classroom

The school building is considered small, with three classrooms for Grades 10, 11 and 12 and another classroom for the Playgroup program. Next to the Grade 12 classroom is a small room for the library, which contains a few books on a table. It appears that the library is not functioning because the door is always locked and the books are scattered on the floor. Another part of the school building is a toilet room for the students. School facilities, such as a computer room and function hall, are attached to the administration office in the main building. Inside each classroom is a set of wooden chairs. As there is only one classroom for each grade, the room is packed with students in the morning, but gradually become less when some students leave the classroom. There are no open areas around the school building. When I visited Nasantara, the only open area was at the front of the administration building, however, the area also functions as a community footpath. Therefore, there are no school activities apart from those inside the classroom (meaning no sports or extracurricular activities exist). Even though people are not aware that the school

exists, many disadvantaged students obtain information about Nusantara from family members and peers who previously enrolled in the school. One hundred and twenty students attend Nusantara in Grades 10, 11, and 12, aged between 15 and 18 years, who cannot enrol in a mainstream high school due to poverty. The school has five tutors (teachers) who are government employees and five volunteers, most of whom have an educational background and more than five years teaching experience. However, apart from teaching, tutors have other duties in managing and implementing other non-formal educational programs, such as literacy education, early childhood education, life skills education and community empowerment. These programs are implemented around the Pandeglang district, requiring tutors to frequently travel around the area. Unlike other similar programs or classes in the Pandeglang district, which most are held over weekends or in the afternoon, Nusantara's learning hours are almost the same as those of a formal high school. From Monday to Friday, the classes commence at 8 am and finish at 12 noon. However, in the implementation process, the learning process is only two hours due to a high absence teachers. It appears that the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes is a major issue at Nusantara.

The majority of Nusantara students are youth aged between 15 and 18 years. The students tend to wear their high school uniforms, similar to mainstream schools, therefore, they look like mainstream school students but without a school logo or name attached to the uniform. They come from disadvantaged family backgrounds where their parents are farmers who work in the informal agricultural sector or as seasonal community labour.



Figure 7.2 Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre main building for the administration office

Since the students are similar in age and background, Nusantara does not face major challenges around how to manage learning for students. Therefore, teaching and learning methods in this school are delivered by traditional methods, such as lectures or face-to-face teaching in the classroom, as opposed to independent study.



Figure 7.3 Female Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre students wearing uniforms similar to formal high schools

7.3 Leaving mainstream schooling

7.3.1 Discontinuing after graduation

In the international context, school dropouts occur when students exit from K-12 schooling without graduating from high school, as most Western countries enforce compulsory schooling for children up to 18 years old. However, in Indonesia, mandatory basic education is up to Year 9 (primary and junior secondary school). Under the compulsory education policy, students are exempt from paying school fees (which cover the annual enrolment fee and monthly fees). This means that after completing compulsory education, students are required to re-enrol at a senior secondary school (three years), which involves enrolment and monthly fees.

As mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6, the majority of Wijaya and Mandiri students drop out from mainstream school during the school year, or in other words, they do not complete either junior or senior secondary schooling. However, most Nusantara students leave mainstream schooling after graduating from junior secondary schooling. By law, public junior secondary schooling is free for all citizens in Indonesia. However, senior secondary schooling is not free. School fees and indirect costs are a major impediment for poorer students participating in mainstream education.

Suryadarma et al. (2006) investigate the cause of low secondary school enrolment in Indonesia and argue that household welfare, children from Muslim families, children in areas with relatively abundant employment opportunities and the gender of children are significant determinants of low enrolment. The Nusantara case study confirms these findings, as evidenced by Umar's and Ridwan's statements:

When I graduated from JSS, I did not continue formal SSS because my mother did not have enough money at that time. I had to find 3,000,000 rupiahs for the enrolment fee. (Umar, male, 16 years old)

After graduating from JSS, I was willing to continue my study at Vocational High School, but because the admission fee was expensive, which was 2,500,000 rupiahs, but my parent could not afford it. (Ridwan, male, 18 years old)

Family financial circumstances in Nusantara students are linked to a range of factors such as family structure, either a single parent or a large family. Lila recalls her mother having to struggle to support five children and their education after divorce. Other stories include Ivan who has eight siblings and Lila with seven siblings, revealing that it is difficult for them to continue education because the family has little money or whatever they had was to be shared with their siblings.

My parents divorced many years ago when I was about five years old. Since then, my father did not feed my family anymore. I discontinued my study in a mainstream school because my mother did not have money for it. Since then, I spent three months at home after graduating from junior secondary school. (Lila, female, 18 years old)

I am the fifth of eight siblings. My father is a '*tukang ojek*' (motorcycle taxi rider) and my mother sells gasoline on the street. In my family, my two older sisters only graduated from junior secondary school, and another sister graduated from Package C. Talking about why I discontinued my education is simply because at that time my little sister needed money for enrolling in the formal school. So I decided to study the Package C program. (Ivan, male, 16 years old)

It is clear that poverty limits access to schooling because education places a cost in most countries. Porteus et al. (2000, p. 10) describe poverty as 'the most common primary and contributory reason for students to be out of school'. Hunter and May (2002, p. 5) call poverty 'a plausible explanation of school disruption'. Related to this, at a micro level, family income has a direct impact on whether children attend education (Hadley, 2010).

7.4 Entering the equivalency program

7.4.1 Free-cost education

The Indonesian government set up the EP to accommodate learners from low-income families, allowing young people to enter an alternative pathway for education because there is no other choice available to them. Therefore, free-cost education in the EP provides the only chance for vulnerable youth to learn. In this sense, money matters in the attainment of education objectives. Beck (1992, cited in te Riele & Crump, 2003) argues that poverty attracts an unfortunate abundance of risks. Furthermore, te Riele and Crump (2003, pp. 68-69) state that there are distinct differences in the material, social and cultural resources that shape the opportunity structure of young people. It means that for Nusantara students, their participation in the EP was not a choice. Syahdan shares his experience on the way he enrolled in the program:

In the first time, I do not know anything about Package C. But, my cousin asked me to enrol at this program because it is free of cost. This school helps our family a lot because we cannot afford to enrol at the formal high school. (Shahdan, male, 16 years old)

Financial cost and affordability become basic reasons for students to participate in non-mainstream schooling. The reasons meet the government objective of providing greater support for offering the EP to disadvantaged school-age students.

7.5 Initial learning experiences

Students are aware that their involvement in the EP is a consequence of their disadvantaged condition, and that the decision to enrol is because Nusantara is free of cost. In the initial stage of re-engagement in learning and schooling in the EP, the

students mention that they encounter a dissonance – a discomfort feeling – as a consequence of unanticipated transfer from the mainstream school to the EP. Learning and teaching practices, as well as the EP organisational structure that is different from mainstream schooling, influence students, especially their self-identity.

7.5.1 Exploration stage

Lack of educational choice

For many people, ‘choice’ is understood to be a rational decision from a range of options available to them, but for Nusantara students this is not the case. Before entering the EP, students are aware of their desire for education. Most students prefer to enrol at a mainstream school for greater educational opportunities, as they believe it will give them a better future. Also, they do not have a positive image of the EP, therefore, they show dissatisfaction about participating from the time of enrolment.

It is clear that schooling decisions for disadvantaged youth correlate with family earnings. Typically, individuals from low socioeconomic status are selected into particular educational types and levels. They are forced to take personal responsibility for their lack of educational choice (Ball, 2006). In this sense, the students explain that they had no choice regarding their educational experience. In other words, participating in the EP is perceived as a lack of opportunities available to them, that material resources shape their opportunity (te Riele & Crump, 2003). Limited choices for young people living in poverty affect their right to a good education, a right that is taken for granted by others who are financially better-off.

This situation seems unfair for a student like me; many students cannot enrol at a mainstream school just because they cannot afford it. However, even though most of the school fee is expensive, especially the enrolment fee, the

learning process looks the same. That is why I am curious about why this matter becomes difficult for us. (Syahdan, male, 16 years old)

Syahdan's voice describes how poverty affects his educational aspirations; it relates to the high cost of school limiting the freedom to make choices. Despite students' consciousness that poverty limits free choice, some define themselves as better off than others. Students explain that many young people in surrounding areas could not access education at all, not even the alternative pathways. It seems that, to some extent, students value the opportunity as they confirm their social condition. Participation in the EP, even though it is not the ideal option, does give these young people some social opportunity. Thus, their actions are based on values, despite confirmation of their marginalised circumstances. In this particular context, people's actions are oriented and constrained by the value and norms of people around them (Knapp, 1994, pp. 191-192).

7.5.2 Transition stage

A sense of dissonance

Students identify themselves as being forced to accept the reality that their involvement in the EP is due to the limited choices available. As a consequence, some issues appear to become part of the student transition experience, that is, uncertainty about the future, distrust of the school and feelings of shame that arise. I called this 'a sense of dissonance'. Festinger (1957, cited in Walton, 2011) describes this situation as cognitive dissonance that refers to the discomfort felt resulting from discrepancy or contradiction between individual-related cognition and behaviour. When students are called upon to learn something and it contradicts what they already know, they are likely to resist the incoming knowledge. In this sense, most

Nusantara students acquire educational expectations through the mainstream school, as this is common among young people. However, unavailability of this option makes student suffer discomfort, shame or uncertainty.

One feeling of uncertainty is ‘a sense of no future’. Consequently, students become resistance to what the EP offers. They compare formal schooling with the EP, consider the subjects that are being offered, school size and the school environment. Differences appear between these types of schooling, and many Nusantara students perceive the EP as a non-legitimate educational pathway. The meaning of life for these students simply relates to the instrument that delivers these programs (rather than the learning provided). Students argue that the EP credential is less appreciated by educational institutions such as universities for students who pursue higher education and by employers assessing job applications. Andin is one student who expresses anger when she shared her story:

I was upset because I did not enrol in any formal school here. I thought I have no future. It was embarrassing to me, as I did not expect to study here. I did not know anything about this school; not even heard about it. (Andin, female, 17 years old)

Another form of dissonance appears in stories of feeling ashamed or bad as a student in the EP. They experience this emotion because they feel they have done something ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ by entering the EP. They imagine how their peers from the mainstream school view them. In their own words, EP students feel they are negatively evaluated by either the self or others, leading to an inferiority complex compared to students in formal schooling. Lila asks herself about being an EP student. For her, some schools with classes starting at 8 am instead of 7 am (when formal school commences) make her feel embarrassed. Her neighbour often asks

why she leaves home after 7 am. Such circumstances make EP students feel different to mainstream high school students.

The reason I do not like to study here is the school starts late. I will tell you the story about when I was in '*angkot*' (public transportation). A driver asked me about my school, and because most of the schools already started the learning process at the time, I was in *angkot*. When I told the driver about my school, his responded, 'Oh okay, I understand why you come late to school.' It was very embarrassing. Even the driver knows how bad my school is. (Lila, female, 18 years old)

Since the student has no power to handle the situation of when school commences, shame cannot be discharged and will remain part of the transition process in terms of engaging with the EP. Therefore, some students hope to transfer to a mainstream school if they can acquire the financial resources.

Honestly speaking, I want to transfer to another school, but I am fully aware that I might not be able to do so because my family does not have enough money to send me to a formal school. Furthermore, it is no guarantee for me that I will be accepted by a formal high school. It seems like the other school will not accept students like us from the Package program. (Syahdan, male, 16 years old)

Syahdan wishes to transfer to a mainstream school, but he is afraid that he will not be accepted because he will be coming from a second class education, while mainstream schooling is considered first class. His concern is shared by other students. Even though the government ensures that there is a school transfer system between the mainstream and non-mainstream pathway, in reality, it is difficult to manage. Mutmainah witnesses difficulties when she attended junior secondary school. At that time, she was enrolled in a Package B program, but decided to transfer to the mainstream school because the Package B program was closed due to a limited number of students. However, some formal schools rejected her:

When I graduated from formal JSS, I did not want to enrol in the Package C program because I had experience that studying the EP is ineffective. So, the story is like this: I was graduated for mainstream JSS, but before that, I was studying Package B program. I had difficult experiences when I was transferring my study from EP to mainstream school. I was rejected by three mainstream JSS. Two schools said that the student from Package B could not transfer to a mainstream school. Another school never gave a reason if I could transfer to that school or not. When I came to the fourth school, they accepted me even though the school fee transfer was expensive, which is almost double the school entrance fee. This experience hurts me so much. (Mutmainah, female, 18 years old)

Nusantara students report complex feelings in the early stages of study in the EP, such as shame and anger, identifying oneself as a bad student, and a willingness to transfer to other school, but the lack of support prevented them from doing so. The transition process appears to be prompted by the unanticipated transfer from a formal school to the EP. It may also be due to a lack of support from teachers at the current school. These difficulties in transition can lead to challenging behaviours from students.

Lack of discipline

In Nusantara, a lack of discipline is mainly an issue associated with male students. Behaviours that contradict expectations include unauthorised exit from the classroom during a lesson, lateness to school, and disobedience to teachers, school rules and regulations. This has turned into a serious problem at Nusantara, where some students complained that it has become commonplace. Initially, behaviour-related disciplinary problems occur with a small number of students, only to be followed by others. Ridwan, a male student at Nusantara, shares his observation that teachers are often angry with students' bad behaviour:

The teachers are nice, but sometimes they are angry because many students are rude. They do not come to the classroom but play outside the school with other students. (Ridwan, male, 18 years old)

In the interviews, male students argue that student behaviour, such as skipping class, was not their fault because there are reasons. These include teacher absenteeism, poor students and teacher relationships, and students viewing teachers as inadequate authority figures. Furthermore, students feel that some teachers are not committed to teaching. Consequently, teachers have little power over their students. This leads to the students' lack of trust in the teachers and less commitment to learning. For example, Rara states that some students truant from school because the teacher does not care about them. As these behaviours continue to occur, students start to ignore the authority of the teacher, as they believe their behaviour will not affect the teacher's evaluation of their academic performance.

Teacher's behaviour caused student indiscipline. They always ask the students to come early to the school, but they do not. The students always wait for the teacher, but now, some students do whatever they want with no control from the teacher or punishment. Another case, for example, is when the student did not come to school for more than three days and the teacher did not call their parents. Surprisingly, they will pass the evaluation for the next grade. (Rara, female, 17 years old)

Indiscipline in schools is therefore related to the school environment and culture.

There is no evidence in this study that a home structure or weak home discipline is the cause of the problem. Students say that this behaviour can be diminished if the teacher arrives to class on time and promises to commit to the learning and teaching process.

Learning and teaching practice

Due to teachers' non-attendance in the classroom, most students in the interviews state that schoolwork means 'getting the notes' from the teachers. Dictation and copying from textbooks and the blackboard are everyday learning and teaching strategies practised at Nusantara. This pedagogy acts as a replacement for the

teacher's presence in the classroom, and makes students feel 'bored' and 'meaningless' in term of improving knowledge and learning experiences. Umar and Cicih both agree that this approach is adopted by teachers who lack commitment:

The teachers are always busy. They rarely come to the class. I know the students feel bored because they have to wait for the teacher everyday, so they decide not to come to the class, even though they come to the school. (Umar, male, 16 years old)

I argued that the teachers do not seem responsible about their job. They often give us school textbooks and the students have to copy the chapter or do a dictation. Yeah, some students, especially girls are copying, but boys are lazy to write. I understand that, because they bored with this kind of activity. We do not even understand what we are copying. (Cicik, female, 17 years old)

Students do not put forward their views to the teachers about what is affecting their learning and teaching practices because they believe that their comments will have no effect on the teacher's approach. They state that teachers often blame students who skip class and that the declining number of students attending classes should motivate teacher to assume a greater responsibility. Susi describes this situation:

We never protest about teacher's absence, because the teacher always blames the student too. The teacher blames the student for bad behaviour, such as hanging out. (Susi, female, 16 years old)

In spite of students being critical of the process of writing down notes, their teacher refers to this process as an independent learning method. The teachers tell the students that a non-formal pedagogical instructional design includes three learning styles: (i) tutorial; (ii) face-to-face; and (iii) independent learning that is connected to self-directed learning. The reasoning behind this is based on the assumption that students will learn better and faster than when they are assumed to be passive learners. However, the self-directed learning that these teachers are trying to apply for their students appears to be ineffective, because the students do not possess the

knowledge about how to prepare plans and how to study by themselves. The majority of students said they need assistance and guidance from the teacher regarding what independent learning means. Below are some comments from female students in the focus group discussion regarding independent learning:

I think independent learning is not effective; because I confused about who to ask if I have difficulties. (Cicih, female, 17 years old)

Yeah, the teacher said that non-formal school have three learning styles, which include tutorial, face-to-face and independent learning. However, from those learning styles, we do independent learning frequently. For me, independent learning is ineffective; I do not understand it at all. I need a teacher to explain the lesson. (Mutmainah, female, 18 years old)

I agree, I think they asked students to study independently just because the teacher does not come to the classroom. (Rara, female, 17 years old)

In addition to self-study, the school does not provide learning materials. This is one of the reasons why Nusantara students prefer to be provided with traditional teaching and learning methods, as they believe that the best source of information they have available to them is from the teacher. Furthermore, this becomes a significant problem as students are unable to provide the finances required to purchase materials and equipment. Supporting the significance of learning materials, Colglough et al. (cited from Sedibe, 2011) argue that to achieve a good quality education, the availability of adequate learning materials is extremely important. Schools functioning without adequate resources will result in ineffective teaching and learning outcomes, which leads to poor academic performance by learners.

As students speak of their poor learning and teaching instructions in the EP, many argue that this situation affects their overall learning experience. They are connecting their limited learning experience of the EP to their future. For example, one female student feels hesitant in applying for work after graduating from the EP.

Upi questions whether her academic and life-skills make it possible for her to get a job:

I am not sure that after graduating from this school I can find a job. I doubt it because we have a limited learning experience here. We do not have adequate school facilities, and as you can see, several computers are damaged, so we have to take turns if we want to use them. The teachers said that the EP curriculum would be enriched with life-skill programs, as most of the students will enter the working place after graduation. However, until now there is no life-skill program available for students. (Upi, female, 17 years old)

School identity and its organisational structure

Another facet of the school that impedes student re-engagement is its identity and organisational structure. Based on student views, the school identity refers to a school's symbol, such as uniforms and logos that identify which school they attend. The majority of students argue that they feel embarrassed among students from other schools because they do not wear a uniform, especially the '*batik*' (Indonesia traditional motif) uniform. However, they do wear 'white and grey' (colours of a formal high school uniform), but without a logo or name of the school. Upi is one student who shares stories on how a school uniform and logo affect her identity as an EP student. Her peers, neighbours and those who meet her accidentally ask about her school:

We do not have a logo on our school uniform. Therefore, the people do not recognise our school. It is embarrassing for me. Indeed, we asked the teachers about this, but they ignored it. In my opinion, it is simple for the school to create and organise a school logo, so people can recognise our identity. However, this thing is not part of their consideration. (Upi, female, 17 years old)

Based on Upi's story, an organisational identity can affect a student's self-image. If society recognises the existence of the EP and its students, it creates a positive social image for students. However, as the government set up the EP as a different system

to that in the mainstream schools, the school's identity, such as a uniform or school logo was deemed unimportant. However, students do not agree.

Moreover, Nusantara's organisational structure is different to the mainstream schools. Nusantara is part of the District Non-formal Education Centre that manages non-formal education programs for communities. Therefore, to separate the organisational function from the school, there are two main buildings, one for the EP and another building for the office. Even though the school is divided into two parts, the school's organisation is under the gaze of the Non-formal Education Office. Consequently, based on student opinions, the school's organisation does not manage their activities effectively as the principal and teachers are also part of the non-formal education organisation that is responsible for overseeing the school while undertaking other duties as government officers.

Regarding this, students argue that the organisational structure influences the relationship between students and teachers. There is no emotional bond or commitment between students and teachers. Teachers have other duties that require them to travel frequently to cities and villages where they manage and conduct other non-formal education programs. Rara, a student, comments on Nusantara's organisational structure and its impact on the relationship between students and teachers, as well as learning and teaching:

The relationship between students and teachers are not too close because the school and government office building are separate from each other. It looks like the other building is not the students' area. It seriously affects communication between student and teacher. Furthermore, as our teachers manage other non-formal education programs, they have other responsibilities apart from teaching us. That is why the teachers always argue that they are absence from the classroom because they have many things to do in the office. (Rara, female, 17 years old)

It is clearly stated here that student learning is affected by the school organisational structure in term of allocating resources of personnel, space and time. It reflects the forces operating within the school system. In this sense, students are powerless under the government setting.

Isolation

The students share their feelings of isolation and of being misunderstood from the educational institutional framework and surrounding community. At an educational institutional level, students reveal that other mainstream schools in the surrounding area, as well as the District Education Unit (*Dinas Pendidikan*), unfairly excludes Nusantara from education-related activities that are provided in town. Hisyam shares the story of Nusantara being excluded from education events in town, such as sports competitions held for high school students, and the Indonesian Independent Day celebration that was conducted by the Department of Education at the District level. He states that Nusantara students are never invited to such events, because the Department of Education does not acknowledge the school's existence. It is painful for Hisyam and his friends because they feel excluded from many activities they would enjoy as high school students:

When the other school students attended the sports competition, we were never invited. I do not know why. I think the other schools or local government do not recognise us as part of an educational institution in this city. I feel upset with this condition because I like sport very much. Surprisingly, it also happened at Indonesian Independent Day celebrations when we are never invited to attend the national flag ceremony. The teacher said that the Department of Education committee did not provide 'space' for our school to participate in this ceremony. If students go to the ceremony, they have no 'line'. (Hisyam, male, 18 years old)

In this regard, the EP can be isolated from the formal education system. Teachers are also unable to build relationships with surrounding formal schools, which makes it difficult for them to connect students with other educational entities.

Besides being marginalised by other educational institutions, students raise concerns about negative public perceptions of being a Nusantara student. They feel that they are viewed and treated as ‘bad’ and ‘poor’ students since society views Nusantara as a ‘school for unfortunate students’. In spite of feeling anger at how society perceives their school, few students accept these negative views because they are aware that Nusantara has many problem related to students, teachers and the organisation. Students compare the EP to their previous experiences in mainstream schooling. A sense of exclusion from the broader community can lead to a negative concept of self, and this can affect a student’s motivation to learn, as Umar explains:

Not every person knows about this school. When friends of mine knew that I was studying here, they teased me. They said that this school was a ‘poor school’. Some people also argued that the students do not study properly in the classroom as they occasionally see our students play outside the school area. Yeah, for this one, sometime they are true. That is why people always have a negative perspective about this school. (Umar, male, 16 years old)

Second class certificate

In Indonesia, the EP is part of a non-formal education system that differs from the mainstream or formal education system. Therefore, the education certificate attained after completing both education types is dissimilar. While the mainstream-high school diploma is well known by educational institutions and society, the EP certificate is of lesser value to most people who achieve one. Indeed, many mainstream-high school students fail their national examination and take the EP

national examination to gain the school diploma, but society has limited knowledge of this program.

Regarding EP certification, many students participating in this study express concerns about the EP diploma being a 'second class certificate'. Even though the government seeks to ensure that an EP graduate can enter university or seek work without being disadvantaged, the students are concerned that educational institutions value the EP certificate less than the mainstream-high school diploma. For example, Rara wants to enter university after completing the program but fears that the EP is a dubious certificate and worries that the university may prefer students from mainstream schools rather than alternatives ones. Currently, the Indonesian government provides many scholarships for disadvantaged group at the university level.

I am afraid that the university does not appreciate me when I graduate from Package C, not from a formal school. I think people will assume that I am an unqualified student because I graduated from the EP. (Rara, female, 17 years old)

There is no doubt that the EP is fundamentally a substitute for mainstream education. It is a second chance or second opportunity for millions of young people who did not complete their schooling. The Non-formal Education Department in Indonesia develops its curriculum and test or examination. For this reason, the certificate should be equivalent to mainstream education at certain levels. Students who pass the EP examination are expected to proceed to further education or to seek employment. Therefore, students need to recognise and value the usefulness of the EP instrumental outcome. However, the community at large does not adequately recognise the EP examination certificate and therefore, questions about the equivalence between the

EP and mainstream education remain. As the EP curriculum and its contents are designed to be more concise than the mainstream curriculum, EP students are suspected of possessing less in-depth knowledge and skills.

7.6 Integration into learning

Nusantara students encounter transition processes that includes varying degrees of emotion. However, after months and years of study, and under the influence of peers, students begin to express attitudes that are more positive. They view their peers as ideal partners to discuss learning issues and seek them for emotional support.

7.6.1 Emotional capital among peers

The connection between peers is based on classroom experiences where each student can give and receive help, and share feelings and responsibilities. This allows each student to acknowledge new perspectives about their presence in the EP and seek to move beyond previously held concepts that arose from their first impressions of becoming an EP student. Close friends act as ‘sounding boards for ideas, feelings and problems’ (Youniss & Smollar, 1985, as cited in Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005, p. 387). Students from similar social backgrounds engage each other in emotional reflexivity and occasionally give critical feedback. This mutual relationship is crucial to adolescents living within resource-poor and problem-plagued environments (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). With help from peers, students who experience dissonance (i.e. incompatible hopes and fact, or beliefs and actions) can make efforts to reduce such feelings by sharing their feelings.

Friends always motivate me to come to school. They are not just friends, but we make a family here. We always share everything, including the hope to get benefits from this school. I think this is because most of the students come

from a similar background, that is, from low-income families, I feel like our relationship among students are good; we support each other. (Susi, female, 16 years old)

Friends have the potential to provide positive influences. However, relationships with friends do not always work at the academic level (Ream & Rumberger, 2008). Although friends can foster positive behaviours and academic success, other situations may provoke anti-establishment behaviours. Despite giving an unfavourable influence, more students consider the role of peer networks as a source of motivation in learning. Students gradually move from feelings of discomfort and uncertainty to a greater confidence in the school because of the emotional bonding among students. Emotion can be engaged as critical and transformative forces. Freire (2004) notes that any transformation begins with recognising how one feels about social events, and those events relate to feelings of entering a new environment or situation.

7.6.2 Adaptive consciousness

Despite peers helping others to reintegrate with the schooling process, students argue that the learning culture at Nusantara impedes the effectiveness of learning, compared to students at Wijaya and Mandiri who find a personal commitment to learning, which is influenced by a positive school experience, Nusantara students express a sense of resignation when asked to describe how they fit into the learning environment. In this sense, disadvantaged students eventually adapt to their condition of deprivation. In other words, they become accustomed to learning about the school's limitations. I called this form of integration 'an adaptive consciousness transformation'.

While Nusantara students become aware of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives, they lack the capacity to transform it. When students find the learning and schooling process is less meaningful than they desire, they do not have the courage or skills to make complaints or objections to the teachers. A poor school culture, as described by students, include unwritten beliefs about the EP, students' poor attitudes and unsatisfactory negotiated learning outcomes that appear to be common in this type of schooling. In contrast, even though being conscious of these problems, students argue that they are blessed to have the opportunity to participate in education. The reason they stay and adapt to Nusantara's culture is to obtain a school certificate. Umar shares this feeling on how he engages with the school:

I think I am a lucky person. I am aware that many young people cannot get education because of the economic factor. Several of my friends did not continue their education because their parents do not have a job. So even though this school condition is like this, which is different from another school, I feel lucky to be here. (Umar, male, 16 years old)

Even though students witness less learning than is desirable, they are content and can adapt to it. According to Freire (1993), when learners face life situations characterised by exploitation and oppression, and they do not have the capacity to formulate scenarios of alternative ways of being, it will lead to the development of adapted consciousness rather than critical consciousness. Adapted consciousness refers to a 'person (who) accommodates to conditions imposed on them, and acquires an authoritarian and a critical frame of mind' (Freire, 1993, p. 23). This constitutes a situation of 'democratic inexperience' within which oppressed people have a limited ability to conceive alternatives to existing social relations. Susi clearly communicates this when she comments on how she has learned to obey the learning and school culture. With a sorrowful face, Susi says it with short sentences:

I only follow it. If this school is just like this every day, which is sometimes, we are not studying in it all day long. The students do what they want to do, as it seems we have no rules here. I have to admit it. However, if the school operate just like a traditional school, I am happy to do it. (Susi, female, 16 years old)

Students' adaptive consciousness seems contrary to the idea that peers may provide an ideal vehicle for learning. However, as Kitchenham (2008, p. 113) argues, this does not mean that a person will witness a perspective transformation through peer communication. In this situation, instead of developing a new perspective and coming to value the EP, students tend to adapt to it. Student's adaptation to the existing reality neglects the student power of voice to articulate beliefs and aspirations to school committees, teachers and principals.

In fact, students have an intellectual confidence when they entered the EP; it is not because of their limited cognitive ability. However, it seems that they have internalised the 'values of the oppressors', which is an EP structure role play in differentiating learning experiences. The EP curriculum content, admission, delivery system, duration of learning and teaching personnel all influence student learning experiences. In other words, EP characteristics⁷, that might be more suited to student workers and adult people, are unable to meet the educational needs and desires of young and capable school students. Furthermore, students who do not have insight into EP principles and educational designs are forced to apprehend its characteristics

⁷ Based on an UNESCO document (UNESCO 1993, pp. 3-4), Non-formal Equivalency Programs are explained, as follows: (i) as much as 75% of the content may be equivalent to the formal programs but 25% may be replaced by work experience; (ii) usually 'open admission' based on life experience; (iii) all possible delivery systems are used, e.g. contact sessions, learning groups, distance learning, self-learning and individualised instruction; (iv) duration of learning includes flexible times and students can study at their own place; (v) since the approach is largely self-instructional, tutors do not need formal teaching certificates but an equivalent qualification awarded through short-term non-formal training.

through teachers' socialisation about the programs in their first year of schooling.

Therefore, teachers apply those learning designs to determine if students can take on their own responsibility for learning. Below, Nining describes an oppressed situation:

It becomes a habit. We accept this culture. If we have to study like this in a mainstream school, I think we cannot do it. I feel like I've become lazy now. I mean, I used to adapt to this school cultures. (Nining, female, 18 years old)

It is true that the EP fulfils the educational demands of disadvantaged youth by providing an opportunity for further education because traditional schools do not make it available to them. However, the content of the course and the school culture do not always meet student expectations and means of schooling. In this case, Nusantara students try to fit into the institution rather than vice versa.

7.7 Self-identification of learning outcomes

7.7.1 Reluctant stayer

Some Nusantara students can be identified as being reluctant or involuntary stayers. They remain in the EP because there are limited choices of educational pathways for them. Other students can be identified as 'reluctant stayers' as for them the EP has become a shelter from unemployment. However, disengagement is not due to students' lack of motivation, but from school-related factors. Students state that the school climate⁸ and teachers' limited commitment to teaching and learning cause student truancy and student feelings of not belonging to the school.

⁸ It is included in the school culture (unwritten beliefs, values, attitudes and various forms of interaction among students, teachers and the administrator), school organisational structure (class and school sizes) and school social milieu.

Students become ‘reluctant stayers’ and adapt to the school system because the EP provides an opportunity to marginalised students to participate in the education process. Thus, they admit that the school mechanism is a way to incorporate school and student functions in society. If students and school expectations are not met, social disapproval of the individual can result. The student who does not meet expectation is sensitive to any disapproval, therefore, he/she will modify his/her behaviour. Parsons (1951) explains that interaction is role taking and role bargaining whereby students need an alternative school for them to continue participating in education, and the school plays a role in preparing them to enter adult life and the workplace.

Below, male students in the focus groups discuss why they have become ‘reluctant stayers’ in an alternative school setting:

What makes me stay in this school is just because it is better than spending time at home all day. (Hendrik, male 18 years old)

My parent always asks me to go to school even though my school condition is like this. They said that I have to stay at school until graduation day comes. (Dedi, male, 18 years old)

In the very beginning, I did not like to study here. I felt like this school is different from another school, especially for the learning experience and environment. But I have to stay here until I finish, because I don’t have money to transfer to another school. (Syarif, male, 18 years old)

I feel that I do not enjoy one school activity. I feel bored studying here. The reason to survive in this school is because I want to get the high school certificate so I can use it for finding a job in the future. (Sujana, male, 18 years old)

Me too, I do not enjoy studying here because there are many bad students. But my sister said that I have to stay until I graduate from Grade 12. (Irfan, male, 18 years old)

Various explanations accompany these students’ decision to stay at school, such as no activity at home, family’s desires and expectation of eventually obtaining a high

school certificate and the inability to transfer to a mainstream school, which they would prefer. However, the main argument behind these grievances is that adaptation to school norms and values will enable student to complete high school.

To consider why these students become ‘reluctant stayers’, it is worth referring to Parsons (1951) who suggests that staying on requires the identification of the student’s orientation. Analysis of the student’s orientation involves an understanding of his/her motivation within that role. It is clear that Nusantara students become ‘reluctant stayers’ because their main reason to study at EP arises from a lack of educational choice. The fact that the majority of students are poor means they face economic and political barriers to participate in mainstream education. Thus, even though in the beginning students’ orientation to participate in education is to prepare and develop themselves as ‘good students’ as they find many limiting and constraining factors in the EP, they unconsciously degrade their role as ‘good students’. As a result, they become ‘reluctant stayers’ who are waiting out the period when they finally graduate. To sum up, a student who adapts to learning is a passive agent who only does things that are expected, as in this case, the student. To continue schooling for this group can be counterproductive if it changes the students’ neutral feelings about learning into negative ones (Dwyer, 2001).

7.8 Conclusion

Chapter 7 analyses and interprets student learning experiences at Nusantara about the process of their engagement in learning and schooling. Nusantara serves rural youth who cannot enrol in formal education because they are poverty-stricken. Nusantara is part of a non-formal education centre at the district level. Neighbouring with a public

high school, the EP that is practised in Nusantara is similar to that provided in mainstream education. Students are required to wear school uniforms, they have regular morning time study and use traditional teaching methods, all in line with student expectations in that the majority of students are school-aged and prefer to be treated as ‘regular students’.

Even though the setting is parallel to a mainstream school, the majority of students feel a ‘sense of dissonance’, a position and identity placed upon themselves for identifying as EP students. The students often feel inferior, based on how peers in the mainstream school perceive them. To connect with the learning and schooling process in the EP, Nusantara students argue that emotional capital among peers is the source of motivation into learning. The emotional bond among peers helps students to stay at Nusantara even though their decision to stay in the EP can be accompanied by various explanations. One key reason is because students try to adapt to the EP to fulfil their role as students. Consequently, they become ‘reluctant stayers’ who stay at school until graduation without witnessing ‘change’ in their learning, either cognitively or emotionally.

There are important lessons to be drawn from student learning experiences at Nusantara. Based on the students’ feedback, it is clear that there is no external force (apart from family’s expectation) for them to stay in the EP, and that they feel a mismatch between the student’s expectation of schooling and the school’s expectation. However, it indicates that students merely fill in time by continuing with the EP, and many use the EP as a shelter from unemployment. This evidence challenges the EP policy and EP teachers to increase the standard of teaching and learning experience so that it meets the needs of school-age students who are ready

for further education. Furthermore, it raises a question about the assumption that the EP is for ‘unfortunate students’. Conversely, policymakers and EP teachers have to seriously consider the expectation that they serve as a better option for disadvantaged young people, that is, to encounter equivalent learning experiences through the EP in education. Chapter 8 provides a comparison of the three case studies through a cross-case analysis.

CHAPTER 8:

CROSS-CASE STUDY

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 focuses on commonalities and differences that emerged from the three case studies, Wijaya Learning Centre, Mandiri Community Centre and Nusantara Non-formal Education Centre. The purpose is to provide insight into the primary research question: *How do disadvantaged students engage with alternative schooling?* To address the question, a cross-case analysis is divided into four sections, each illustrating the processes by which EP students in this study re-engage with learning: (i) *pathways* to the EP; (ii) process of *transition* into EPs; (iii) *reconnection* with learning; and (iv) *quality* of the learning experience encountered in the EP.

The *first* section discusses how disadvantaged students find their own pathways into the EP. There are four pathways that students undertake in this study: (i) dropout; (ii) gap; (iii) direct entry; and (iv) mobile. Factors that accompany these pathways include previous educational experiences, personal situation and family circumstances. Examining these pathways enables an understanding of why disadvantaged students make crucial decisions that enable a nuanced analysis of the ways they re-engage with learning. The *second* section focuses on students' understanding regarding their re-involvement in education by reflecting on the way they engage with learning in the EP. There is a process of transition encountered by students in learning that includes moving from mainstream to alternative schooling,

adapting to the alternative school culture and acknowledging individual stories of transition.

The *third* section discusses how students approach learning and how they connect with the EP environment. The focus is on the students' interest in their studies, the connections they make with other students and teachers, and how they address the challenges of EP. The analysis also considers the role of the school culture in the process of connecting with the teacher, school context and community stakeholders.

The *fourth* section examines the possibility of students' transformation that provides them with a new understanding about their learning. The potential for student transformation in this section derives from various learning outcomes, as described by students from all case studies in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. I term a student's potential for transformation as the 'quality of learning'. The quality of learning in the transformative view is rooted in the notion of 'qualitative change', a fundamental change of *form* (Harvey & Green, 1993). It means an expression of what a student demonstrates as learning outcomes that include knowledge of oneself, the world and learning requirements of the EP that link to a fundamental change as a student and as a person in society. To make sense of the complexity of the student quality of learning, three themes are explored: (i) adaptive-consciousness; (ii) transactional/situational; and (iii) transformation/self-conscious. These categories are not hierarchically organised, but deliberately differentiated for the purpose of later examination for building strategies and policies on student engagement.

8.2 Pathways to equivalency programs

Student recollections about their arrival in the EP provide interesting insight into how these pathways to a second chance education unfold (Shavit et al., 2002, p. 2). From the three case studies, educational pathways to EP can be identified in four ways.

8.2.1 The 'dropout' student

I was expelled from the previous school because I always argued and fought with other students. It was also because I could not tolerate the study loads, too much homework, and school made me bored with its routines. Only a few months after departing mainstream school, I enrol in the EP. It is because I did not have any activities at home after dropping out. (Erwin, Wijaya student)

This first group of students dropped out from junior and senior secondary school in the mainstream schooling system but later took up study through the EP pathway.

These students are *coming back* and thereby demonstrating their commitment to complete schooling, even through a different pathway. As the student above has revealed, dropping out of school can be related to disaffection and boredom leading to expulsion (Bowers & Sprott, 2012a; Petrušauskaitė, 2010; Rumberger, 2011).

Students in this group identify themselves as people trying to do something different, that is, 'drop in' after 'drop out' from the educational program.

Various stories accompany dropout students in finding new pathways to learning. In Wijaya, students who drop out are mainly from middle-class families due to behavioural problems. They never intended to leave the mainstream school, but describe their exit as a gradual process of disengagement, often marked by behavioural difficulties. The reason they come back to school through the EP is due to a lack of activity and boredom at home. After falling out of their mainstream

school and spending time at home, these young people feel bored and start to think about how they could come back to schooling. For example, Erwin from Wijaya states that his coming back to school after dropping out is ‘mandatory, as well as a family expectation’. In Erwin’s case, two factors influenced him to enrol in the EP. Firstly, he feels that going to school is mandatory for young people like him, and secondly, the family expected him to return to schooling.

The characteristics of dropouts in Mandiri are slightly different in that Mandiri students are largely poor youth who were expelled from the mainstream school system because of a lack of attendance. They rarely attend school because activities outside schooling, such as singing in the street and other methods of earning a basic income, kept them out of school. The time spent out of school by Mandiri students was longer than Wijaya dropouts, ranging from one year to more than five years. These students return primarily because of the efforts of the principal, teachers and/or administrators of Mandiri. Street children commented that Mandiri staff occasionally come to the bus station area to seek out children who do not attend school. Thus, these students acknowledge the caring attitude and persistence of Mandiri staff in persuading them to attend school.

In contrast, dropping out is not the major reason that Nusantara students need to gain their education through the EP. Dropping out from the mainstream school system does not seem to be a huge phenomenon in rural areas. Rural youth tend to stay at school because they understand that employment opportunities will lessen if they drop out from school. Therefore, other factors create pathways for students to enrol at Nusantara. For Nusantara students, their pathways into the EP are more about a lack of educational choice. In other words, Nusantara students attend the EP

for their senior secondary education directly after graduating from their junior secondary school. These students are limited in their choice of education as poverty hinders rural youth in choosing an educational pathway. The pathway to the Nusantara EP is explained in Section 8.2.2.

8.2.2 The 'gap' student

I came from Pemalang, Central Java province. Many of my friends work in Jakarta after graduating from JSS. I did not continue my study because of a family financial matter. So I joined my friends to go to Jakarta. I live with my cousin at a small rented room. I was forced to become a young worker, working as a construction labourer. This job is hard for me. After eight years, I decided to enter this program because I want to have a better job in the future. (Raka, Wijaya student)

Raka's narrative is typical of the second group, 'gap'⁹ students, which is characterised by students who finish either primary or junior secondary school but do not continue to the next stage. Some students decide to work for a year in the same or another city, but some remain unemployed for several years. Later, 'gap' youth make the decision to re-enter education through the EP. The EP attracts 'gap' students by providing a different system of schooling. The majority of young people in this category are older rather than school-age students.

Research findings reveal that students are likely to take gap years because of family circumstances, such as poverty, family size and a lack of parental

⁹ For the purpose of this study, the term 'gap student' differs from what constitute a 'gap year' in Western societies. In Western countries, it is associated with young people who decide not to enter higher education immediately after completing high school. Instead they choose to spend a year travelling, working, volunteering or engaging in other activities. These young people generally come from wealthy social groups. In Indonesia, specifically in my study where I use this term, it refers to disadvantaged youth who complete junior secondary schooling or senior secondary schooling, but do not immediately proceed with higher education due to a lack of funds for education. However, a 'gap' student re-enters education at a later date.

commitment to education. These factors cause disadvantaged youth to discontinue their education. Compared to the *'dropouts'* group, the young *'gap'* student spends more time out of school, for example, in Wijaya, where many post-school-age students aged 19 to 25 years are enrolled in this school after being out of school for four to nine years. (In Indonesia, students graduate from junior secondary school at around 15 years of age.) Many of these students did not think they would return to schooling after a long *gap*, but later they became aware of the possibilities provided by the EP system.

None of the participants at Nusantara are *'gap'* students. Most *'gap'* students are from Wijaya, however, there are a few at Mandiri. The majority of Wijaya students are post-school-age students who work in the informal sector in the Jakarta area. They come from rural areas and other provinces in Java. During their *gap* years, they move away from their family and friends to begin living independently in the city, starting casual work as housemaids, shop workers, cleaners and so on.

'Gap' students at Wijaya and Mandiri comment on 'a better future' that they wish to obtain. They know that a high school certificate is the minimum credential for gaining a formal job. White and Wyn (2004) corroborate that working youth who leave school to take up jobs soon discover that the jobs do not provide them with a better future. Thus, through self-critical reflection, these young people make the constructive decision to enter the EP in order to recreate their personal and educational biographies (Evans, 2002).

8.2.3 The 'direct entry' student

After graduating from junior secondary school, I was willing to continue my study at a Vocational High School, but because the admission fee was

expensive, being 2.5 million rupiahs, my parent could not afford it. Therefore, I decided to enrol in an alternative school. (Ridwan, a Nusantara student)

The third group is termed '*direct entry*' students. These students also finished their primary or junior secondary school but because they have limited financial resources to continue education in the mainstream system, they enrolled in the EP to continue their study without interruption or delay. The majority of direct entry students are of school-age.

Nusantara has predominantly '*direct entry*' students, a few are taught at Mandiri, and there are none at Wijaya. It is clear that rural families are poorer than urban families. Nusantara students, of whom the majority are poor, say that their main reason for seeking '*direct entry*' to the EP system is financial problems. The enrolment fees for senior secondary schooling create a barrier for students seeking to continue education in mainstream schools. By contrast, much of the EP is free from monthly fees or is subsidised by the government. Some community schools receive limited government support, but their fees are still not as high as those of mainstream schools.

Unfortunately, enrolling in the EP is not the preferred outcome for young people in the study. If they had a choice, they would prefer to study at a mainstream school. Female students at Nusantara made it clear that they are disappointed about not being able to afford to continue in mainstream education. For instance, Upi states:

I'm trying to enjoy myself, to become part of the school although it is not my intention. (Upi, Nusantara student)

Although Upi accepts her unplanned path of education, in the interview process, she continually mentions how insecure she feels as an EP student. However, male students show less emotion about their educational experience. It appears easier for them to accept their circumstances, despite their hopes and desires. For example, Ridwan made a clear statement that demonstrates he accepts his fate as an EP student:

What can I say? Now I feel that all schools are the same because it depends on each student's destiny to get success in the future, no matter what kind of schooling that you take now. (Ridwan, Nusantara student)

It is established that the emotional attitudes of female and male students are 'different', as evidenced by Nusantara students. Female students tend to be more concerned about their school and their own social identity in relation to their peers from their previous school. In this regard, they feel embarrassed when their peers from the previous school enrol in a mainstream school while they cannot. By contrast, male students find it easier to manage this situation. Quantitatively, there is no different level of worry and self-confidence between Indonesian male and female students aged 17-20 years old (Yuniarti, 2012). Indeed, gender stereotypes exist, so the construction of self-identity is influenced by demands and expectations of society. In this matter, it can be argued that female students are more concerned about self-identity due to peer pressure, particularly as females tend to have more friends than males.

The majority of students in this group unintentionally choose the EP as their main educational destination after completing their lower education. In spite of the pragmatic choices they make, these young people are proactive and maintain their aspiration for education under limited choices and circumstances. These students

develop their agency in the face of risk and uncertainty of the educational outcome (Wyn & Dwyer, 1999, p. 5).

8.2.4 The 'mobile' student

The reason I enrolled at this school is that I do not have a school transfer certificate from my previous school. My family just moved from Padang to this city. (Rizal, a Mandiri student)

The last category is the '*mobile*' student. As Rizal states, his family moved from a rural area to the city; this is becoming increasingly common. This study discovers that some students have to transfer to alternative pathways in the middle of the academic school year. In this study, student mobility is associated with a family's change of residence, usually from rural to urban areas and usually due to one parent's work circumstances. Inner city mobility is not usually the main reason for students to move to another school, particularly if their original school location remains accessible. However, the need to change schools does arise when families move to another city. In such cases, it is necessary for children to transfer to a new school in a new place.

Student mobility, in this study, mainly happens in urban areas rather than in rural areas. Urban life attracts people with the promise of a better life. Thus, the phenomenon of the '*mobile*' student mainly happens at Wijaya and Mandiri. There may be instances where a student moves from a rural or urban area to another rural area. If this occurs, it is most likely that the student can keep his/her place at the mainstream school even though he/she does not have a transfer certificate. In rural areas, the school operating system is not as rigid or complicated as in urban areas, nor is there the same level of demand.

In urban areas such as Jakarta and Depok, being the locations of Wijaya and Mandiri, student mobility can be seen to follow a predictable pattern. Internal migration to the city is a major phenomenon every year after *Ied Fitr*, the religious day celebrated by Muslims that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. Many families from rural areas move to the city with the expectation of a better life. However, there is little data about student mobility. The main issues researched in relation to this trend are concerned with housing and employment. It is important that governments identify this pattern of change as one of student mobility, not just ‘people mobility’.

Mainstream school students also transfer to the EP due to institutional barriers. These students receive certificates from their previous school. For many of these students, their shift in location was unexpected. This is especially the case with disadvantaged families, many of whom lack knowledge about the formal process required when transferring from one school to another.

To sum up, the research reveals that the EP is not primarily for dropout students; some are school-age students who enrol for other reasons. A variety of pathways into the EP show that it addresses the vulnerabilities of different population segments, thus implying the inclusivity of educational programs. From young people’s perspectives, the different route they undertake towards the EP implies that disadvantaged youth are able to develop a sense of urgency in taking control of their own life when deciding to re-enter into the EP system (Evans, 2002). Young people’s decision to enrol in the EP shows the participatory nature of non-formal education activities that can lead to transforming personal attitudes towards learning. It is a

starting point for young people to find learning more interesting and meaningful later on.

8.3 Processes of transition in equivalency programs

This study suggests that the majority of students encounter transitions in learning in the EP. Transition is a process of moving from the known to the unknown (Green, 1997). The process of transition may arise by encountering different aspects of the school system, but it is part of the process required to find learning more interesting and meaningful. In this study, the experience of transition relates to movement from the mainstream education system to an alternative one. Wyn and White (1997, p. 98) use the metaphor ‘boomerang children’ to refer to students encountering the transition between leaving and returning to education as an ongoing process. Emerging from the three case studies are three themes in the process of transition that deserve comment: (i) moving from the mainstream to the alternative; (ii) adapting to an alternative school culture; and (iii) individual stories of transition.

8.3.1 Moving from mainstream to alternative education

Entering different systems requires a different process. This section explores students’ transition in learning resulting from moving between schools. This kind of transition mainly occurs with school-age students who are ‘direct entry’ students or enter as ‘mobile’ students moving from mainstream education to an EP. The transition into the EP identifies systemic barriers that marginalised youth encounter (e.g. the way the alternative school is structured) rather than barriers related to personal attributes and circumstances.

Young people in this study, both in the rural and urban EP, generally believe that they are positioned as subordinate and inferior to students in mainstream schooling. This belief mainly occurs with school-age students rather than post-school-age students. This view arises more frequently at Nusantara, as the majority of its students are school-age who have made direct entry into the EP after graduating from junior secondary school. They describe their moving in negative terms, such as ‘being an inferior student’ because they had to move to ‘a non-competitive environment’. Upi describes being a ‘few steps behind her friends in formal school if they share the experience of schooling’. Adding to this comment, Wijaya, a male student, makes a clear explanation:

If I compare, mainstream school is more standardised. It has more subjects to learn, more knowledge for students. In contrast, we learn little here because we only study three hours a day. (Tedjo, Wijaya student)

Feeling inferior in a non-competitive environment influences students’ plans for the future, and some students start to develop strategies and plans. For example, Eva from Wijaya, who transferred from a mainstream school to the EP, shares her plans in relation to her future education journey:

My plan after I graduate from this program is to enrol in a university. However, I understand that I would not be able to compete with other students from the mainstream high school. I think I am not able to enter a public university. I have to realise that there are many limitations here, including the learning processes and the facilities. I think I will go to a low-achievement private university, which is ok for me. But, I think I should try enrolling at a public university. Yeah I should try it. Maybe I’ll get lucky. Maybe I should take private study and hire a private tutor, like, for learning English subjects. Yeah, I think I can do that. (Eva, Wijaya student)

The difference of viewpoints among students relate to the context of the area. In rural areas where Nusantara is located, the number of EPs is limited. Thus, their existence

is unfamiliar when compared with established mainstream schools. This may lead students to feel ‘inferior’. In contrast, in the urban context, the availability of educational choices influence how students value their participation in education. For urban youth, the EP is just another schooling system that the government has set up, which becomes another choice to be made when selecting an education system.

The differences in learning instruction and material support can influence how students feel about learning in the EP. Many students commented that the EP environment does not invite learning. They said that the flexible lesson plans in the EP do not challenge student learning. In contrast, mainstream schools have tightly planned routines that allow for inviting learning responses and create an academic challenge for school-age students. For example, Wijaya urban-middle class-learners share that they became accustomed to the learning environment of the formal system, which generally combines lectures, worksheets, lab-work and out-of-school activities. In the current school, there are only one or two learning methods, such as lectures and dictation. These students suggest that these difficulties ‘degrade’ their learning opportunities, as Dwipa reveals:

In a mainstream school, we are serious students. In contrast, I found that the learning process in the EP is more relaxed than in the mainstream school; there is no punishment for whatever students do. But one thing is the student does not pay attention to the lessons. (Dwipa, Wijaya student)

Adding to this circumstance, Nusantara students feel that their learning progress slows down, as sometimes they have to repeat the schoolwork they had already completed in their previous school. Moreover, the changed curriculum to which the students are exposed to when they enter the EP can cause anxiety. Students now learn fewer subjects. The curriculum includes subjects that will be examined in the

national final examination. Participants from the three schools are concerned that their particular subject, such as natural science, will be eliminated because a teacher is not available to teach it. As a result, all students from the three schools are forced to take the social science specialisation in Grade 11, including those who transferred from the mainstream school and had already studied that topic.

In contrast, other groups of students, mostly post-adolescents, identify the move to the EP as exciting because they recognise new opportunities for learning. For these students, their involvement in the EP is voluntary, and therefore they understand that they are ‘doing the right thing’ and there is ‘nothing wrong’ with this type of schooling. However, this attitude is not always in line with post-adolescent students’ readiness for learning. This particular problem is described in the next section on the transition experience.

In short, the EP has different traditions and rituals that may not fit with a student’s expectations and assumptions. Many of these students have concerns about the school situation and about understanding the ‘alternative’ rules and procedures. The fact that many students encounter a transition from mainstream schooling to a non-mainstream school system in negative ways is not surprising. They see formal schooling as the dominant pathway in education and hold it in high esteem. The students’ view on formal education as a dominant pathway is a result of a hegemonic force (Borg & Mayo, 2006) that operates in society. Within society, formal education is viewed as better than the EP.

8.3.2 Adapting to the alternative school culture

The educational environment of a school plays a major role in the efficacy of transition. A student's transition to a new school can be understood in terms of the influence of the school on conditions of learning.

In my study, there is a generic school culture¹⁰ that impacts on a student's transition into learning, such as a flexible learning system. However, each school has a particular environment and practices that influence the process of transition for every student. These include school policies and practices, attitudes and practices of staff members, physical environment, location and the learning program.

All alternative schools in the case studies work through flexible learning systems that involve flexible scheduling to enable students to negotiate learning hours that are best suited to their circumstances. Flexible scheduling means different things to different people. For example, at Mandiri, students can choose morning, afternoon or evening classes. Morning classes are provided for the school-age population who are required to work after school or over the weekend. Afternoon classes are set up for similar working students, but who cannot attend morning classes. The morning class has fewer students. The evening class, which is set up for three days every week, involves mature students, many of whom have permanent jobs. Similarly, Wijaya offers three days of schooling in the afternoon. Here, the afternoon class comprises of workers and non-workers. In addition, Nusantara set up a morning school, with shorter learning time than in the mainstream schools. In all

¹⁰ The concept of a school culture or milieu is used to explain family background, student-teacher relationships, instructional practices, school facilities and school rules. A school culture is constructed by the school community and has a significant impact on student performance and achievement (Johnston, 1992).

schools, attendance requirements are not as strict as for mainstream schools. Students can obtain permission from their teachers to attend class irregularly or at particular times after explaining their reasons for doing so.

Flexible scheduling provides an opportunity to meet student needs and assure student success. However, the research indicates that students have different responses to their school culture. For Mandiri and Wijaya students, their learning culture is favourable because many students have other responsibilities apart from schooling, principally work and home duties. For disadvantaged urban learners, such activities outside schooling are necessary. Most of them have to contribute to the family income. Ajeng from Mandiri and Widi from Wijaya are examples of students who benefit from the flexibility practised in the EP:

I can choose afternoon or evening classes in Mandiri. I prefer evening classes as I have to manage my time as a housemaid. In this city, I work for a family with three children and live with them. It is easy for me to take the evening class rather than the afternoon class. At that time, most of the children are ready for bed. I go to school at 7 pm, because it starts at 8 pm. You know, it is never been easy for me to study at evening time in the busy city like this – too many risks. You know, I am still a teenager; something might happen to me on the street because the school finishes at 10 pm and I can return home by 11 pm. But I love to do this. (Ajeng, Mandiri student)

In the school days, I start work earlier. I wake up at 4.30 am and do the household job because I am a housemaid. I wash dishes, prepare breakfast for all family members and clean the house; I have to make sure that my duties are done before I go to school ... I get home at 7.30 pm. Sometimes I continue my work after that, such as gardening until 9 pm. After that I go to sleep. In the school days, I am busy managing work and study. But because I only have three school days, I can relax a bit on the other days. (Widi, Wijaya student)

Ajeng adds that sometimes she comes to afternoon class if she missed the evening classes for a week. For her, flexible scheduling does not affect her commitment to learning. However, for some other students, they break the commitment to learning under this flexible system. For instance, Ajeng comments about her friends:

Many students enrol in this program, but they rarely get involved with the learning processes. Some of them come to the school only for attendance, and then they go home. I also found out that my classmate only comes to the school once a month. But if semester examination comes, the class is full of students. (Ajeng, Mandiri student)

Eva from Mandiri states that younger students with behavioural problems in a previous school are more likely to skip the classes. In contrast, mature students appreciate their opportunity to learn by showing resilience in the learning and teaching process. However, the consequences of this behaviour not only affect individual students, but can influence government, being the policy decision-makers when they evaluate the program. Sinta from Wijaya makes a clear statement when she mentions her concerns about this:

I am worried about this school because many students and teachers do not appreciate this program. Many of them do not obey the rules; I am worried if the government closes programs like this. Because, you know, for a student like me who already dropped out, we may never have a chance again to go back to the mainstream. The mainstream school will not accept a student like me. (Sinta, Wijaya student)

Similar to this concern, Nusantara students argue that a flexible learning schedule leads to a feeling of uncertainty. Some students said they do not understand how the school works toward a norm when its attendance requirements does not seek to regulate attendance. One male student states:

What makes me lazy at this school is because everybody knows that the EP is a flexible school. Even though students do not attend school for several days or even for a month, they can progress to the next grade. (Irfan, Nusantara student)

Structurally, the flexible learning environment expands beyond the classroom walls, allowing learning to take place in a variety of settings, such as at home or other places where students spend their time. The flexible delivery modes can be combined

with independent study modules for students who lost class time due to work. This strategy aims to increase school attendance and reduce dropout rates of disadvantaged students, especially working youth, for whom it is designed. However, for ‘direct entry’ school-age students, it has a negative impact on their motivation to learn. School-age students, especially at Nusantara, want to spend more time at school as they do not have responsibilities outside the school.

The physical school environment and other educational resources also influence student transition experiences. Students from the three schools comment that school physical resources in the EP are limited compared to resources available in the mainstream schools. Some Nusantara students said that having an economically disadvantaged background does not make it easy for them to negotiate their school experience. They feel disempowered in their education because they feel unable to articulate their needs for, and concerns about, their schooling. For instance, Upi from Nusantara comments on how she and her friends lost the opportunity to master two skills, ‘*computer skill and foreign language skill*’ that are important basic skills for entering the workforce. Furthermore, having three classrooms for all students and limited learning facilities make some students feel that their learning experiences are inadequate. In other words, they feel marginalised by the limitations of the school system.

In my opinion, the learning experience in this school is still limited. We do not have good facilities. Even for sport, we have to go to the city court, because we do not have a playground. Moreover, several computers are also broken, so the students have to take turns when they want to use it. The teacher told us that the government will provide an additional life skills program for the EP, but until now, it has not happened. (Susi, Nusantara student)

In contrast, Mandiri students view this condition as understandable as they link it to their life circumstances. For them, as long as they participate in school, regardless of their school's condition, they value their educational opportunities. Rita states, '*as long as I am happy, it does not matter to me*'.

The school location is another factor that influences student's transition into the EP. In this study, students in the rural school feel stigmatised by peers and society because they study in different and unfamiliar school systems. However, in an urban context, because of a plural society and diverse educational needs of urban dwellers, different kinds of schooling systems are viewed as normal.

Students also have to adapt to specific learning activities that each school provides in order to attract students' attention and commitment to the school. For example, Mandiri practises '*one day one verse*', requiring every student to read one verse of Quran before class starts. The aim of this activity is to give each student a spiritual sense, so gradually they can change any improper behaviour. Some students resist this activity, but gradually carry it out and see it as a worthwhile requirement. Wijaya prefers to add popular classes, such as beauty or cooking to its curriculum. However, students do not seem overly interested in the activities, therefore, only a few attend. They prefer classes that relate to their learning needs, such as computer skills. In contrast, Nusantara does not have particular activities that attract student's attention due to limited programs funded by the government.

Learning activities appear to be in line with each school's values and characteristics. Community schools, such as Mandiri, are successful in creating daily school activities based on student problems and circumstances, with a spiritual dimension used as an approach to increase student awareness. In contrast, Wijaya

and Nusantara, as government schools, add value free-of-charge, and they rely on the government for direction to create such programs.

8.3.3 Individual stories of transition

This section examines student stories about transitioning across the three schools.

The transition experience, based on ability, is different between post-school and school-age students, and between working and non-working students.

For some students, entering the EP is a straightforward transfer, however, many students transfer after a long break, especially the post-school-age population. Students can experience two types of difficulties after a long break from education: (i) dealing with the learning process in terms of academic standards; and (ii) they are no longer familiar with the school environment. The former relates to academic transitioning, which many students find different between the workplace and school environment. The latter focuses on social and cultural transitioning, such as how to blend in with other students, teachers, the administrator and school leader.

Students who take a long break from schooling are often not ready for learning in the first few months. Worker students at Wijaya, for instance, frequently mention that some subjects, especially natural sciences, are difficult to follow. They are not familiar with Maths, Physics and Biology, therefore, they require previous knowledge to connect with the current learning in their new school. Moreover, as most worker students are post-adolescents, their maturity often requires them to be treated 'like an adult'. It means they want their teacher to not lay blame on them for any inability to connect with learning, but approach them in a more positive manner. Social and cultural transitioning for long hiatus students is related to new activities at school. Students are concerned about wearing a school uniform, adjusting to the

learning activity schedule, and building good communications with other students and teachers. This sort of transition is mostly encountered by Mandiri students who spent years as 'street youth.' For them, entering a new environment with a steady schedule, firm guidelines and formal relationships with others causes anxiety.

Regarding the capacity to learn, the majority of students' learning level starting in the EP is as a low-achiever. At Nusantara, some male students identify themselves as low-achievers. For example, Ridwan said:

I feel stressed when I was in the mainstream school which pushed me to study from 7 am to 3 pm. (Ridwan, Nusantara student)

Self-identification as a low-achieving student is part of the problematic patterns of personal agency beliefs when students, for example, experience continual frustration at school. This can lead to a 'perception of self as ineffective and powerless' (Finn, 1989). For low-achievers, relationships with peers become a dominant concern rather than involving academic activities. Therefore, male students often skip class.

However, they argue that it is not their intention to be a member of a badly behaved group. It is not easy for them to settle down to work. Students argue that bad behaviour is maintained because it is difficult to change a personal image, especially in the eyes of the teachers. Lila, a female student from Nusantara, comments on what happens with male students who skip classes:

We never protest about teacher's absence, because the teacher always blames the student too. The teacher blames student for bad behaviour, such as skipping class. (Lila, Nusantara student)

To feel included, regardless of having good academic performance, is important for students. But, it is also critical to note that the affective domain needs to be

considered (Greenhalgh, 1994). Affect is the emotion that lies behind the action that influences the capacity of learning. The way in which individuals engage in effective processes has an impact on the capacity for learning (p. 22). Therefore, the transition for some students at Nusantara is about making an effort to change their behavioural problem rather than the transition in term of academic ability, as they already see themselves as being included, according to alternative academic requirements.

Many students identify themselves by comparing with others, such as being low-achievers or having bad behaviour that lead to being labelled 'at risk'. However, identity is derived from society. As Loutzenheiser (2002, p. 441) argues, 'The discourse of at-risk does not discern individual effort, rather its pathologies.' In this sense, to reduce the problems associated with disadvantaged youth, it is necessary to rely on the individual efforts of the student to change bad behaviour, to make an extra effort to cope with intellectual challenges, and to understand the educational value of student diversity.

This study suggests that there are significant issues that need to be addressed to turn the period of transition of re-entry at the EP into a positive experience. However, from the three case studies, it is clear that there is limited support available to disadvantaged young people during the transition time.

8.4 Reconnection with learning

Section 8.4 explores the reconnection to learning through the process of students controlling their own learning and facilitating their reconnection to learning. This will be explored in three 'spaces' of reconnection with learning: (i) within classroom practices; (ii) school context; and (iii) in the broader level society. Engagement in

classroom experiences complies with the teacher's directions in the classroom and students successfully involved in the tasks. Furthermore, school reconnection refers to students' commitment to the EP system and the belief that 'school is for me' (Munns & McFadden, 2000) in which their sense of belonging to the school begins to rise.

8.4.1 Learning connection within the classroom

Students often face difficult experiences before enrolling in the EP. Thus, they need an appropriate pedagogical and learning culture, especially in a classroom context. The study argues that recognition of this constructs the possibility for schools to accommodate students and to support them through the learning process. Each school has different classroom practices for facilitating learning engagement for its students. For instance, Mandiri is concerned with classroom management practices, Wijaya combines pedagogy for school-age and post-school-age students, and Nusantara provides traditional teaching methods, as most students are school-age based. In the EP context, there are multiple pedagogies that respond to particular needs, interests and conditions (Gaudio & Alba, 1994, p. 128).

EP students in this study show interests by attending class regularly, participating in the classroom and completing their schoolwork. At Nusantara, for instance, even though a lack of teachers happens almost every week, students remain in the classroom until school finishes, in order to show their interest and commitment to the school. This also helps them to avoid any negative stereotyping by society, such as being referred to as a 'bad' student who is always out of class. However, Wijaya and Mandiri students show a slightly different scenario. They mention that their commitment and responsibility to participating in the classroom is influenced

by the interpersonal connection with their teachers because they show kindness and care towards the students. For example, Iman said:

The teachers are completely different from our previous school; they are so open, and we call them 'kakang' (brother or sister) just like at home. We often talk personally, which that is why the students and teachers have a good relationship. (Iman, Mandiri student)

Some participants in this study also agree that the positive connection with learning in the classroom context is because of their school's cooperative approach to learning. Cooperative approaches in the EP classroom is a teaching technique that brings students together to learn, thus challenges and rewards are shared. Some students argue that this is not advantageous for some students (i.e. especially Nusantara school-age students, as described in Chapter 7), although the non-competitive environment has benefited other students. A non-competitive behaviour among students allows them to explore their learning abilities without feeling ashamed. It also leads to self-confidence, especially for post-school-age students who can lose the motivation to learn. The cooperative learning environment in the EP also shapes a sense of personal control among students. They do not feel intimidated that their learning ability might be different from other students. Indeed, this learning has a positive effect on student learning when compared to individual or competitive conditions (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Dwipa explains this situation simply:

Not feeling intimidated in learning is important for me. The classroom environment in this school is not set up to be a competition. So every student shares the knowledge together. If it is in a mainstream school, everyone is trying to be the best among others. (Dwipa, Wijaya student)

In a non-competitive environment, student progress is measured in terms of self-improvement rather than recognition and grades. Linking learners' realities within

where they live to a classroom assessment approach is an essential part of critical pedagogy. Keesing-Styles (2003, p. 10) argues that in the classroom, it is important to value and validate the experiences of students, situate them in the classroom content and process, and avoid oppressive power relations, as well as create a negotiated curriculum. Thus, a non-competitive learning environment is particularly important for accommodating certain student's concerns, especially those who are post-school-age students who feel more comfortable in the classroom environment.

Teacher and classroom practices also influence students reconnecting to learning. Teacher influences arise in several ways. In Mandiri, for example, a teacher changed the seating arrangement for his students so they were free to choose where to sit, to feel comfortable and ready for learning. For Mandiri students, this strategy encouraged students to respect the teacher's tolerance. This has an effect on the student-teacher relationship because there is respect for each other based on mutual understanding. Female students in the focus group discussion reveal:

We share everything with the teacher, because they are open and often create a relaxing situation between us. (Group of Mandiri female students)

Furthermore, volunteer teachers also influence students to stay at school. Nusantara and Mandiri students comment that they appreciate volunteer teachers offering their time and effort without financial reward from the school or government.

One of the problems here is about the teacher. I want the teacher to have a good salary, so they do not have any reason for not coming to school. Yeah, I know it is not easy for volunteer teachers like them. However, I appreciate what they do. (Umar, Nusantara student)

At Wijaya, the demographics of students are young and mature males and females. Thus, the teachers combine pedagogy for both student types: (i) young students feel

that the teacher pushes them to learn; work on assignments; and maintain a good attitude in the classroom; and (ii) teachers are tolerant with mature students who have difficulty in reconnecting with learning in the classroom and facing issues related to classroom attendance. However, a different standard of teachers sometimes confuse students, but most of them understand that it is the consequence of student diversity.

Some working students do not come to school regularly, but I'm not (like that). I am happy to be here even only for three days. Friends always attract me to come to school. I know that I am too old for them, but they accept me (to attend). For those who do not come everyday to school, it is so sad. But I am trying to understand that; maybe they have to go work. (Indah, Wijaya student)

Similar to Wijaya, students at Mandiri report that their teachers provide a fun learning environment for all students. The teachers enhance learning by making learning less stressful for street-based children by providing games. Unfortunately, not all teachers have the appropriate skills when approaching their students, for example, they are often strict and insist on the traditional way of teaching. Some teachers enforce students to complete lessons from the textbook when they are not able or ready to do so. Iman from Mandiri explains this situation as he argues that some teachers need to improve their knowledge and skill on how to approach 'at risk students':

How can teachers adapt to the school environment? They have to consider and understand their students' circumstances. The teachers need to improve their knowledge and skill on how to approach 'risk students' like us. We are from the street, have a family problem, poor, and some students have bad behaviour. It is wrong if the teachers always push the students to understand everything they say. Sometimes, the students are not in a good mood; they are feeling tired. So you cannot push the students to do everything that you (teacher) point out. In contrast, the teachers need to create interactive methods of teaching to attract students, especially how to make students feel enjoyment in learning. (Iman, Mandiri student)

The pedagogy practised above is linked to the idea of empowerment in critical pedagogy. In this concern, the teacher helps students to exercise power, instead of giving power to students (Weiler, 1988, p. 59). This particular orientation removes the teacher's authority, but understands student limitations and practice pedagogy differently from how Wijaya and Mandiri teachers practise. This pedagogical practice may also describe a teacher's attempt to promote 'problem-posing education' (Freire, 2000, p. 58). Within this form, the teacher recognises a student's social context, such as being a worker-student and/or coming from a street-based background that might find difficulty in learning, and makes connections to the context of instructional practice in the classroom.

In contrast to both schools, Nusantara students describe how teachers set the amount of learning required, that is, assignments and homework, at a lower level than what students experienced in their previous mainstream school. This is appropriate for lower achieving students to help them connect easily with learning. However, this leads to a hindrance of average/higher level student learning and achievement, as explained by two students:

Our study loads are not as much as in the mainstream school, (Andin, Nusantara student)

I don't have trouble with my studying because the teachers do not push the students to study. (Ridwan, Nusantara student)

However, it does not indicate that average/higher achiever students do not connect with learning. These students try to set their learning expectation to fit with the learning culture and environment at Nusantara. Some female students in the group discussion comment:

We are now used to integrate with this learning culture and environment, even though it is different from what we experienced in the previous school. (Group of Nusantara female students)

Indeed, maintaining academic standards while working on student academic abilities is difficult. Sometimes the desires for academic excellence causes teachers to be impatient with those students who do not work hard enough. However, in critical pedagogy, a teacher's commitment to academic excellence on all levels is important (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). In this particular case, teachers are encouraged to expand the definition of success on academic achievement. Other forms of non-mainstream knowledge, such as technical work, arts and the emotional dimension of students are needed to stimulate and encourage students to remain at school for as long as possible. It is also important for teachers to avoid judging their students.

The last essential part of the classroom practice is a multigrade classroom. The EP practises multi-age and multigrade classrooms where students are influenced by their connection to learning. For example, the multi-age class at Wijaya influences students' non-cognitive outcomes. Students have the chance to form relationships with other students, more so than in the mainstream classroom. This learning environment can lead to students receiving greater support and feeling more confident. Mature students with a longer absence from school than younger students have an opportunity to learn from their peers. For instance, Raka with an absence of nine years shares his experiences:

It was nine years ago; I cannot remember anything about how to study. So I don't have any idea how I can study for such a long time not in school. But I'm trying to engage with the learning process. I asked my friend who is younger than me, how to use the Internet for searching information related to the learning material. (Raka, Wijaya student)

Multi-age groupings also provide younger students with the opportunity to learn from mature students. It creates a joy of learning as students learn from each other. In multigrade classrooms, lower grade students can enrich their learning from the higher grade curricula, while students from a higher grade have the opportunity to review their previous material. However, this type of classroom practice is not always possible when the class becomes overcrowded and students from two grades cannot study comfortably, as has happened at Wijaya.

8.4.2 Learning connection beyond the school

Students identify with the school dynamics as instrumental in the process of surviving transition experiences into the EP. Students in the study recognise that alternative school rules and its boundless acceptance of differences promote student connection beyond the school. They also acknowledge that the EP culture and its system target more diverse students than in mainstream schools. In terms of its culture, several contexts that lead students' sense of connection to the school are fair discipline policies, safe school environment and school/family atmosphere.

Fair discipline policies are applied to the choice of dress and self-presentation. This culture is practised in all schools, however, with different contexts and strategies. In Wijaya where students range from 12 to 28 years old, there is no school uniform policy. For more mature students, Wijaya offers a flexible policy in terms of rules and educational requirements. Mandiri has a uniform policy, but allows its students who struggle with behavioural issues to wear different coloured uniforms, wear earrings and have long and/or coloured hair, although it is not common in educational practices in Indonesia. Nusantara has a school uniform but with different standards for each student. It depends on a student's ability to purchase the uniform.

In this context, the EP has changed its focus from uniformity, as practised in mainstream schools, to one of diversity. Even though school-age students identify themselves in their school uniform, Nusantara's school uniform policy is flexible, as consideration is given to each student's circumstances.

A more sympathetic disciplinary approach is a major way in how the EP differs from mainstream schools. For example, the absence of school uniforms is one aspect that successfully reduces the need for students to fit with a rigid image of a 'good student' (Fine, 1991; McLaren, 2014). te Riele (2004) stresses that educational approaches that are supportive rather than punitive provoke students to connect with the school. In the EP context, a fair disciplinary policy is ideally suited for students from diverse backgrounds because it does not alienate them; rather, it reconnects them with learning.

All participants agree that the school environment influences their feelings toward themselves and others, especially in relation to feeling safe in the school environment. For example, at Wijaya, a small school-size approach creates a positive atmosphere to be 'friendly' to young students who may have experienced behavioural problems in their previous mainstream school. In small schools, antisocial behaviour is less prevalent because the interaction among students is less complex. This finding is similar with De La Ossa (2005, p. 35) who reveals that smaller schools can teach students and faculty members how to behave as a community, thus disassociating from school violence.

Consistent with this, Mandiri students comment that their school secures them from the hardships of street life. The school provides street-based students with a safe environment that differs from street life, such as keeping them away from being

bullied by others or being targeted by police officers. In other words, these students are protected from serious violent situations. This sense of security allows students to grow psychologically, socially and academically, as Iman explains:

Because our school location is in an open area, many street children stay here. They feel safe to be here. I think this is good because many of them are attracted to come. This school is like a safe place for them. (Iman, Mandiri student)

However, the meaning of a ‘sense of security’ by Nusantara students differs. For them, it means security from educational exclusion. Ridwan states:

I’m blessed because I can still continue my study. I believe that if other young people like me know about this school, they will come here too. (Ridwan, Nusantara student)

In this sense, their connection to the school is about utilising an educational function on maintaining status as a ‘student’ and avoiding the probability of being a dropout. For Nusantara students, the second chance opportunities that the EP offers protect them from ‘downward mobility’ (Shavit et al., 2002, p. 9).

Lastly, participants from all schools cite the ‘family atmosphere’ as another factor that leads to feeling a connection with the school community. Characteristics of the EP, such as small size and specifically targeted recruitment, lead to a feeling of being connected to peers. Small schools, such as Wijaya and Nusantara, increase the likelihood of students building a close relationship with other students. In addition, the specific-targeted approach, as practised at Mandiri for street-based children, Wijaya for urban youth-worker, and Nusantara for school-age marginalised youth, brings a sense of equal circumstances among students. Under equal conditions, the students often share their concerns about uncertainty for the future. In this sense,

peers play a significant role in enabling a connection to learn in the EP, as Ajeng explains:

I have many friends who work as a housemaid. They also have good motivation to study and have a dream to go to university. In this matter, my friends affect me so much. They inspire me so much. (Ajeng, Mandiri student)

Furthermore, teachers with similar backgrounds to their students or who have concerns for disadvantaged students may create a family-like situation. This sense of connection is more visible at Mandiri than at Wijara and Nusantara. Mandiri students feel that their teachers understand their circumstances as some teachers are from similar disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, these teachers are more committed to assisting disadvantaged students. Two female students shared their opinions about their teachers:

They are so open; we called them ‘Kakak’ (brother or sister), not ‘Bu or Pak’ (Miss or Sir), just like at home. We often talk personally; that is why the students and teachers have a good relationship. (Rita, Mandiri student)

I remember the new teacher. She only taught for couple months and decided to quit when she knew that the school only paid her transportation expenses instead of a good salary. But I also found some teachers who knew about this school incidentally. They decided to teach in this school simply because they were curious about the school and had the willingness and motivation to teach here. Teachers like them inspire me so much. Most of these teachers are university students. (Mae, Mandiri student)

In the sense of a ‘family atmosphere’ that schools offer, it is significant to highlight that the relationship between teacher and student is part of the emotional dimension of schooling (te Riele, 2006a, p. 63). EP students will receive benefits from a teacher who has a friendly attitude. Caring teachers help students to learn at school, as well as ensure a positive experience for students, especially those from a disadvantaged background.

A teacher's commitment to his/her students begins from the process of recruiting teachers. The study recognises that teachers from Mandiri are more committed to assisting disadvantaged students, because most were recruited as volunteers. In contrast, teachers from Wijaya and Nusantara are mainly hired by the government. In this regard, issues around staffing are crucially important for these young people.

8.4.3 Learning connections with the community

Learning is not limited to the classroom, but also connects with the community in order to assure a fair, equitable and socially just education for disadvantaged students. The term 'community' has two uses (McMillan & Chavis, 1988, cited in Osterman, 2000): (i) geographic unit; and (ii) relational that describes the character of the relationship between the school and other institutions and society. In the present discussion, the two terms are used interchangeably. Whatever the form of connection with a community, it is important to note that young people in the EP perform better in school if they feel connected to the surrounding community. However, not all schools in the case studies form good partnership with the local community. For example, Nusantara students often mention that their school is isolated from other educational institutions in the local area, institutions that they could benefit from in sharing knowledge and activities. In contrast, Mandiri students feel proud of their school because its location (between a major bus and train station and the local market) attracts the surrounding community and encourages collaboration with them. Mandiri students get the benefit of collaboration between the school and other organisations, such as private companies, non-profit

organisations and the mass media in improving social and vocational learning. One female student shares her story:

Sometimes the school has a vocational program from donors or other organisations, such as cooking skills. I also know that teachers are occasionally trained by another party about teaching skills. (Mae, Mandiri student)

Private companies often provide vocational training for street-based students to assist them with life skills. Furthermore, the local media often publicises school life by interviewing students, which influences their sense of belonging to their school and leads to a feeling of pride.

Schools with few connections to other entities may have less influence on a student's sense of belonging and engagement. For example, Nusantara students feel that their school does not build strong relationships with other mainstream schools in the area and the local Department of Education. As a result, they feel isolated from activities that other high school students are involved in, as Ridwan explains:

When the local government of education or other schools have sports tournaments, my school does not get invited. I believe that the government knows about this school, but they ignore it. (Ridwan, Nusantara student)

This situation influences student perspectives about being an EP student. Gradually, they perceive that the EP student may be different from other mainstream school students, reflecting that they do not have a proper 'place' in the eyes of the community and other stakeholders.

Similar to Nusantara, Wijaya students feel that their school has less connection with services within the community. As the majority of Wijaya students work, they comment that it is important to have work-based experience at school so

that the school can form a partnership with other local institutions. One worker students shares his idea in relation to this:

The majority of students are workers. So it will be good if the school can link with some workplaces to help their graduate students find a better job. (Raka, Wijaya student)

It is clear that there are different responses from students about how their schools make connections with the community to enhance learning engagement. Building relationships with the community is essential to improving society's trust of the EP system. It is seen to be crucial in facilitating an early school leaver's easy transition in second chance education. By connecting with community agencies, the EP can break barriers of students feeling isolated, help them to reconnect with school and reposition themselves in the local community.

8.5 Quality of the learning experience

In this section, I turn to a group that includes 'dropout', 'gap', 'direct entry' and 'mobile' students (Section 8.4). After experiencing a transition and reconnecting with the EP culture, these students come to perceive themselves as learners in the EP. Therefore, I draw attention to the 'quality of learning experience' from the students' perspectives. Based on self-reporting and analysis, three forms of learning quality are discussed: (i) adaptive consciousness learning; (ii) transactional/situational learning; and (iii) transformation/self-conscious learning.

The quality of learning can be viewed as contested or relative (Harvey & Green, 1993). For example, quality can be viewed as exceptional, perfection (or consistency), fitness for purpose, value for money and/or transformative (Harvey & Knight, 1996). In examining the quality of the learning experience, this study refers

to the notion of quality as transformative. The transformative view of quality is rooted in the notion of ‘qualitative’ change, a fundamental change of *form* (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 24). Within this notion, the EP is not a service for a targeted learner, but an ongoing process of transformation of the student. The quality of the learning experience is the expression by which the student demonstrates as learning outcomes that include knowledge of themselves, the worlds, and the learning requirement at the EP, and links them to fundamental changes as a student and as a person in society. Three themes of the quality of learning are explored: (i) adaptive-consciousness learning; (ii) transactional/situational; and (iii) transformation/self-conscious.

8.5.1 Adaptive-consciousness learning

I became a lazy student day by day because of this condition. (Irfan, ‘mobile’ student)

I only follow and admit what the school offers. (Susi, ‘direct entry’ student)

I am still participating because of credentials, even though I feel that I do not get enough learning experience. (Rara, ‘direct entry’ student)

I am now used to this learning condition, so it is okay for me now. (Eva, ‘mobile’ student)

It is an irrelevant experience to me. But I’ll keep staying at this school so I can get a future engagement in a formal school once I graduate from this program. (Tedjo, ‘mobile’ student)

The first category are students disconnected from their learning process, but they simply endure the situation until they graduate. They cannot decide about participating in the EP because sometimes they want to and other times they do not. This condition is experienced mainly by ‘direct-entry’ and ‘mobile’ students who are forced to accept and adapt to the reality of learning in an EP setting. In this sense, they have not succeeded in changing their perspective of the mainstream school as

the dominant pathway in education. As a result, they do not accept the limitations presented in the EP system and, therefore, are less successful in liberating themselves from their way of thinking and making the most of the new. Illeris (2007, p. 187) calls this type of defence '*ambivalence*', that is, the learner cannot decide whether they want to engage in the learning process.

For young students in the EP, such as those at Nusantara, this kind of '*ambivalence*' arises because they perceive the school's processes to be a less challenging and interesting experience. Illeris (2004, p. 86) refers this situation as 'cognitive dimension obstacles to intended learning' in which students may have experienced inadequate learning and teaching processes. For example, as Susi mentions above, after two years of studying (now in Grade 12) she finally understands that the quality of learning in the EP means 'adapt to the program'. In this sense, she learns to live with the contradictions and conflicts of the EP system, and that part of her learning involves developing the capacity to deal with her expectation and the reality of learning. Referring to Illeris' (2007, p. 188) concerns, Susi has succeeded in learning to live with *ambivalence tolerance*. It is a condition when the learner questions her/himself, and faces conflicts and endures.

In other words, students become *adaptive-consciousness*, not because of a lack of self-motivation in learning, but more due to concerns with school-related factors. Being unaccustomed to the school environment and its system contributes to uncomfortable experiences of learning. School-age students at Nusantara, especially female students, such as Rara (see quote above) comment that their motives for adapting to school conditions are to avoid disapproval by society for becoming a school dropout. In addition, male students, such as Tedjo, sense their own 'limits' by

consciously staying in Nusantara because it is a 'safe' route from 'educational exclusion'. This situation parallels with Illich's (1971) elaboration that schooling *credentialises* rather than *educates*. Students seeking admission to the education system find themselves resistant to the learning process utilised by the school.

Learning is often unintentional rather than deliberate. Students in this group clearly experience a situation where they cannot overcome certain aspects of learning in the EP. In transformative learning, these students are 'comfortable with their own beliefs' (Cranton, 2002) about the position of the EP compared with other education systems. However, these students are trying to accommodate the conditions that limit their life's goals, for example, a less popular school and social situations in the school. According to Illeris (2007, p. 171), mental resistance can encourage learning where one is 'ready to go' and even be the motive for the transgressive learning process. In other words, resistant students will find their learning potential if they allow their resistance to unfold and adapt to the EP in a constructive and progressive manner (Illeris, 2007, p. 173).

'Adaptive learning' can lead to great potential for creating a space for learning. It can be a legitimate expression of learning, as well as challenge EP institutions to promote meaningful learning for 'direct-entry' and 'mobile' students. For example, although Tedjo is resistant to his current learning, he will make a 'bridge to future engagement', stating, 'I will re-enrol at a mainstream senior high school after I get Package B certificate.' This might sound positive, but the EP has to be designed to prepare this student for the next step of transitioning back to the main track. Similar to this, Eva plans to attend university in the hope of gaining further education even though she is resistant to her current learning. In a direct quote, Eva

shares her plan, *'I will hire a private tutor for preparing me to compete with another student to get into university.'* To identify the potential for future learning that results from the current experience, students have to be able to accommodate the limitations they perceive in their current learning (Freire, 1993, p. 23).

8.5.2 Transactional/situational learning

I have now changed to become a better student. This school disassociated me from bad habits, such as fighting with friends. (Erwin, 'mobile' student)

It is a good school environment, though. I can say that since I am here, I will never brawl again. Now I am well behaved. (Dwipa, 'mobile' student)

Now I do not get into trouble with my study anymore because the alternative school curriculum suits me. I can learn more because the EP has limited subjects, which do not give me much burden. (Ridwan, 'direct-entry' student)

This school is more real for me. I can sense that the learning situation surrounding the school fits with my circumstances. Now I feel confident in learning because there is no more bad judgement about me. (Deni, 'dropout' student)

The quality of learning for some students means that the learning situation in the EP is *'fit for purpose'* (Harvey & Knight, 1996). Specifically, if referring to the students' stories, they become good learners (in relation to their own standard or criteria) if they get benefits from interactions between themselves as learners and the environment. This environment may be defined as 'material' (as stated by Erwin and Dwipa who have a better sense of purpose in a small-scale school that can disassociate them from bad behaviour), the tool and instrument (as stated by Ridwan who feels that the EP curriculum meets his needs), and/or localities that surround the learning situation (as stated by Deni who finds more confidence in this school environment).

From the quality of learning experiences in EP, I refer to these students as ‘situational learners’, meaning their learning is ‘situated’ (Illeris, 2007, p. 122). It takes place in a certain social context that not only influences student learning but is also part of the learning itself. In other words, students sense the quality of learning in the EP when they feel its climate and curriculum match their needs and capacities. This fosters a positive learning outcome in student experience.

Erwin and Dwipa from Wijaya present another example of the problems with behaviour at their previous mainstream schools. They share how they intend to become a ‘*new person*’ in the EP setting. Their success could be the result of the belief that a non-authoritarian environment works to overcome their needs and problems. Deni, a street-based student at Mandiri, added that the learning situation surrounding the school increases his confidence with learning. It seems that the student can transform him/herself during learning, and that transformation has a direct consequence on the influence of the school.

8.5.3 Transformation/self-conscious learning

My goal has changed. Initially, I just wanted the Package B diploma so I could apply for a job as a factory worker. Now I want to aim higher than that. That is why I am continuing my study with the Package C. (Risma, ‘dropout’ student)

It is like a good movement for me. Now I am saving money for university. (Siti, ‘dropout’ student)

I am proud of myself because I feel like I am different from other students (in another school). (Iman, ‘mobile’ student)

Some students describe changes with a greater influence resulting from their learning in the EP system. These students come to place their learning in the EP through a perspective that brings about emotional responses to becoming an EP student, as

stated by Iman, and as a result of self-empowerment that leads to students placing more value on their schooling, as suggested by Risma and Siti.

Harvey and Green (1993) explain that recognising quality learning as transformation is rooted in notions of personal change and development. Enhancement is concerned with providing educational experiences that enable the improvement of student knowledge, abilities and skills (Harvey & Knight, 1996). The aspect of empowerment focuses on giving power to students so they can influence their own transformation. Student learning that is transformed can be considered to be enhanced and empowered. Regarding the students' stories, Risma and Siti seem to be experiencing empowerment rather than enhancement. They describe how they changed their educational goals from obtaining instrumental outcomes to self-empowerment. With their new goals, these students perceive their new knowledge and experience in the EP positively, with a future orientation. This greater commitment to learning is a result of prolonged interest energised by opportunity and perspective. This evidence is similar to research on Australian young people in second chance education programs at TAFE and VET, who gained the confidence, knowledge and skills to undertake further learning outside the school system (Ross & Gray, 2005, p. 122).

Moreover, students' limitations and limited educational resources available to them restricts them and yet, they contribute to transformation. For instance, young students in Mandiri are aware of their limited learning circumstances, but due to the support and encouragement they receive from teachers and past graduates, some have found ways to circumvent those limitations. These students place more value on the EP through perceiving it differently. For example, Iman talks of feeling alienated

by people's judgements about the school, but he feels proud of '*becoming different*' from other school students. The feeling of being different is mentioned by a number of young people in the interviews. This emotion can be used as a resource for learning and further research. Seen positively, it can be the basis of emotionally-based transformation in learning.

For students in this group, education can be a transformative experience. The students are conscious that their limited learning circumstances mean they cannot acquire the highest levels of knowledge, ability and skills, but it is clear that when students do shift towards understanding themselves and the world around them, this is learning of a great importance. The evolution of one's way of thinking, seeing and doing things is associated with personal growth. For school-age students like Iman who feels 'rejected' by the mainstream educational system, this is a time for him to prove to himself and others that he is capable of academic study. On the other hand, for post-school-age students and low-skilled labourers like Risma and Siti, their self-transformation is affected by their reflection on their lives and the learning process they encounter in the EP. Here, the nature of change relates more to the broadening of the mind to increase the possibility of gaining future employment. These young people situate their individual agency within this critical 'reading' of the opportunity structure (Diemer & Blustein, 2006, p. 220).

Transformative learning is a far-reaching type of learning termed 'personality changes' and is characterised by simultaneous restructuring in the cognitive, emotional and social-societal dimensions, a break of orientation that typically occurs as a result of a crisis-like situation caused by challenges experienced as urgent and unavoidable, making it necessary to change oneself in order to go further (Illeris,

2003). Transformative learning is profound and extensive, and can often be experienced physically, typically as a feeling of relief or relaxation. It is also a demanding process that changes the personality or identity, and occurs only in very special situations of profound significance for the learner.

These three learning qualities show the diversity of how students engage in study in the EP. Taylor (as cited in Beaty, Gibbs, & Morgan, 1997, pp. 77-78) terms this as a result of the diversity of ‘orientation to learning’ of students that can influence their experience of learning. Taylor identifies four distinct types of orientation: (i) *academic orientation*, where the student’s goal involves the academic side of school life; (ii) *vocational orientation*, where the student’s goal is to get a job after school; (iii) *personal orientation*, where the student’s goal is concerned with their personal development; and (iv) *social orientation*, where the student’s goal focuses on the social side of school life (Beaty et al., 1997, p. 78).

It is possible that the first group became ‘*adaptive-consciousness learners*’ because their academic orientation or intellectual interests remained unchallenged in the EP and by the teachers. On the other hand, peers fulfil students’ social orientation. ‘*A situational learner*’ is open to personal and social learning (i.e. as a result of personal and social orientation of education). They are able to engage with learning and to improve themselves as individuals, especially in terms of changing their behaviour and approach to learning. Thus, the students come to view their study as of personal significance. The complexity of learners’ orientation appears in the last group, ‘*the transformed learner*’. Students in this group have a mix of two or more educational orientations, for example, a worker student has a vocational, academic and personal orientation, and a social orientation when many students feel

lonely in a new city. This joint orientation benefits these students through transforming their educational orientation into new goals of learning.

To conclude, the learning orientation of students in the EP is diverse, similar to its rationale and individual characteristics. Orientation strongly affects self-assessment of the quality of learning experienced in the EP. Therefore, it is important to consider how the program responds to students' concerns in order to understand if and how it meets student needs and expectations.

8.6 Conclusion

Within four categories: (i) *pathways* to the EP; (ii) process of *transition* into the EP; (iii) *reconnection* with learning; and (iv) *quality* of learning, Chapter 8 provides a comparative analysis of three case studies. In doing so, it is possible to identify commonalities and significant differences related to the dynamic process of re-engaging in learning. The pathway to the EP is complex and intertwined. EP students are dominated by 'dropout' students who voluntarily enrol and are eager to learn, but they did not make a deliberate choice to enter the EP. Whatever pathway the students choose, the study suggests that the majority of them encounter a transition period into the EP. Transition in the learning process is the starting point for students to question their beliefs and assumptions that lead them to uncover the potential learning in the EP system. Hence, it is vital for teachers and school leaders to provide disadvantaged students with support, either in the classroom, beyond the school and or/within the surrounding community.

In order to seek equitable quality of learning in the EP, the current study confirms that the EP provides a transformational educational space for many

disadvantaged students. There are students who are able to engage with learning in the EP context, to improve themselves as individuals and to transform their educational orientation into new educational goals. Chapter 9 relates these to the theoretical framework of transformative learning and critical pedagogy, and concludes with identifying its limitations and propositions for future study.

CHAPTER 9:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 reflects on the research journey and links key findings to the educational field. In responding to the study's research question, findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework, which argues that disadvantaged young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling. The chapter then discusses the strength of the framework and its limitations and concludes with recommendations, policy implications and further study.

The chapter is divided into six sections. First, the research journey is described in terms of the assumptions I brought with me to the study, how I interpreted the participants' stories and how their stories transformed my assumptions about the research. Second, a summary of the thesis is highlighted. It describes an overview of the aims of the study, research methodology and key findings. Third, further discussion of the key findings in relation to the main argument is presented. This study argues that Indonesian disadvantaged youth have unique perspective on learning, teaching and schooling, highlighted as three meanings of transformative experiences: (i) learning through resistance; (ii) learning through individuation; and (iii) learning through consciousness-raising. Fourth, the significance of the research findings and limitations of the study, especially in relation to the limitation of the methodology used in the study's results, are discussed. Fifth, the implications of this study concerning the relationship between

teaching and learning practices and the Indonesian education policy are explored. Finally, the study proposes areas for further research, as well as recommends teaching and learning strategies, and ideas for future policy development.

9.2 My research journey: From deficit thinking to social learning

My research journey began with my encounter with the research problem while in my home country. One of my initial perspectives on the topic was what I would describe now as my ‘deficit thinking’ about the quality of education in the EP. My assumption is that the EP serves people from disadvantaged backgrounds and is not able to break the reproduction of limited social opportunities for marginalised groups. This type of schooling, I believe, would generally ignore the potential for disadvantaged youth, based on the notion that they might not be ready for gaining knowledge at school. This assumption is influenced by the fact that EP systems have less qualified teachers and under-resourced facilities, factors that make it difficult to bring students’ academic performance to the level required for greater social mobility.

When I commenced study in Australia, I assumed this topic might be unfamiliar to my supervisors and colleagues considering their Western perspective and my assumptions about their prior experience. Surprisingly, meeting with them gave me an opportunity to share my non-Western perspectives and this enabled me to reflect critically upon my initial habits of mind and perspective.

Initially, I deliberately chose a paradigm that might support my assumption about the research participants and context of the research. For example, I began by

reviewing articles and books related to social reproduction theory, which illustrates how reproduction theory is practised in the EP and in Indonesian society. However, through this framework I did not see any opportunities that may have been provided by the EP. This ‘failure’ made me fully realise the impact of this choice of research paradigm. This made me rethink the route to be taken. I now think of this as a ‘transition’ period within my own research journey, a period where I cannot envisage my destination through my initial research paradigm.

My research journey is therefore complex. It is a journey that required me to revisit my own thinking repeatedly until, on one occasion, my thoughts gave me the space and opportunity to make my own reflective analysis. Through local knowledge acquired from the research participants while collecting data, I redirected my journey by revisiting the framework that I used to interpret their local knowledge. As I started to see the ‘light’ from the research participants about the value of their own educational experiences in the EP, even though it may contradict society’s assumptions that view this journey as worthless, I started to interpret these stories differently. One example is a young female participant who saw that ‘light’:

Years ago, I had a dream to become a teacher, but since I dropped out from school, I never imagined the future again ... The EP opened up that possibility even in my current difficult position working as a housemaid in uncertain working times. (Ajeng, Mandiri student)

The value placed on this belief by this research participant challenges my existing ideas. It disorientates my approach to the research.

The element of reflexivity becomes even more necessary at this point of the research. As a result, with my supervisor’s guidance, I started to use different frameworks in order to value the participants’ knowledge in a way that I had not

previously considered. For example, I doubted the research participants would come to understand their position in society or their belief in their educational journey related to the EP setting. I thought it would be impossible for them to be proud as learners emerging from this type of schooling because it does not offer quality education. In fact, I discovered that participants have the power to articulate meaning from their subjective interpretations of their experience. My way of thinking is changed as participants and the new research framework guide me to that insight. As the majority of participants successfully shift their perceptions before and while learning through their own subjectivity, I also shifted my perception about them. I came to see that disadvantaged youth deserve to be given the opportunity and hope for a better future, and that transformation is possible for them through an alternative 'space' in education. Indeed, I now see that new 'light' from the theoretical lenses I used, that is, transformative learning theory and critical pedagogy.

Using the theory of transformative learning for this research allows me to be transformed by the research participants and the research process. This occurs through thinking positively, having self-belief and understanding, and appreciating the 'inner' process of learning (individually and collectively). All these changes, I believe, are influenced by how my participants feel and think about themselves, others and the worlds that unwittingly carry some 'distortions or preconceptions'. I note that every transformative idea results in hundreds of misconceptions that lead to nowhere.

After describing my journey, Section 9.3 discusses the participants' own journey of learning in an alternative school. Similar to my journey, theirs begin with

how they were introduced to their current learning and includes their experiences of disorientation. It ends with their reflections upon learning itself.

9.3 Summary of the thesis

This study aims to understand disadvantaged students' construction of their learning experiences in the Indonesian EP, in particular, the process of re-engaging in learning. The concept of student re-engagement in learning in this study refers to the ability of students to reflect upon or rethink their learning and school experiences (Zyngier, 2008). By reflecting on their learning experiences, students have the ability to bring those experiences into personal and social transformation for future opportunity and mobility.

Despite some disadvantaged youth returning to school through non-mainstream pathways, little is known about how they re-engage in learning after being unsuccessful in their first attempt (Barrat et al., 2012). The present study attempts to fill in the gaps framed by the theories of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973). This means looking at how students encounter change through learning in the EP based on critical reflection. The experiences are documented through individual interviews (11 female and 10 male students) and focus group discussions (14 female and 13 male students). Feedback from 48 students from three EPs is interpreted and presented in single case and cross-case analyses under the guidance of the research question: *How do disadvantaged students in Indonesia engage with alternative schooling?* The findings suggest that different forms of learning experiences are encountered by students (Chapter 8). These categorisations are based on student reflections on their learning.

It is evident that learning is transformative because it changes their worldview about their learning and its social significance for future life.

Adaptive-conscious learners understand that cognitive orientation to learning cannot be fulfilled by the current situation, but they believe and are optimistic that the EP can be 'a point of departure' for gaining further learning. Transactional/situational learners sense that the EP curriculum and learning environment meet their needs and capacities. Students in the second group sense that the EP learning environment, including the material, tools and instruments (i.e. curriculum), and the localities that surround the learning situation, foster positive learning outcomes. These students become a 'new person', believing that the EP reshapes their personality, as influenced by the learning environment. Situational learners engage with learning because of self-belief, therefore, breaking away from collective assumptions about learning in the EP. In other words, the students see the context of transformation from the development of individual personality (Jung, 1972, as cited in Cranton & Roy, 2003, p. 90). The transformation/self-conscious learner understands that his/her learning in the EP brings him/her to a new perspective of their educational goals and life. The student in this third group has transformed his/her educational goals from obtaining an instrumental outcome to self-empowerment and critical insight into the context of that empowerment. Students who undergo this transformation engage with knowledge and situate their individual agency within consciousness-raising and critical reading of the opportunity structure (Mezirow, 1991).

There are different processes of engagement related to the point of entry, and when entering the EP, they influence the meaning attached to transformative

experiences, as articulated by students. The point of entry relates to how students approach the EP. Research suggests the reasons for returning to schooling emanate from student's personal awareness and external factors, such as family, peer pressure and that school that act as catalysts. This leads to youth acting purposefully and intentionally weighing up alternatives to participate in education. Furthermore, an engagement upon entering the EP relates to a process whereby students engage with learning in the EP. There are two important moves related to the process of re-engagement: (i) transition in learning; and (ii) reconnection with learning. This is in line with Mezirow's phases of transformation that highlight two crucial encounters: (i) disorienting dilemma; and (ii) critical self-reflection. However, for some students, the process of re-engagement relates to changes in their own perspective. Other students desire social and political change by connecting their personal engagement or transformation to the wider society. These are students who expand the meaning of transformation, which not only connects with personal experiences (Mezirow, 1991) but also social experiences (Christopher et al., 2001; Cunningham, 1992).

As students engage with different processes of learning, they articulate multiple transformative experiences. This suggests a holistic approach must be employed as each EP student is different to each other in terms of age, lived experiences, prior learning experiences, pathways to the EP and the context of the school and its culture.

9.4 Discussion: Multiple meanings of transformative experiences

The use of theories of transformative learning and critical pedagogy enable philosophical assumptions about individuals and social changes based on humanist

assumptions. Humanist assumptions suggest that human beings are capable of making a personal choice within the constraints enforced by biology, personal history and environment (Elias, 2005). Each person can create their own meaning through experience, interaction with others and context/environment. To give a meaning to an experience and to acknowledge transformation in learning, perspective transformation is drawn from theories of transformative learning, and critical pedagogy provides a different explanation of how learning can be transformative. Transformation in learning refers to how students learn to negotiate and act on their purposes, values, feelings and meanings while learning (rather than uncritically accepting what the teacher asks or tells them). The theory of transformative learning views student transformation or change as associated with personal experience as a result of confronting epistemic and psychological assumptions with limited functionality. Critical pedagogy describes transformation through consciousness, which is the capacity for students to learn to critically analyse their social conditions and act to change them.

Major streams of perspective transformation show that such learning can be transformative if learners encounter a change in meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1991), a change in one's personality (Dirkx, 1998), a shift to a different stage of development (Daloz, 2012), a development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1973) and a shift involving an understanding of ourselves and our relationships with other humans and with the natural world (O'Sullivan, 2012). The various definitions of transformation demonstrate that different learners undergo different 'forms' that change and transform. These variations are in line with this study's finding, that is, EP students have a different conception of how the EP can be a venue for

transformation and what students mean by transformative experience towards the EP through the change they experienced. The different theoretical perspectives of transformation give significant clarity of our understanding of the diversity of learning experiences in the EP rather than relying only on a single idea.

The central element of perspective transformation is critical reflection and reflective discourse in that learners can change their perspective about learning. Adaptive-conscious learners demonstrate learning through resistance, transactional/situational learners demonstrate learning through individuation, and transformation/self-conscious learners demonstrate learning through consciousness-raising. Different ways of making sense of learning in the EP implies that transformative learning has different consequences in specific contexts. This is in line with the constructivist approach (Mezirow, 1991) that suggests that every person can create his/her own meaning. In this study, it is through resistance, individuation and consciousness-raising. I discuss each conceptualisation of transformative experience, incorporating a holistic approach to perspective transformation.

9.4.1 Learning through resistance

The conception of transformative learning through ecological consciousness contributes three ideas to educational processes: (i) education for survival; (ii) education for critical understanding; and (iii) education for integral creativity (O'Sullivan, 2012). Survival education means creating conditions for the continuance of living. In this study, there is a moment of resistance to learning for some students to survive in the educational arena. Limitations to life fulfilment for Indonesian disadvantaged youth, especially related to the need for learning and education, is an existential condition that no one escapes. At Nusantara and Wijaya, *direct-entry* and

mobile students underwent learning through resistance. It means the students are faced with something that they either cannot or will not accept. These students reflect that the learning process in the EP does not meet their educational expectation, but they adapt to it for the sake of survival. Learning through resistance does not reflect a defence against learning, but acts as a brake on development and life fulfilment. Learning experiences in the EP can be ‘a point of departure’ for gaining potential future learning, such as when students enter higher education or other forms of future learning. In other words, learning through resistance can be a source of far-reaching potential for learning.

In terms of learning for transformation, learning through resistance is part of a strategy for survival. It means that learning for transformation for these learners involves emancipation from humbleness. Students do not accept the challenge when they experience conflict with learning and social situations in the classroom or school. For example, a student from Nusantara, Irma says:

I was shocked when I found this school culture is like this. When I was in JSS, it was good. Every student obeyed the rules; we studied six hours a day. However, in this school, the students come late, the teachers do not come to the class, and sometime no teacher attends the classroom even though they are in the office. They said that they are busy with other things. It looks like a habit for us. The students are forced to accept this culture. (Irma, Nusantara student)

Students understand the situation and contradictions of the learning situation in the EP, but they oversimplify the situation and admit all the practices. This is, however, part of their learning that involves the capacity to develop when dealing with expectation and reality. It also involves: (i) an understanding of ourselves and our locations, our relations with other humans and with the natural world; (ii) an understanding of the relations of power in the interlocking structures of class, race

and gender; (iii) body awareness; and (iv) our visions of alternative approaches to living (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002).

Therefore, from an ecological consciousness approach, transformation is a process of learning that creates conditions for the continuance of living (O'Sullivan, 2012). It is learning embraced as a journey, less concerned with trying to find fixed facts and more concerned with identifying what student needs to learn to live well ecologically, peacefully and justly. Working with this concept, students who learn through resistance view EP learning and the school culture as an external situation created by the institution, all out of the student's control. Therefore, a resilient attitude is associated with a strategy of survival in learning. Education for survival is a defence mechanism that prevents students from being overwhelmed by the deeply problematic nature of a student's life (O'Sullivan, 2012). In spite of the fact that students create a survival mode for their learning condition, they develop an optimism towards current learning based on the premise that 'we can encounter change' (Knight, 2007, p. 543) in subsequent experiences. This optimism is a benefit emerging from the EP. For example, Tedjo from Wijaya School explains:

It is absolutely an irrelevant experience for me, but I will keep staying at this school so I can get future engagement in the mainstream school once I graduate from the EP. (Tedjo, Wijaya student)

This particular learning experience is in line with outcomes of similar programs in regions where many students acquire benefits from the EP after graduation in which they successfully transfer to the mainstream system (Morpeth & Creed, 2012; S. R. Nath, 2002). In the US context, Tyler and Lofstrom (2009, pp. 93-94) also argue that pursuing a GED could increase marketable skills for employment.

Nonetheless, both groups of students acquire benefits from the educational program for their future orientation.

It can be argued that a school is often organised and functions on the premise of already privileged members of society (Illeris, 2007). Therefore, teachers and representatives of the institution, as well as society, view students who learn through resistance negatively. They are considered undedicated learners who always show their resistant behaviour towards learning, according to the teachers. However, students in this particular group have encountered a shift of consciousness resulting from their reflection on their different experiences. For example, in the rural context, most Nusantara students live under a similar value system, such as respect for adults (e.g. teacher at school and parents or older family member at home), and regard for life's opportunities available to them, such as the opportunity for education. This is a type of appreciation shown by rural students as another dimension of transformative learning, which is based on an ecological consciousness approach. Students have learnt to function as a whole person in relation to the cosmos and biosphere (O'Sullivan 2012, p. 174). In other words, students demonstrate learning through appreciating certain aspects of traditional wisdom and cultures in terms of web and circles, rather than hierarchies. These students act cooperatively in learning and schooling; they come to class regularly and are involved with the learning material.

For students who express learning through resistance, the process of understanding transformation in learning involves 'objective re-framing'. It is an understanding of the wider issue of power, socialisation and the history involved in how students come to be, rather than 'subjective re-framing' that involves personal understanding of working through, and confronting, change (Mezirow, 2000).

However, it does not express scepticism or irresponsibility toward learning; rather the integration of new transformed understandings that are guided by the values and norms that integrate with the school culture and in society. This implies that transformation in learning is not a ‘rational-ordered’ set of processes often overlooked when discussing the issue of student responsibility in transformative learning (E. W. Taylor, 1998). For Indonesian youth in this particular group, it significantly results from engaged wisdom, thought to have a ‘good’ (perhaps morally good) life aligning to become a good member of the family, society and to the national discourse of citizenship (Parker, 2013). This form of transformation that emphasises a particular endpoint in mind is different from transformation for the purpose of empowerment or authenticity (Cranton & Roy, 2003).

9.4.2 Learning through individuation

Transformative learning is often perceived as a rational process. However, from an in-depth psychology perspective, meaning-making stresses a more unconscious, imaginative and extra-rational process. Transformation, based on this approach, is a journey of coming to understand oneself through reflecting on the psychic structures that make up an individual’s identity (Boyd, 1988; Cranton, 2000). A result from this learning is a change in personality, a becoming that is unified but also unique, an undivided and integrated person (Stein, 1998). It can be argued that the idea of separating the self (autonomous) with culture and a social context is incongruent, because individual potential needs legitimisation from the surrounding community. However, the uniqueness of an individual cannot be overlooked within the relationship of culture. A learner can allow his or her greater expression and voice through interacting between, and relationship with, their inner feelings and thought.

The expression of affective and emotionally laden issues often reveals the ways and forms through which learners give voice to an unconscious personal meaning of their learning experiences. It is part of the intrinsic aspect of a human being (Boyd, 1994; Dirkx, 2000). Some Indonesian young people in this study encounter learning through individuation. They engage with learning and encounter transformative experience in the EP by successfully separating themselves from the common value in society. Society may value the mainstream school more than the EP. However, students in this group believe that the EP reshapes the individual personality in this learning environment; they value the EP similar to other educational forms in the country. These students break away from the collective assumption by critically questioning their habits of mind.

Individuation is different from individualism as the latter focuses on the needs of the self over the needs of others, while the former is an understanding of how a person fits in, or does not fit in, with others around him/her. Jung (1921/1971, as cited in Cranton & Roy, 2003, p. 90) defines individuation as:

... a process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology. Individuation, therefore, is a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality.

A learner gradually becomes conscious of his/her unique characteristics and qualities. Referring to this study, the structure of learning environments in the EP evokes powerful emotion among these students and, therefore, they develop their sense of self fully:

Now, I've become a better student as this school has disassociated me from bad habits. (Erwin, Wijaya student)

The school is more real for me. I can sense that the learning environment fits with my circumstance and I feel confident about learning because ... there is no more bad judgement. (Deni, Mandiri student)

Deni from Mandiri School feels a different emotion is influenced by the environment of the school. He does not feel like an 'outsider'. He is happy that the school is located near the train and bus station, a place where he can earn money as a street singer. The student uses the role of imagination to develop a way of knowing about his/her learning that is influenced by the surrounding environment and engendering the soul. In other words, unconsciously, images are often experienced as the manifestation of compulsions, obsessions or complexes take over our conscious awareness (Singer & Kimbles, 2004).

Erwin and Deni's expressions are resultant of their new knowledge about oneself through individually structured learning or through the journey of personal transformation as individuation (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 91). Students bring feelings and fantasies to their learning experiences. Given the appropriate conditions, a learner can enter into a conscious relationship with school images. The need for individuation of learning in this study is also echoed by other researchers in alternative schools in other countries (te Riele, 2011; Watson, 2011) where alternative school experiences enhance student's self-esteem and positive disposition towards learning.

In the form of individuation, transformative learning is less about change in the dramatic sense and more about continuous self-organisation. A student can create a network among his/her own ideas, attitudes, feelings and behaviours in order to self-organise as a road to self-transformation (E. W. Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Learning through individuation is active learning to seek one's own relevancy in the

EP for the sake of personal growth and self-development. The students construct alternative ways of being in a non-mainstream context. However, a journey of personal transformation as individuation is complex (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 91). It involves imagination and understanding of our 'inner' world, of which we may be unaware. Conscious expressions of learning are interpreted as also possibly reflecting unconscious meanings (Dirkx, 2012, p. 118). Some urban youth in this study who voluntarily participated in the EP after experiencing alienation from mainstream schooling became aware of the self, including the kind of learner they want to be, by developing self-understanding in the EP environment.

Finding a sense of self for students in this group is a gradual process. Breaking away from a previous experience in a mainstream school, grouping and regrouping in a new learning environment with more like-minded others continue throughout a lifetime as students continue to refine who they are (Jung, 1971, as cited in Cranton & King, 2003). Sharp (2001) analyses Jung's four stages of the analytic process that represent individuation: (i) confession; (ii) elucidation; (iii) education; and (iv) transformation. According to the stages, the first step is confessions, which include everything that has been consciously concealed or repressed until a person becomes aware of the unconscious complexes and projections called elucidation. The next stage is education, the process of discovering a self-role as a social being who fits within the world. The last stage, transformation, is when a person is who he/she is meant to be.

Dwipa from Wijaya, developing a sense of becoming a better student in the EP is revealed in the individuation process. He identifies himself as a failure and feels that peers from his previous school, family members and neighbours humiliate

him for becoming an EP student. For Dwipa's friends, Wijaya is just a small school compared to others, and it does not represent the image of a 'school' organisation. However, Dwipa finds the school size provides a more comfortable environment and has less complex interactions than the mainstream school. It gives a space and opportunity for Dwipa to revisit and rethink the existence of himself that leads to positive behaviours and results in a renewed commitment to learning. The climate of acceptance and less complex relationships in the EP leads to actions and choices on learning based on 'what kind of person he is'. Dwipa expresses that he has now become a 'new person':

I can also say that since I came here, I never fought with other students. I think I have changed now and become a better student. It is a good school environment, though. (Dwipa, Wijaya student)

Rather than feeling ashamed among his friends, Dwipa reflects that the EP gives him new learning experiences, such as a disassociation from juvenile delinquency, therefore, he can stay longer at school. This conscious development is about a level of awareness of students' beliefs and feelings about themselves (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 33). In this sense, the EP 'responds to what the learner brings' (Baxter & Bethke, 2009, p. 39) in which the learning context and culture have considered the experiences of the students for whom they are designed.

Learners who acquire knowledge through individuation often reflect their experiences by expressing various emotions, such as feelings of uncertainty, fear or inferiority before they reconstruct their physical dilemma and engage with the powerful process of transformation. Therefore, the language and processes of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991) are not considered well suited to working through this extra-rational dynamics. The transformation through this way is a journey of the soul

in finding one's personality, resulting in students feeling confident about their actions.

There are implicit and sometimes explicit EP cultures, such as *fair discipline policies, safe school environment, and a non-competitive behavioural environment* that works with students' psychological and social needs. For students who have experienced chaos and discrimination at their previous school, the EP is a space for the voice and silence (Schwartz, 2014). It means that students are free to speak about different dimensions of learning and their outcomes, as well as space to be quiet, to think and to feel about their learning. The EP creates a venue for healing and imagination, as Iman explains:

This school is unique for me. Can you imagine that our school is in the middle of a bus station community? We are having a 'real life' and feel close between school and community. The students and people interact with each other, just like in an everyday manner. A modification of the school building and design, such as colour, shape of the garbage bin and other facilities attract many people to come and see that we are different; we are unique. (Iman, Mandiri student)

The hidden curriculum of the EP is represented by the school culture and policy, and its mechanism does not lead to troubling 'psychological deduction' for students, but invites them to develop their confidence through engagement in learning with soul. Different and rich learning opportunities afforded to disadvantaged youth in the EP setting provide justification to challenge the mainstream school (Wrigley, Thomson, & Lingard, 2012). The spirit of the EP serves the needs and educational orientation of young people, as well as provides a lesson for mainstream schooling to work more through students' eyes of imagination than with their mind or head. Understanding imagination as the source of learning has profound implications for how learners think about, design and implement their learning for life.

9.4.3 Learning through consciousness-raising

The product of learning is consciousness-raising (Freire, 1973). This concept describes the transformation of consciousness from acceptance of oppression/reality to the belief that reality has changed. This transformation, or unveiling reality, is an ongoing, never-ending and dynamic process through the awakening of a learner's critical consciousness where the student learns to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive element of reality (Freire, 2000). The nature of change for some students in this study, especially post-school-age students, most of whom are workers, relate more to broadening their minds that learning in an EP where they not only pass examinations and hold the school certificate, but they develop a sense of agency over their lives.

Consciousness-raising relates to the ability to make a critical 'reading' of opportunity structures and critical reflections toward the learning experience. Some students show a greater commitment to learning because of interest energised by their context, everyday learning experiences and social relationships. These factors open up student perspectives and inform actions to believe their own value of education and enthusiasm for pursuing it.

Risma and Siti represent students who encounter consciousness-raising during their studies and therefore see their educational journeys and goals differently. Siti successfully developed her action plans and goals under limited circumstances, that is, working as a housemaid, she changed employers several times.

My goal has changed. In the first time, I just wanted to pursue the Package B diploma for applying for a job as the factory worker. Now I want to [pursue] higher than that. That is why I am continuing my study to Package C. (Risma, Wijaya student)

My first purpose when I came to this program is for the certificate, but now it has changed. If I only graduated from Package B, later I might find a similar job like a housemaid [now Siti is in Package C]. My ambition now is to graduate from this program and enrol at university so that I can become a teacher. I have told my employer my plans. She said that if I go to university, I can stay here, work with her and I would not have to pay for accommodation. I feel that it is a good step for me. Now I am saving money for university. (Siti, Wijaya student)

Both students' actions are a result of consciousness-raising, the capacity of the student to take action against social, political, cultural and economic circumstances that influence and shape his/her life. In this sense, their transformative experience creates raised awareness of the contradictions in life and society, and they are able to take action to liberate themselves at the personal and social levels. However, transformation of consciousness is different for the second group of students who encountered self-transformation through psychological reintegration.

Giroux (1992) states that a person needs to understand what currently exists before he/she begins to understand what should exist. Context reflects the personal and sociocultural factors that include the individual background involving familial and social histories that have influenced the individual growing up. It plays an influential role in the process of transformative learning. For students in this group, their context influences how they learn to counter dominant assumptions or societal tension. For example, some students entering the EP through 'the gap' pathway often experience humiliation in the past (in the family or society) in which it becomes the catalyst for decision-making and change. Siti shares her experience of humiliation by family members:

I always have friction with my mother. She always humiliates me; she would always blame me that I did the wrong things. In this matter, I want her to know that I love her, and I want to show her that I will be successful in the future. (Siti, Wijaya student)

Iman describes another humiliating experience at school:

The school leader from my previous school always requests fees from students for extracurricular and other activities. It made me angry, and thus I quit the previous school (and re-entered a new school through the EP). (Iman, Mandiri student)

This experience of humiliation, both in the family and school context, demonstrates a positionality of a marginalised group. The EP provides an opportunity for young people to understand their situation and social context, to reflect upon their reality and to connect it to the world when making a decision or change. The readiness to make a decision or to accept change lies on ‘contextually appropriate and timely opportunities that allow for possibilities of hope and the formulation of dreams’ (Bennetts, 2003, p. 474).

Context also influences the pattern of transformative learning. Many urban students in this study encounter self-conscious learning. Urban life influences its society to increase complex ways of making meaning, as rapidly changing society trigger assumptions about self, others and society. For example, urban students search for meaning to empower themselves through education to survive in the competitive society. This is different for rural students who encounter learning through resistance. Therefore, many Indonesian young people from rural areas who travel and live among urban society tend to view the value system differently between rural and urban cultures. Migration represents a potentially fruitful vehicle for transformative learning and education, as young people encounter with other cultures in a new environment. In other words, these young people see unusual ways of doing, causing them to question the problem and trying to solve it through education for transformation (Eyler, 1999).

Through this group of students, transformative learning involves the importance of relationships. They exercise life conscientization through social relations to construct a sense of identity to wider educational stakeholders and society as a whole. In the process of exercising conscientization or moving to the critical consciousness stage, a bicultural voice (Darder, 1995) facilitates dialogue and reflection. It occurs in the context of the classroom and community to reflect and respond on the issues of cultural domination, alienation, resisting, negotiation and affirmation. Hisyam exercises this process in the community surrounding his school. He recognises that isolation and stereotypical biases through labelling EP students as ‘non-capable’ leads to students feeling educationally deprived:

I think other schools or local government do not recognise us as part of the educational institution in this city... I want my school to be just like the other schools. If the local government is organising sports tournaments, I want them to invite us ... So many people know that this school exists. (Hisyam, Nusantara student)

Transforming society’s view of the EP for a student like Hisyam is important and implies the desire for collective and social transformation. A transformation is not a ‘lonely’ experience (Daloz, 2000) nor does it result in changes in the learner, but it needs social and political change. It also strengthen the understanding that human beings are essentially rational and offers a broader viewpoint about the relationship among education, personal and social change. Critical reflection in Mezirow’s model is not useful in describing transformation in learning as emotion and a strategy for survival due to its different dimensions of transformation. However, it is important for students who encounter learning through critical-consciousness to examine the problem and find strategies for it that are encountered during learning.

There is a student's willingness to connect his/her personal learning with a shared life world in line with the spirit of the value of opportunity (Inbar, 1995) and fairness (Cuban, 1990) of a second chance school. Receiving equal treatment and acknowledgement are important for disadvantaged youth because they develop an optimistic disposition through the ongoing practice of self-emancipation. EP systems need more acknowledgment and support from governments and society. EP students in this study need to be recognised for their capacity to promote social change, equality and equity (Kim & Taylor, 2008) in the context of Indonesia, a country that is changing rapidly and requiring the contribution from its rapidly increasing number of educated informed citizens. The EP system needs recognition for its integral involvement in the development of nationhood. This strengthens the point made by Pietrykowski (1996), along with Clark and Wilson (1991) who argue that perspective transformation is emancipatory and that its benefit accrues to individuals and through them, to society.

For students who encounter learning through individuation, the EP is a counter space that promotes emotional and psychological health. However, for students who encounter learning through consciousness-raising, the EP is a vehicle for 'border crossing' (Giroux, 1992). The EP provides a vehicle for Indonesian young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to negotiate the shifting borders that shape the different structures of knowledge and power. In other words, as students understand the value and role of the EP for their future personal, social and workplace relationships, it creates spaces for young people who are alienated from national education structures and encourages them to cross this border to enter the alternative schooling experience. It indicates that recognising marginalisation is a

key dimension of transformative learning, as well as benefits students for developing their sense of identity of being a student in a non-mainstream school and increasing their identity in the non-schooling experience.

9.5 Significance of the research findings

The study builds on prior research in a Western context in which many scholars have addressed the experiences of young people in alternative schooling (Jones, 2011; Kim & Taylor, 2008; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Mills & McGregor, 2010; te Riele, 2011; Watson, 2011). The focus is on the Indonesian context, which is different to the Western context where young people generally attend alternative schooling due to behavioural problems or through a desire to search out what they consider to be more appropriate curriculum and pedagogy (te Riele, 2007). In Indonesia, poverty forces students to find alternative ways to gain an education. This creates a challenge for the Indonesian government to accommodate a diverse group of non-traditional learners. Importantly, while many Indonesian scholars evaluate the EP from the teachers' or administrators' perspectives, this study explores the student's voice that has never been heard. Through their voices, this study explores the nature of learning, student knowledge of themselves and their insight into the relationship between their learning and its social significance.

The study examines two theories: (i) transformative learning; and (ii) critical pedagogy. The concept employs 'perspective transformation/change'. Through perspective transformation, this study develops the understanding that EP students have the capacity to critically examine assumptions and to liberate themselves from an oppressive understanding of social relationships to become more reflective, open,

and inclusive. Both theories emphasise self-reflection and dialogue/discourse as a means through which to search for meaning in educational experience (Freire, 1973; Mezirow, 1994). It is through rational and critical reflection that the process of making meaning of experiences is achieved. By using both theoretical frameworks, the study is able to give a voice to Indonesian disadvantaged youth. Furthermore, the study validates the capacity of the EP culture to accommodate a diversity of learning needs. It shows that the EP works in accordance with the needs of learners with different orientations and philosophies toward education. Through different learning cultures, many students encounter significant developmental, cognitive and emotional changes throughout the dropout and re-entry process.

Theoretically, the three concepts of transformative experience, as described in Section 9.4, contribute to the predictive power (Howie & Bagnall, 2013) of the impact of the learning experience in the EP. The impact of learning is not demonstrated around the traditional area of learning, such as involving a number of students in tasks or assigned works that are grounded in an objectivist understanding (Zyngier, 2008). Nevertheless, it is through the transformative engagement in learning that is significant as an effective base for current learning and the possibility to make predictions of the student's future learning and life. The form of transformative learning, as conceptualised through this study, suggests that the concept of transformation is not always considered as the conceptual domain of consciousness-raising. A transformation is not a linear process for a learner to improve or become free from the past because it all refers to moving forward from one position to a new one. However, it is a means of creating resilience for future orientation derived from the appreciation of life and wisdom in society. This study

affirms the concept of perspective transformation, and enriches it by showing that learning for transformation in a non-Western context is not always presented by current change (i.e. change that happens within the students in current learning), but it can be delayed for future change that possibly results from current learning resilience.

This study can help the Indonesian government to theorise the form of learning in the EP. Perspective transformation is suited to this study because it uncovers the benefits of learning through various dimensions, including emotions, individuation and consciousness-raising. Learning variations evident in this study show the capacity of Indonesian disadvantaged youth to discover their own authentic and authoritative life and to retrieve a learning agenda (Giddens, 1994). Such learning that makes a difference to disadvantaged lives is not merely learning manifested by academic achievement, but learning that empowers students with self-beliefs and subjective judgement. The assumption that the EP only attracts lower social class groups with limited control over their destinies is at odds with the evidence presented in this study. It implies the need for a reconceptualisation of the EP to provide a venue for learning for other students from well-to-do families and those living in poverty. The EP is not 'inferior', as is often criticised by the public and perhaps in the minds of policymakers.

9.6 Significance of the methodology

Interpretivism is the theoretical perspective that informs this research project. In the interpretive paradigm, there is no single reality. Reality is based on an individual's perceptions and experiences (Robson, 2011). A qualitative approach is used to

understand those perceptions and experiences. Interpretivism works with this study because the aim of it is to uncover reality ‘beneath the surface’ of the participants in order to understand the meaning of their experiences. Furthermore, a qualitative research method incorporating a multiple case study approach is used in this study to emphasise the different atypical features, happenings, relationships and connections of, and between, each case study (Stake, 2000). This consideration fits in with the differences of each case study (Chapter 8), with each one representing the EP environment, culture and student backgrounds that contribute to a variety of perceptions and experiences embedded in their context. Therefore, the specificity of each school leads to a better understanding and better theorising about a larger collection of cases (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

The focus of this study is to uncover the form of transformation in learning that results from student interactions within the school and its environment. To gain information about student learning, an in-depth interview method is used to record student’s personal experiences aimed to search for common patterns. In-depth interviews elicit rich information from the perspective of the students (Liamputong, 2007), where each student is freely able to share his/her stories, feelings and arguments confidentially without feeling shame. Some students, especially females, often cry when they tell their stories about their family or their struggles, but at the same time they feel happy that someone is willing to listen to them. Some male students also find it difficult to express their feelings. Therefore, focus group discussions added to the data collection process allows for dialogical conversations in a group context to be conducted (Barbour, 2007). Dialogical research is important

and appropriate for this study because it seeks engaged critical reflection upon participant experiences.

9.7 Limitations of the study

This study uses a critical interpretive paradigm. Critical reflection is a central subject from the theories of transformative learning and critical pedagogy, and involves problem solving, problem posing and perspective change. Thus, in some questions asked in the individual interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher inquired into ‘What could or should be?’ In doing so, students are asked to challenge the status quo, to question social norms and to look for ways to improve practice through action and the involvement of those people who are affected by the situation being investigated (Merriam, 2000). However, not all participants are able to articulate their feelings. This happened most often with young people in rural areas.

Furthermore, this study does not reflect the experiences of all EP students across Indonesia. Some target groups are not covered in this study, for example, youth living in isolated areas, youth studying Islam in traditional Islamic institutions or *pesantren* without formal school, youth living in prison, and students who are sports players or with special talents who study in the EP. Due to limitations of the current study, much remains to be investigated. Thus, a broader and larger-scale research study is required to investigate what has yet to be uncovered around the benefits of learning for disadvantaged youth in the EP context.

9.8 Recommended areas for further research

Questions emerged during the research that can lead to further investigation. As mentioned in Section 9.7, a broader and larger-scale research study is required to examine the EP in other learning contexts and settings, such as the EP in prisons, isolated areas including border areas, and tribal communities. A broader-scale research will enrich documentation of learning experiences in specific contexts. In an urban context, this study initially investigates working youth who migrated individually or with their families. It opens up the possibility of continuing the investigation because the phenomena of internal migrant youth and family is increasing every year. It is important to study patterns of ‘student mobility’, not only ‘people mobility’. An effective educational transfer function for this group of youth needs to be investigated to identify how they maintain access to education, both in the formal or EP context. The current study found many students transferring between mainstream schooling and the EP at different times for different reasons. In all likelihood, this movement will continue into the future and therefore deserves more analysis.

In addition, this study recognises the role of the EP culture in providing opportunities for EP students to become ‘transformed’ learners. However, not all aspects of the EP culture meet student needs and expectations, especially for school-age and academically abled students. A second possibility for future research is to conduct a study to explore how the EP culture meets these particular students. Poor youth who are academically able deserve ‘a rigorous, intellectually challenging curriculum that does not further marginalise them’ (Smyth, McInerney, & Fish, 2013).

As an extension of this research, an examination of students transitioning from the EP to mainstream schooling would be informative because a number of them expect to enrol in a mainstream school after they successfully complete the EP. This study reveals that several school-age students in Package B wish to re-enrol in a senior secondary school after graduating from the EP. As the EP has different approaches to teaching and learning, it is important to examine this movement. Students from the EP may once again feel disorientated, but it is also possible that their movements are unproblematic, cognitively and affectively.

9.9 Recommendations for learning practices and future policy

The EP as an alternative education program designed to meet the aspirations of young people to further their education in Indonesia. It requires every student enrolled in the EP to work through a process and perspective that give meaning to their experience of school and society. The research findings are in line with the humanist and constructivist theories that underpin the study. Humanism presupposes that ‘human nature is intrinsically good and that humans are free and autonomous beings’ (Stuckey, Taylor, & Cranton, 2013, p. 39), thus every student has the potential for growth, development and self-actualisation. Constructivism also asserts that to create meaning from a learning experience, some students only focus on an individual learning perspective while others base their judgement on dialogue with others, thus sharing ways of understanding the world (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Stuckey et al., 2013). In this sense, this study reveals that youth with heightened aspirations (academic, vocational, personal or social) need to approach education differently from youth with normal expectations.

The implications for education in the EP in this context is that the EP challenges students who are willing and able to engage in learning, whatever their educational aspiration, and to enable a shift in their educational perspective. However, EP educators need to distinguish between indoctrination and transformative learning. In this matter, they cannot blame their students who have problems arising from previous learning experiences in a mainstream school and identify the problems these students create or encounter as pathologies of individuals. The approach is to help learners question their old problematic beliefs and values and then unveil them as students' false consciousness. This implies that there is a need for EP educators to perceive themselves as change agents responsible for the learning of individual and collective students. Helping students to reflect upon their experience means that students will experience education as something they do, rather than something done to them. Importantly, learning then arises through dialogical and dialectical relations between the educator and students.

Educators with a desire to develop students need to exercise their learning development. It is important for an educator to experience the changing process in teaching and learning and to learn how to respond to individual students in the learning process. If an educator's assumptions are not synchronous with a student's learning processes, the education is not effective. Educators need to be aware of how new learning can shape the perspectives of both the educator and the student. Then the educator will respect the student's preferred method of learning. It also means the teacher becomes a learner as well as an educator (Freire, 2000).

In relation to the educational policy, expanding the opportunity for choice between educational systems for gaining higher school qualification deserves a

policy response. The EP has a strong effect on policymakers because it gives individual student an opportunity to transform their perspective in order to receive a meaningful education. It enables disadvantaged youth to access an alternative educational channel for upward social and economic mobility. Even so, this study confirms that every EP organisation or school needs to identify its educational approach and relationship to its educational environment. This means that a national model of the EP will not necessarily be appropriate due to the diversity of learners and numerous contextual factors related to schools and their community. The lessons learnt from the three case studies suggest that no ‘blueprint’ for setting up an EP can be prescribed (UNESCO, 2006b).

In the Indonesian context, it is possible to evolve each EP institution based on its contextual factors. The government has made educational reforms that move toward decentralisation since 2000. In Government Regulation No. 25 of 2000, the education sector is shared between central and district governments. The central government focus is on implementing national policies for standards of competencies, national curriculum, education calendar and evaluation. The implementation of the EP belongs to the district government, which focuses more on operational and technical arrangements. The implication for governments is that there is a need to provide guidelines for each EP to set up their own organisational goals, including their learning and teaching philosophy arising from an interpretation and disposition of each EP and its local context. Woods and Woods (2009) offer a three-fold theorisation of educational alternative: *separation*, *engagement* and *activist*. One EP may *separate* from the mainstream school by emphasising a different educational environment and culture; Wijaya is an example for this setting.

Another EP may *engage* with a mainstream school, especially in practical terms, to close the gap between non-mainstream and mainstream schooling; Nusantara fits with this strategy. The third theorisation is that another EP can act as an *activist* in its goal to bring disadvantaged groups through education, as Mandiri does.

These three theorisations of educational alternatives can lead to differentiation in learning and teaching that occurs at the classroom level. Implementation occurs by modifying curriculum materials and learning modules nationally, and each EP organisation can work with that curriculum and match them to local circumstances. An EP developing its response to local context can recognise the knowledge that students bring to the classroom, their diverse circumstances and interest (Mills et al., 2014). However, national curriculum standards still need to be set up to maintain the synergies of learning outcomes between the EP and mainstream school.

9.10 Conclusion

This study addresses the practical understanding of the EP in Indonesia through the voice of its students as it seeks to uncover the meaning and value of educational experiences for those who are disadvantaged, such as the poor, school dropouts and those forced to work at a young age. The study also argues that the Indonesian EP is comparable with other non-mainstream educational systems around the world, such as alternative schools that offer democratic educational experiences or second chance schooling that stress the value of opportunity and fairness. However, the Indonesian EP is different due to the circumstances of its learners and their educational needs, and the social, political and economic situation of the country.

Nevertheless, the alternative education movement for young people, whether marginalised from public education or seeking a democratic educational experience, is growing throughout the world (Nagata, 2006). Either the government recognises the EP as an alternative education system that requires a passive approach whereby alternative education is positioned merely as performing a supplementary role to mainstream education or the government plays an active role in ensuring that alternative education has its own autonomy and fosters complementary citizenship of its learners. This study suggests that the EP should not only be seen as supplementary or complementary to mainstream education, but it should be understood as able to respond to the challenges and diversity of children and young people in an emerging and developing nation. The EP is a robust minority educational movement with considerable significance in Indonesian society.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ENGLISH)

Student researcher: Ila Rosmilawati
School of Education
Bankstown Campus
+61432550098
17320346@student.uws.edu.au



English Version

Interview Questions

1. When did you dropout from formal school?
 - Why did you dropout?
 - How did you feel being dropout?
2. Why did you decide to go back to school, and why did you choose EPs?
 - When you start in EPs?
 - How long have you been not attending school until you go back?
 - What did you do while not attending school?
 - How is your process in getting involved after such a long time not in school?
3. What is the perception of EPs in your community?
 - Are their perceptions affecting your sense of belonging?
 - How do you value your school?
4. Can you share your learning experiences in EPs?
 - What attract you to come to school?
 - How can this centre serve your needs?
 - EPs use flexibility in schoolwork, how you engage with “the different ways of learning”?
 - What do you like about these learning methods?
 - How is your tutor help you engage/enjoy with learning?
 - How is your experience in participating with other activities in school (such as life skill)?
 - What is your expectation after graduation?
5. How can this experience be improved?
 - What aspects need to improve in this program?
 - How it could be improved?

APPENDIX B: UWS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751 Australia



UWS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

8 August 2012

Associate Professor Carol Reid,
School of Education

Dear Carol,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal **H9767** "*Disadvantaged Youth in Alternative Schooling: Investigating Indonesian Young People's Re-engagement with Education*", until 16 March 2013 with the provision of a progress report annually and a final report on completion.

Please quote the project number and title as indicated above on all correspondence related to this project.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Carol Reid, David Wright, Ila Rosmilawati.

Yours sincerely

Dr Anne Abraham
Chair, UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY (ENGLISH)

Student researcher: Ila Rosmilawati
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English Version

Request for Authority

From the Department of Education - DKI Jakarta, Bekasi and Pandeglang

Project title: Disadvantaged Youth in Alternative Schooling: Investigating Indonesian Young People's Re-engagement with Education.

Greetings my name is Ila Rosmilawati. I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, supervised by A/Prof Carol Reid and Dr David Wright. I would like to ask your permission to conduct research investigating Indonesian young people's re-engagement with education in Equivalency Education Programs. If you are in agreement with this study, I will contact the schools and distribute the Participant Information Statements and Consent Form to the students. In this study, I will conduct interviews and focus group discussion with a number of students, to obtain information about their experiences in learning in Equivalency Education Programs (EPs). I believe that this research will be beneficial in developing Equivalency Education Programs in the future, especially how accommodate students' needs and engage them in learning.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. Thus, students who participate in this research can decide if they will withdraw from this research. Also, any information provided by the participants will be treated as confidential. The researcher will use pseudonyms for the participants' identity, so it will not be identified in the reporting of the research findings. The data provided by participants will be stored in a locked drawer located within the University of Western Sydney, and only accessed by members of the research team.

The collected information will be used as part of my research higher degree thesis, and may be reported in conference papers and academic publications. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the research, then please email me.

Please find attached a copy of the Participant Information Statement, the Consent Form and my proposed interview questions for your kind consideration. If you are in agreement for me to conduct this research, contact me via e-mail: 17320346@student.uws.edu.au, or telephone +628159324418. Alternatively, if you have any questions feel free to contact either myself or one of my supervisors for further information about the research. My supervisors contact details can be located on the Information Statement enclosed.

Best Regards,

Ila Rosmilawati

APPENDIX D: AUTHORITY FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (ENGLISH)

Student researcher: Ila Rosmilawati
School of Education
Bankstown Campus
+61432550098
17320346@student.uws.edu.au



English Version

Authority from School Principals

Project title: Disadvantaged Youth in Alternative Schooling: Investigating Indonesian Young People's Re-engagement with Education.

Greetings my name is Ila Rosmilawati. I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, supervised by A/Prof Carol Reid and Dr David Wright. I would like to ask your permission to conduct a research investigating Indonesian young people re-engagement with education in Equivalency Education Programs. If you are in agreement with this research, I would ask your permission to allow me distribute copies of the enclosed Participant Information Statements and Consent Forms to students as my potential participants. In this study, I will conduct interviews and focus group discussion with a number of students, to obtain the information about their experiences in learning in Equivalency Education Programs. I believe that this research will be beneficial in developing Equivalency Education Programs in the future, especially on how accommodate students' needs and engage them in learning.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. Thus, students who participate in this research can decide if they will withdraw from this research. Also, any information provided by the participants will be treated as confidential. The researcher will use pseudonyms for the participants' identity, so it will not be identified in the reporting of the research findings. The data provided by participants will be stored in a locked drawer located within the University of Western Sydney, and only accessed by members of the research team.

The collected information will be used as part of my research higher degree thesis, and may be reported in conference papers and academic publications. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the research, then please email me.

Please find attached a copy of the Participant Information Statement, the Consent Form and my proposed interview questions for your kind consideration. If you are in agreement for me to conduct this research, contact me via e-mail: 17320346@student.uws.edu.au, or telephone +628159324418. Alternatively, if you have any questions feel free to contact either myself or one of my supervisors for further information about the research. My supervisors contact details can be located on the Information Statement enclosed.

Best Regards,

Ila Rosmilawati

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (GENERAL)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services



Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: Disadvantaged youth in alternative schooling: Investigating Indonesian young people's re-engagement with education

Who is carrying out the study?

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Ila Rosmilawati, PhD candidate, School of Education University of Western Sydney under the supervisor of Assoc Prof Carol Reid and Dr. David Wright.

What is the study about?

The purpose of the study is to examine disadvantaged youth experiences of educational re-engagement processes in alternative school setting in Indonesia.

What does the study involve?

This research will utilise qualitative research methods with case study approach. The participants will be investigated via interviews and focus group discussion and it will be audio recorded for one hour at your school, such as at common areas, library or class or others quite place of your choice.

How much time will the study take?

The individual interview will take approximately one hour and the focus group discussion will have a duration of one to two hours.

Will the study benefit me?

This research will give the opportunity for you to articulate your needs and aspirations for improving your experiences in alternative schooling.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?

You will tell the story about your life and experiences in learning in alternative schooling. It might be possible that you have to explore the difficulties in your life. However, this situation only will lead to minimum discomfort for you, as speaking about it more likely going to be a chance to release any frustrations. Furthermore, by sharing your feelings might also encourage you to have better hope in the future.

How is this study being paid for?

The study is being sponsored by Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) of Indonesia which has provided funding for a PhD scholarship.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers and my supervisors will have access to information on participants. The result through the completion of my PhD thesis, seminars, conference presentation and journal article.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate -you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, you can contact Ila Rosmilawati, mobile number is +628159324418 or via e-mail 17320346@student.uws.edu.au if you wish to discuss it further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors Associate Professor Carol Reid Tel: 02 9772 6524 or e-mail c.reid@uws.edu.au and Dr. David Wright Tel: 02 4736 0267 or e-mail david.wright@uws.edu.au.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services



Participant Consent Form

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text.

Project Title: Disadvantaged Youth in Alternative Schooling:
Investigating Indonesian Young People's Re-engagement with Education

I,....., consent to participate in the research project titled Disadvantaged youth in alternative schooling: Investigating Indonesian young people's re-engagement with education.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, 'have had read to me'] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the information collected from the participants includes their age, family background and the years of schooling.

The interview will investigate the following:

1. Reasons for dropping out of formal schooling
2. Reasons for choosing alternative schooling
3. Sense of belonging in school
4. Students valuing of school success
5. Students' experiences in learning
6. Students' aspirations

The focus group discussion will be cover:

1. Clarification on themes/problems for individual stories
2. Identifying possible solution and aspiration from students' view

I consent to a one hour audio taped interview and/or focus group discussion with the researcher and I am willing to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Return Address: 121 Menteng Wadas Timur, Jakarta Selatan, 12970

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Approval number is: [enter approval number]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PARENT/CAREGIVER)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services



Participant Information Sheet (Parent/Caregiver)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: Disadvantaged youth in alternative schooling: Investigating Indonesian young people's re-engagement with education

Who is carrying out the study?

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by Ila Rosmilawati, PhD candidate, School of Education University of Western Sydney under the supervisor of Associate Professor Carol Reid and Dr David Wright.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to examine disadvantaged youth experiences of educational re-engagement processes in alternative school setting in Indonesia.

What does the study involve?

This research will utilise qualitative research methods with case study approach. The participants will be investigated via interviews and focus group discussions, which will be audio recorded for one hour at school, such as at common areas, library or class. Your child may also be involved in a focus group if you approve.

How much time will the study take?

The individual interview will take approximately one hour and the focus group discussion will have a duration of one to two hours and it will be audio recorded.

Children not participating in the study will be involve in class activity during the time the research is being carried out.

Will the study benefit me?

This research will give the opportunity for your child to articulate his/her needs and aspirations for

improving the experiences in alternative schooling.

Will the study have any discomforts?

Your child will tell the story about his/her life and experiences in learning. It might be possible that your child has to explore the difficulties in his/her life. However, this situation only will lead to minimum discomfort, as speaking about it is more likely going to be a chance to release any frustrations. Furthermore, by sharing his/her feelings might also encourage him/her to have better hope in the future.

How is this study being paid for?

The study is being sponsored by Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) of Indonesia which has provided funding for a PhD scholarship.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers and supervisors will have access to information on participants. The results will be disseminated through the completion of my PhD thesis, seminars, conference presentation and journal article but individual participants will not be identifiable. A short report will be sent to all participating schools so you can read the results.

Can I withdraw my child from the study?

Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to consent. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time - or you may withdraw your child from the study at which point all written and audio records of your child's participation will be destroyed.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, you can contact Ila Rosmilawati, mobile number is +628159324418 or via email 17320346@student.uws.edu.au if you wish to discuss it further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors Associate Professor Carol Reid tel: 02 9772 6524 or e-mail c.reid@uws.edu.au and Dr. David Wright Tel: 02 4736 0267 or e-mail david.wright@uws.edu.au.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (PARENT/CAREGIVER)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services



Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text.

Project Title: Disadvantaged Youth in Alternative Schooling:
Investigating Indonesian Young People's Re-engagement with Education

I, [print name]....., give consent for my child [print name]..... to participate in the research project titled Disadvantaged youth in alternative schooling: Investigating Indonesian young people's re-engagement with education.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, 'have had read to me'] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child agrees to their participation in the project.

I understand that my child's involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity.

I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary. I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.

I consent to the information collected from the participants includes their age, family background and the years of schooling.

The interview will investigate the following:

1. Reasons for dropping out of formal schooling
2. Reasons for choosing alternative schooling
3. Sense of belonging in school
4. Students valuing of school success
5. Students' experiences in learning
6. Students' aspirations

The focus group discussion will be cover:

1. Clarification on themes/problems for individual stories
2. Identifying possible solution and aspiration from students' view

I consent that my child participate in interviews and/or focus group discussions, which will be an hour of audio taping and my child can cross out any activity that he/she does not wish to participate in.

Signed (Parent/ caregiver): **Signed (child):**
Name: **Name:**
Date: **Date:**

Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Return Address:

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Approval number is:

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.