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Doctoral Dissertation of Philosophy in Education

**Contextualizing Dropout Experiences
of Youth Migrants
in Transitional Myanmar**

전환기 미얀마 이주청소년 노동자의
공교육 중도탈락 경험에 관한 질적연구

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**Contextualizing Dropout Experiences
of Youth Migrants
in Transitional Myanmar**

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To the memory of my mother
who taught me the power of love, laughter and curiosity

And

To my families
who appreciate the joy of thinking, questioning and sharing

ABSTRACT

Contextualizing Dropout Experiences of Youth Migrants in Transitional Myanmar

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This doctoral dissertation addresses how the lives and learning of youth migrants in Yangon are interwoven during the economic, political, dramatic and cultural social transitions in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Myanmar or Burma). It explores that *first*, multidimensional drivers of youths' decisions on dropping out of school beyond economic issues; *second*, the pathways of dropping out of school from youth's experiences from the ethnographic and interpretative approach as well as interplays between schooling as a social institution and individual dropouts being evolved in between. And *third*, drawn from youth's life experiences within and outside of school, it re-theorise understanding socio-cultural and educational aspects of school dropouts and further the current phenomenon of Myanmar's inequality in education.

By rooted in social anthropology and influenced by critical sociology, Victor Tuner's notions on Structure and Anti-Structure, Liminality and Communitas are re-visited in order to contextualise the shifting realities of life and learning of Yangon's migrant Youth workers. These theoretical lenses allowed to explore twelve research participants

to that collected and analysed the recent life histories before and after dropping out of school as the basis for an understanding of their learning inside and outside of formal schooling. This study has a strong focus on process of the twelve youth, rather the results of dropping out itself: (i) Breaking away (separation), (ii) of being out of school and working (being in liminal space) and (iii) seeking the possibilities for integration (re-integration or separation).

It is argued that interplays of the two aspects - *the Outer process of poverty*, structured failures from education systems and lack of quality education *and the Internal process of benevolence* – which is formed ideas of *Dana* and *Sedana*, *Ana* and *Anade* create space of Myanmar's unique space for liminality. In the micro-subjective perspective. The major finding is mainly three folds. First, it is evident that root causes of inequality in Myanmar's education also are operated as a sociocultural issues. Formal education in Myanmar in the past can be perceived as a political and social reproduction of disadvantages and inequalities of Myanmar society itself. Thus, inequalities have been being recycled through the education system and other social institutions in Myanmar which is under the former governments that still structurally lingers in contemporary Myanmar's education. Second, by putting lights on critical social symbols of educational realities of dropout youths, *poverty* as a powerful social symbol, *structured failures* in formal schooling as educational symbol and cultural symbol of benevolence were found the most powerful cultural symbol that underlay conditions their life choices. Particularly, in a liminal space and time for the young migrants, the concept of *Sedana (Dana)* and *Anade (Ana)* – which captures the essence of benevolence and generosity plays critical socio-cultural foundations that underlines the interplays between inner process and outer process of liminality.

Therefore, third, being in liminal stage, not in ritual state in a traditional society, its migrant youth may not be able to have space to return due to their *Structural Inferiority* and *Outsiderhoods*. No matter how exciting and glamorous the initial arrival of a big city looked, the migrant youth workers are likely to be able to *re-integrated* or *re-incorporated* or *simply fallen into* the further cracks without further education, learning and skill development in fastest growing city of Yangon.

It argues that the unique mechanism of *Sedana (Dana)* and *Anade (Ana)* plays critical elements of day-to-day conceptualisation of their lives and education in the past, current and future. It is argued that the participating youths in the research have shown that the cultural mechanism of ignoring and transcending the difficulties are deep-rooted in the acceptance of power. This is embedded in their perceptions, behaviours and choices of education, employment and marginalisation. In other words, youth themselves semi-voluntarily accept the everyday power and authority which take away any educational opportunities from those who are legible for public education.

The research depicts that transitions of Yangon's migrant youth's workers are relational and multi-faceted, rather than fixed and linear than theorists or policy specialist expects. And their imagined better life with filled with learning opportunities in the city in liminality as wholly emancipatory. This thesis explores that what happens in the process of changes of young migrant workers in the shifting economic-learning, socio-cultural –learning nexus. Since the first democratic election in 2010 and the new government introduced in 2015, there are growing markets, more opportunities for youth employment, followed by urbanization and notable international and internal migration. With the long desired wind of democratization and social changes, youths' choice

of remaining in malfunctioning public schools and leaving for new job opportunities was a multi-dimensional choice.

At the time of democratically elected government's reform accompanied with major education reform, it welcomes that education, more importantly the problems of dropout, started taken seriously for the first time in thirty years. In this context, it is the precious opportunity that education reform embraces the quality education and lifelong learning for *All*. Providing more equitable and flexible education learning in both public schooling and communities only can start from understanding very real context lives and learning of school dropouts. No matter how society calls school dropouts - Failures, Underachievers or Outliers, the thesis offer both academic and real life time narratives from the school dropouts who have a lot of lessons for the upcoming education reform of transitional Myanmar.

Key Words: Myanmar, education, lifelong learning, anthropology of education, liminality, youth migrant workers, dropout

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS

AY	Academic Year (Myanmar context: June-April)
BEHS	Basic Education High School
BEMS	Basic Education Middle School
BEPPS	Basic Education Post Primary School
BEPS	Basic Education Primary School
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
CFS	Child Friendly Schools
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DEPT	Department of Education, Planning and Training
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HREIB	Human Rights Education Institute of Burma
HS	High School
IHLCS	Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (Myanmar)
IOE	Institute of Education
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LS	Lower Secondary
MOE	Ministry of Education
MICS	Multiple Indicator Custer Survey
ODA	ODA Overseas Development Assistance
PPE	Post Primary Education
SE	Secondary Education
SES	Secondary Education Sector
SPDC	State Peace & Development Council
SY	School Year
TEO	Township Education Office
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
US	Upper Secondary
WIDE	World Inequality Database on Education
YU	Yangon University

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Dropouts are not only social and educational issue of Republic of the Union of Myanmar (also known as Myanmar or Burma¹), but are a global concern. In turn, the last two decades of global education agenda in both policy and academic literature has heavily developed around the issues of how to increase school accessibility. However, in recent years, there is a growing consensus among keen governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations involved in discussions on education and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the issue of universal secondary education and the issue of dropping out need to be integrated into any new upcoming educational development framework. Now dropping-out has become the so-called newly emerging agenda.

Recent international comparative studies and UN related literature clearly show that, over last two decades, dropping out has worsened. According to the data for the school year ending in 2013, 124 million children and young adolescents, roughly between the ages of 6 and 15 years, have either never started school or have dropped out. This is compared to 122 million in 2011. The global number of children and young adolescents not enrolled in school is rising at the same time that

¹ Naming debates on the Republic of the Union of Myanmar as Myanmar and Burma has been heated political debates. In this research both Burma and Myanmar can be both found in the text. Burma is used when describing the country prior to 1989 when the country is changed its official name. The detailed historical and political debates between the country's name in political and diplomatic arena can be found in Michael Aung-Twin's 2008 article called, "Mranma Pran: When Context Encounters Notions".

the international community is now setting a new sustainable development goal that includes universal secondary education (UIS, 2015). The global situation on the status of out-of-school children are alarming;

The global number of out-of-school children of primary school age rose by 2.4 million between 2010 and 2013, reaching a total of more than 59 million(2015). 1 out of 11 (or 9%) of children of primary school age (usually 6 to 11 years) continue to be denied the right to education. A growing number of young adolescents are also out of school is a global concern with the global total reaching almost 65 million in 2013. Particularly, adolescents of lower secondary school age (usually 12 to 15 years) are almost twice as likely to be out of school as primary school-age children, with 1 out of 6 (17%) not enrolled (2015). Although relatively fewer girls enter primary school, they are less likely to drop out and more likely to pursue their education at the secondary level than boys, according to UIS data. A look at primary and lower secondary ages combined shows 1 out of 8 girls was out of school in 2013, compared to 1 out of 9 boys (UNESCO Institute for Statistics: 2015).

This concern comes as a grim reminder that the world has yet to fulfil its original promise to provide every child with a primary education by 2015. Further, there is a growing number of young adolescents - almost 65 million out of school young adolescents in 2013- are not paid much attention. Further, there is recent striking evidence that globally 41% or 24 million of all out-of-school children have never attended school and will probably never start if current trends continue.

About 20% of these children attended school in the past but could not continue their education, and 38% are likely to start late (UIS, 2015).

It is yet uncertain how the dropping out of formal education systems - specifically in secondary education - can be strategically adapted as a main agenda at global and national education policies and programs. It may be too early yet to welcome such attention on out of school related policies and programs among mainly multilateral organizations such as Global Partnership for Education (GPE), international organizations such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics (UIS)², however, raising such critical but undervalued issue itself can be a significant turning point at a global level of education.

Among countries have serious challenges in education, Myanmar, after a long periods of isolation and militarisation, now opened up a new national and educational reform with the emergence of the democratically elected government. Going through dramatic political, economic, social changes, since 2010, Myanmar has entered a period of intensive transition. Recent economic growth, an increase in manufacturing, and the resulted in the expansion in services. This has creating significant employment opportunities in urban areas (World Bank, 2016, p.3). Although in the last four years, the speed of Myanmar's economic shift, from agriculture toward industry and services, are sometimes not 'as fast as they should be' (Myanmar Times,

² For the detailed data on out of school policy and programs can be found in major multilateral agencies. Comprehensive quantitative data and analysis are all linked in All in School: The Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (allinschool.org).

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (unicef.org/education/bege_61659.html)

- UNESCO Institute Statistic (uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth)

- Global Partnership for Education (globalpartnership.org/focus-areas/out-of-school-children)

2016; New Lights of Myanmar, 2016), urbanisation and job creation is fast enough for average people of Myanmar. The political and economic transitions have seen the potential to significantly impact on labour and mobility patterns, especially for mobility of people, particularly making young population is on the move. Myanmar government as well as international organisations expect that increasing domestic migration flows to urban areas is likely to mark the beginning of a structural transformation away from a rural, agricultural economy toward a more urban, industrial and service-based economy (World Bank, 2016, p.6).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

One aspect of concern is unchanged approaches from the perspectives of increasing enrolment - attracting more children and youth to formal schools by providing appropriate economic, social, and educational *interventions*. It is often forgotten that there is a humble reality world neither achieved sending all children and adolescents to school, nor they could even retained them within a public education system after era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Global results on some of the impressive enrolment rates were achievements from China and India's recent national development and some Asian countries' recent expansions of universal primary education, which leave the rest of the countries' educational development progress in question.

I argue that global education's obsession on narrowed visions – increasing better education system for *All*. In reality, this *Enrolment Fever* has left us with serious social and educational syndrome in many developing countries that are mainly two-fold³. First, a number of developing countries find it extremely difficult to keep up with the rising demand for education from a school-age population that continues to grow. Second, particularly in developing countries, which a larger portion of education funding is intrinsically linked to global education agenda's priorities, there is systematic lack of policy, systems, and even

³ In recent years, increasing number of policy literatures have payed attention to challenges that education policy makers and program specialists and ways of finding a balance between increasing enrolment while at the same time maintaining and raising the quality of education. Cassandra Birchler and Katharina Michaelowa (201) have argued since 2010 that international donors have often put pressure on recipient governments to simply increase school enrolment. And so that policy may have been counterproductive since it might end up emphasising quantity to the detriment of quality (see the details of their arguments from the article, 'Making aid work for education in developing countries: an analysis of aid effectiveness for primary education coverage and quality (WIDER Working Paper, 2012/21)').

basic information in relations to young adolescents of lower secondary and upper school age, which lead to a lot of issues in relations to the issue of dropping out.

In turn, schooling in Burma is only compulsory for five years, and the majority of students drop out after this short period. As it is shown in various literature and data provided in the thesis, only about 50% of youth are reported to be enrolled in upper secondary education. This is not only in stark contrast with international standards as it is shown above, but also this figures deeply challenges the very functionality of current education systems. The astonishing number of out-of-school children and youth in contemporary Myanmar also reflects that this is not only current phenomenon, but it is related to deeply rooted in the past of Myanmar's political, economic, and social challenges form the past. Seeking the answer on why such a Phenomenon happens may start from understanding their multi-dimensional aspects of socio-cultural and educational realities which made them "leave" the free and compulsory formal schooling.

Are they *forced, pushed, or recommended* to leave or have they *chose* to leave formal schooling? What were the drivers of making such 'decisions'? Could the perspectives of these Quitters, Failed Ones, and Marginalized– to be introduced throughout this thesis – be able to provide honest portraits on the realities of Myanmar's crumbling public schools and what the meaning of public education system means? Society seems to be a process, rather than a thing – a dialectical process with successive phase of structure and communitas (Turner, 1969, p.203). Persons served of one in their functional day-to-day activities seen t in socio-cultural liminality. Structurally inferior aspire to symbolic structural superiority in ritual process, structurally aspire to symbolic communitas and undergo to achieve it (Turner, 1974, p.203).

1.3. Contents of the Dissertation

1.3.1. Purpose of the Study

This dissertation pays a close attention on the issues of dropping out of school. Rather than, looking at global or cross-regional view, this thesis will focus on a country case. By exploring primarily about the lives and learning of dropouts, both inside and outside of school in a specific country, it aims to explore more detailed narratives on *process and meaning of dropping out* – rather than the results. It explores that *first*, multidimensional drivers of youths' decisions on dropping out of school beyond economic issues; *second*, the pathways of dropping out of school from youth's experiences from the ethnographic and interpretative approach as well as interplays between schooling as a social institution and individual dropouts being evolved in between. And *third*, drawn from youth's life experiences within and outside of school, it re-theorise understanding socio-cultural and educational aspects of school dropouts and further the current phenomenon of Myanmar's inequality in education.

By rooted in social anthropology and influenced by critical sociology, Victor Turner's notions on Structure and Anti-Structure, Liminality and Communitas are re-visited in order to contextualise the shifting realities of life and learning of Yangon's migrant Youth workers. These theoretical lenses allowed to explore twelve research participants to that collected and analysed the recent life histories before and after dropping out of school as the basis for an understanding of their learning inside and outside of formal schooling. In a border context, drawn from youth's experiences of life and learning, it aims (i) to provide *theoretical and conceptual discussions* for the nature of school dropouts' problems and (ii) further provides *socio-cultural and education debates* for the

current phenomenon of Myanmar's inequality in education. This qualitative research, particularly intends (iii) *to seek the conceptualisation of social-cultural interplays* between schooling as a social institution and individual dropouts. The meaning of 'contextualizing', in this study, implies for the nature of mobility of space and time for individuals, who constantly straggles against and negotiated with formal schooling as a dominant social organisations for Myanmar's young people.

1.3.2. Research Questions

This study has a strong focuses on process, rather the results of school dropout: (i) *of dropping out (separation)*, (ii) *of being out of school and working (being in liminal space)* and (iii) *seeking the possibilities for integration (re-integration or separation)*. In order to advance the theoretical development of the subjects of liminality, while generating methodological and practical implications, the following research questions have been evolved throughout the research.

- First, beyond economic issues, what are the multidimensional drivers of Myanmar adolescents' decisions on dropping out of school?
- Second, how had the experiences of migrant youth workers changed in course of breaking away from their schools and living in Yangon? How are the interplays between schooling as a social institution and individual dropouts being evolved in between?
- Third, drawn from youth's life experiences within and outside of school, how this implications to contribute the theoretical and conceptual discussion for the nature of school dropouts and further the current phenomenon of Myanmar's inequality in education?

This dissertation is qualitative research , which is primarily about shifting life and learning from the perspectives of youths in contemporary Myanmar – more precisely, out of school adolescents in urban Yangon⁴. It explores sociocultural and educational experiences of migrant youths of Yangon, who are living in liminality – the space exemplify the cultural interplays between culture of public schools and lifelong learning, social experiences of urban Yangon and rural areas of Myanmar. In this sense, therefore, that I argue that it is their culture, interplays between poverty, lack of good quality learning and pressure of being benevolent to community and family members, which most effectively prepares some youths for migration and manual giving of their labour power.⁵ If there are some uneasy realities, in turn, may provide rich narratives and glimpse of clues for ongoing education reform for both inside of school and out of formal schools also, it aims to explore new conceptual ways of thinking about multi-faced liminality of youth in shifting social and cultural changes in a broader social context. It intends to provide different perspectives on inequality in education from the viewpoint of youths by theorizing on Myanmar’s local context of “being out-of-school”.

⁴ Transcription of Burmese is not fully standardized, as seen in the varying English transcriptions of Burmese names. As for the Romanisation of Myanmar spellings, there are limited number of literature are available such as *A Guide to the Romanization of Burmese* (Okell, 2002). In this research, at least for the names of locations and official titles of places, I have uses newly introduced government principals, unless they are specified with reference. In this research, Therefore, a few terms for regions and ethnic groups are used as follows: Yangon (formerly, Rangoon), Bagan (formerly Pagan), Ayeyawady (formerly Irrawaddy), Rakhine (formerly Arakhan) and Kayin (formerly and often now Karen). In some part of the research, both Ayeyawady and Ayeyarwady were used.

⁵ In the process of the effective preparations of making and re-making of youth workers, that there is an element of *Communal Condemnation* in contemporary culture of Myanmar’s migrant youths. In Chapter 6, the differences between *Communal Condemnation* and *Individual Self-damnation* (in Paul Willis’ term, 1977) are discussed as ways of taking one of low skilled jobs and not taking risks and ambitions for further education.

1.3.3. Organization of Study

The exposition of this dissertation is divided into mainly seven chapters. By introducing detailed methodological foundations in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and 4 raised the issues of out-of-school issues in global and national concerns in the field of international development and education. In the micro-subjective perspective, youth's perceptions are explored because their perceptions on schools and schooling, portray various facet of the sociocultural construction of reality. In the micro-objective perspective, youth's interaction with their peers are observed because their shifting perceptions of schools and schooling are shaped and influenced by social interactions. By applying ethnographic, interpretative approaches, which were explain in details, in Chapter 3, the thesis theoretical and conceptual foundations are influenced by critical sociology in issues around educational inequalities in border social context and rooted in theory of *Liminality* and *Communitas* of the youths' lives and learning from school of social anthropology.

In the Chapter 4, it focuses on challenges and issues of contemporary education, while briefly touching upon modern history of Myanmar's education, by giving a special attention the dropout Phenomenon. The chapters introduce the key historical development of Myanmar's education and analysis based on quantitative data and literature review from the most recent data. These chapters illustrate the details of youth experiences on shifting their lives and learning in relations to poverty, exams and failing as well as benevolence.

There is also in Chapter 5 and 6 an intervention into the discussion of youth's perceptions and social interactions for understanding their experiences within and outside of schools as well as their aspirations for further studies and success. This is the spine of the thesis. In the pursuit of these aims the thesis intend to make a contribution in a number of

areas. It explores the educational paradigm at the heart of roles of schooling, make a critique of quality of education and suggest some explanations for persistent failures of public education to provide good quality education or even ensure them they complete at least the level of basic education. In the conclusion, the last two chapters will develop in detail on the process of dropping out for Myanmar's Youth in Transition and how they life and learning changed in an ethnographic narrative telling. Then, the last chapter shall cultivate on both theoretical and conceptual findings of the research and discuss the future of youth outside of schools.

CHAPTER 2.

METHODOLOGY

2.1. Methodological Approach

2.1.1. Ethnographic Foundations

As an overarching methodology, an ethnographic approach has been embedded in every single phase. As it is primarily about a trial of immersion in the culture or social field of interest and spending a certain period with the subjects of the research (Oxford Dictionary of Anthropology, 2010) in order to observe and document the patterns of their lives from schools and their lives in the city. The ethnographic method will be applied to the study of a group of adolescents who are connected by shared similar interests, identity, and culture. The researcher will attempt to immerse herself in the culture or social field of interest and spend a period of three to four months with the subjects of the research in order to observe and document - as objectively as possible - their patterns of communication, the meaning they attach to particular cultural customs and the structure of their social relationships.

From 2011 to 2015, in conducting the research for this thesis I had continuous opportunity to lead, participate in, and to observe the process of policy and field research and projects mainly in the cities of Yangon, Mandalay, and the surrounding districts and villages. Not only was I fortunate to observe dramatic changes in governments and public spheres such as the historic institution of Yangon University - where I engaged in academic exchanges in the field of international development - but I was also able to witness dramatic economic, social and cultural changes in the streets of Yangon. These macro changes and

their impact on the everyday lives of the youth made me explore their areas of living, schooling, and learning in communities, employment and most of all their unique communal lives.

Throughout several field visits in February and May in 2016, I extensively explored Yangon's city centre - mainly from the 25th street to 40th street. Also, I visited industrial zones and in-transit trading areas such as Hlaing Tharya in the West, Hmowbi town in the far North, and South Okkkalapa in the East Yangon District. In all the districts, my visits to small restaurants (commonly called *Lapae Yeah Zein*, *teashops* in Myanmar and in this research they are referred to as *teashops*), grocery stores, convenience stores, food, and fruit stands on a daily basis provided me with more natural opportunities to be able to recognize the environments in more realistic terms.

From the second half of the year, studying the lives of youth living in the centre of Yangon city and in the middle of the Indian Quarter proved a turning point in my immersion into the lives of Yangon city people. Living with workers, migrants, and many of 'school dropouts' allowed me to merge their social lives and learning in out of school with these aspects of my own childhood, growing up in various shanty areas of Seoul. Similarly, in the street that I lived in Yangon was filled with all sorts of 'dropouts' from the age of 10 to 80 years old. Although they have not been directly quoted, observing and casually listening to their lives and learning experiences both inside and outside of formal schooling has shaped the direction of my research.

The process I chose for the research was intentionally proceeded the process rather old fashioned way: I conducted field observations in natural conditions in various locations at different times and days, developed rapport with some youths, visited youth leaders and organizations, wrote field notes, organized in-depth interviews, read and

re-read field notes, read literature and developed an analytical framework from the results of fields work and writing up. There was a clear intention to avoid quantitative research and dived into qualitative means for the research. There are some global and national statistics critical to illustrate the macro picture of the issues of Myanmar's education and drop out phenomenon in its narrower aspect - are presented throughout the research and utilized as a means of enriching the context of the studies of individual youth workers.

This is in part, because there were quantitative survey work in relation to the drivers of leaving school was previously conducted by a group of researchers as part of the CESR. But it is also due to the fact that contextualizing the process, the relationships and meanings of *how and why* dropping out of school in contemporary Myanmar education can only be observed, recorded and written in qualitative ways. Fundamentally, researching changes in individuals at a time of rapid change - in modernization, urbanization and socialization as well as in the cultural and educational values - cannot draw meaningful results by applying only quantitative methods (Lener, 1958, pp. 438 – 439).

Rather than calling this research the full scale of ethnography, I must clearly state that this research is only rooted in ethnographic foundations. Regardless of my five years of engagement with Myanmar and a year-long research process in Yangon, due to my lack of language ability, there were clear limitations in conducting a full scale of ethnography. Understanding the nuances of language in language-related interactions will hopefully improve as my language skills develop in the near future.

2.1.2. Yangon as Transitional Space

These dramatic changes are visible in all corners of the City of Yangon, providing opportunities that may lead to significant changes in labour and mobility of the landless and land-poor workers and the family members who compose a large part of the rural workforce. While international migration has always been prevalent in Myanmar⁶, there is growing attention from international organisations (World Bank, 2016, p.3; IOM, 2016, p.25; ILO, 2015, p. 2016) in regards to domestic migration playing a powerful role as catalyst for economic transformation and contributing to economic growth. Just like Mawlamyine and Hpa-An in the central region, Yangon and its surroundings, including are the most popular destinations in the central and southern region for male and female domestic migrants, especially those from the Ayeyarwady area. Yangon, it is, by far, the primary location of choice. According to joint study from World Bank, it is reported that the 58 percent of migrants from Ayeyarwady move to Yangon ⁷(World Bank, 2016, p.56).

While the time and space of liminality for urban youth in Yangon were being researched throughout the year, approaches on urban ethnography were also evolving. There were unexpected encounters with urban anthropology. In placing the youth at the centre of the

⁶ See the details of dramatic economic changes of Myanmar from the 2015 report from World Bank. *Myanmar: Empowering People for Inclusive Growth; Myanmar Country Partnership Framework for the Period 2015-2017*.

⁷ According to the recent publication from World Bank Myanmar, *'A Country on the Move: Domestic Migration in Two Regions of Myanmar'*, Yangon is the most popular destination for both men and women, 'featuring particularly prominently for migrants from Ayeyarwady, with 58 percent of migrants heading to Yangon compared with 24 percent from Magway (2016, p.83)'. Yangon is especially popular 'for female migrants from Ayeyarwady, with three-quarters of women choosing to move there. Only 9 percent of Ayeyarwady migrants relocate internationally, with the vast majority being men. Malaysia, Korea, and Thailand are the major destinations for international migrants from Ayeyarwady (2016, p.84)'.

analysis, cities and the sociocultural experiences and practices of urban dwellers were investigated in relation to the larger socioeconomic and cultural contexts (Scott, J. in *A Dictionary of Sociology*, 2014).

This study of the city with its complex social institutions – schools, families, work in this research, and the diversity of lifeways, challenged holistic approaches to culture and cross-cultural generalizations (Lutters and Ackerman, 1996). A focus on structures and patterns of social inequality yielded critical analyses of migration, labour, class, race, ethnicity, poverty, and violence. Social and spatial organization and placement and displacement were also informed by processes of industrialization, deindustrialization, and neoliberalism in a local urban sphere that was linked to a broader transnational and global political economy (Lutters and Ackerman, 1996).

The relationship between the structure of the city, the cultural apparatus of society, and the transformation of urban settlements was then tied to an established political economy, resulting in a range of cityscapes and socio-cultural spaces that encompass the industrial, decaying, and neoliberal, environmental, and militarized city. In this context, it is natural to develop such connection with urban anthropology while conducting daily field work in the heart of the city of Yangon, which, while still religious and traditional is at the same time developing into an industrial, highly commercial, and partly militarized city. The liminality of the city itself, reopened only a few years after the democratic election in 2010 and the removal of US sanctions only two years ago, has created a truly unique space for researching individual lives and learning.

2.1.3. Yangon's Migrant Youth Workers

The critical focus of research is conducted as natural observation and semi-structured interviews regarding the lives and learning experiences of a core of twelve out-of-school youth in two sites and surrounding areas. They consist of four distinct groups. First, most of the youth interviewed are from the Burma/Myanmar ethnic group and Buddhist, except for one Christian boy and one Muslim girl. It is important to note that the most of the girls and boys are ethnically Burmese (Barma or Burman). Except for one Muslim girl, their mother tongue is Myanmar or Burmese. Myanmar is known as a 'salad bowl' multicultural country, rather than a melting pot of nationals from 135 recognised groups. (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016). These 135 groups include the 'major national ethnic races' of Bamar, Dhan, Mon, Kayin (formerly known as and still often called the Karen), Kyah, Chin, Kachin and Rakhine.⁸

Second, all of boys and girls were from outside of Yangon and mostly from the central region of Myanmar, except one boy who is originally from Ayeyawady, but lived most of his life in Yangon at the time of interview. In other words, the participating youths are the subjects of this research are all domestic migrants, who refers to voluntary migrants within Myanmar⁹. They are more likely to become

⁸ From the political perspective, the language of Myanmar is 'Myanmar language' and the people of the country are 'Myanmar people', a term used in some official documents. This research adopted Burmese or Myanmar, for language and Bama or Myanmar, for ethnicity. However, there is a changing reality among the youths that I studied: in conversation, most of them referred to their mother tongue as Myanmar (not Burmese), to their ethnic group as Myanmar, and the name of the country as *Myanmar-Naingan*, *Myanmar-Pyi*.

⁹ The term, 'voluntary migrants' needs more academic debates in a global and national context. Particularly, 60 percent of participants in the study are youths, are under the legal age of full employment unless the government permission and 100 percent of participants in the study are dropped out of school when they were under the legal age,

a permanent migrants who intended to live in Yangon for a longer period, rather than when a return to the village of origin is planned after the initial three months. The basic overview of their age, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, occupation and place of origin appear on the table below.

Table 2. 1.

Participants of the Study: Twelve Out-of-school Youths

no	age	sex	occupations	ethnicity	religion	language	hometown	G ¹⁰
1	17	M	construction workers	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Bago	6
2	18	F	shopkeeper at grocery store	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Ayeyawady	5
3	20	F	shopkeeper in traditional market	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Bagan	4
4	19	M	shopkeeper convenience store	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Yangon	10
5	15	M	waiter at teashop	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Hinthada	4
6	15	M	waiter at teashop	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Thanlhyun	4
7	20	F	shopkeeper at shop	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Bago	10
8	16	F	shopkeeper at shop	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Shew Bo	10
9	20	F	worker at tea shop	Burmese /Myanmar	Christian	Burmese /Myanmar	Bagan	5
10	17	M	cashier at convenient store	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Ayeyawady	10
11	17	M	cashier at convenience store	Burmese /Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Magway	10
12	17	F	maid	Indian	Muslim	Burmese /Myanmar	Dahla	KG

more careful terms should be adopted on what is ‘voluntary and ‘what is ‘involuntary’ migrations.

¹⁰ G stands for the grade left school. KG represents Pre-primary school - part of formal basic education in Myanmar.

Some of the boys I met and discussed various issues on construction sites, who had to come to Yangon for less than six months as a form of seasonal migration are excluded from the primary data. Also, there were a group of short term seasons migrants in the construction sites that were excluded from the primary data. They had come to Yangon during the off-peak harvest and planting seasons in their home villages and intended to go back at the end of their short term contracts and therefore their nature of living in Yangon was significantly different from the topic of the study.

Third, they all come from central regions of Myanmar¹¹ - Ayeyawady, Bago, Magway and Bagan, which are known as the dry zones of the country. The commonalities of participating youths - their ethnic, religious and hometown origins - are not intended and designed from the research planning. Rather, this is more likely to be due to the fact that domestic migration has been increasing from areas such as Ayeyawady, Bago and Magway. Recent quantitative research findings show that the central regions are home to large numbers of Myanmar's rural poor⁴ and that rural poverty is the main driver of internal migrations⁵.

Fourth, the research highlighted that all the young people working as casual labourers in urban areas tend to work in restaurants, grocery stores, construction sites. Since works such in constructions, garment-

¹¹ In the regard, internal labour migration and trafficking survey report is, for the first time conducted. For the details, not specifically focused on the issues of youth, however, the detailed information on contexts and patterns in internal labour migration such as geographic patterns in migration, recruitment conditions, Working conditions, Occupational safety and health, living conditions can be found in this report. Regardless of the importance, there are a lack of academic and policy studies are conducted on the issues in relations to learning, training and formal education system. See the International Labour Organization Liaison Officer for Myanmar's 'Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour'

factories and other manufacturing are available, also a large number of casual labourers in Yangon tend to work in restaurants, construction, and in other non-agricultural, low-skilled casual labour. Although short term visitors and seasonal migrants are excluded as a primary source, all the boys and girls participating in the study are not so-called 'full time staff'. They are defined as a casual labour in service industry and as low-skilled casual labour in other words. In practice, they were hired for casually and usually paid by weekly or monthly. The job description of 'casual' given to their work was confirmed by employer shop owners and managers during conversations in the workplaces. Only two were shopkeepers. The range of their daily wages were varied from 800 kyat (80 Cents, USD) to 7200 kyat (6 \$ USD). Except for two who were not sure how and when they got paid, most of them were paid irregularly. In the cases of two of the participants, their families were in debt to the business owners so the young boy and girl were paying off their families' debts by working for the owners.

2.1.4. Personal Rites of Passages

This *emic* perspective in conceptualizing the current changes of the bustling city of Yangon made my participant observation much more compelling. Since the ethnographic approach is primarily about a trial immersion in the culture or social field of interest and time spent with the subjects of the research, I have moved my residence from Seoul to the city centre of Yangon in order to observe and document the process and patterns of my subjects' lives from their school lives to and including their lives in the city. In this context, I pursued that this research seeks to explore the patterns of their lives from their schools - as social institutions - and their lives in the city - as the space of liminality.

The journey was not complete by the time I had finished my visits to several key locations inside of Yangon and surrounding areas in May 2016. In some ways, it had begun from the beginning once again. Because both the intensity of field research experiences, as well as my own personal changes – from a strategy development and evaluation specialist in the field of aid and international development to taking a more academic path - were quite drastic, I accepted the active period of field work with a lull for reflection. While I as a researcher was going through a transitional period, the thesis evolved into a holistic piece of writing about the people in question and people in transition. While observing Yangon's youth in transition, I found myself also being 'betwixt and between' different spaces, locations, and life stages.

Further, as a social anthropology trained researcher, it became more sensible to adopt mixed styles of research writing, combining the analytical with the descriptive, unlike the very descriptive, interpretative and sometimes postmodern writings of cultural anthropology, which largely focus on symbols and values (although the boundary is increasingly blurred). Thus, in the literature reviews in chapter 3 and 4, some of the empirical evidence from previous quantitative national and special surveys results is included. Mixed both analytical and descriptive writing will only allow me to appropriately capture the process, interrelationships, and meanings of conducting this fieldwork that fulfils my own academic ritual of passage.

2.2. Methods

The research process was conducted according to the general directions rooted in social anthropology with ethnographical and urban anthropological touches. Five different methods were undertaken; (i) literature reviews; (ii) field observations in a few major locations in Yangon city; (iii) individual naturalistic interviews of the young people at their workplaces; (iv) interviews with education experts and leaders; and (v) focus group interviews in a community centre for youth education.

Since my personal and professional engagement with Myanmar had already started in August 2011, my observations about society and education were already fundamentally influenced from the period before my professional experiences prior to 2016. Before examining the details of the methodology, it is important to mention that this research is fundamentally based on an ethnographic approach focusing on semi-structured interviews and observations of twelve out-of-school youths. As an integral part of natural and over observations, additional in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and interviews of eight education specialists and youth leaders were conducted.

2.2.1. Research Setting

As the Yangon Region consists of 4 districts, 45 townships, 743 wards, 619 village tracts, and 2,126 villages, naturally this research naturally, did not include all parts of the city. Yangon city and surrounding areas include city centres for business and commercial districts, but also vast residential areas, small and medium-sized industrial areas as well as small and medium business centres. In the process of participant observations and preliminary field visits, two

areas – one construction site, two commercial areas and one traditional market area- were chosen for observations and in-depth interviews.

- (i) Commercial areas around Sule Pagoda and surrounding areas in the 29th to 36th streets - upper and middle blocks
- (ii) Traditional market area on the East Gate and People’s Park near the Main Gate of Shwedagon Pagoda

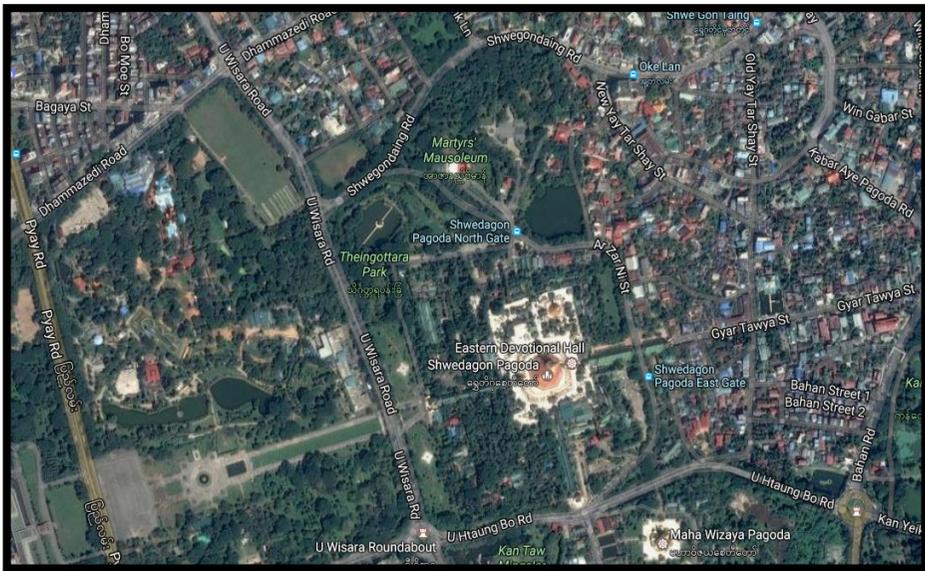


Figure 2. 1. Research Sites – Shwedagon and Surrounding Areas (Source: Maps Retrieved from Google Maps, December, 2016)

In several locations such as in teashops and restaurants, there was overt participant observation, in which the subjects of interest to the researcher were made aware of the researcher’s aims and purpose before the period of participant observation commences. As the observations occurred once or twice a week in a location over a possible two to three months, my activities could be immersed in the lives of research subjects, young school dropouts, while at the same time allowing me, as a researcher, to maintain the professional distance needed for adequate

and objective recording of data. Despite the fact that the research continued throughout the year, the specific events described in this research are all held in May and between October and December 2016. The experiences and events described in the subjects' formal schooling were based on their memories not later than 2007, except for the stories of illiterate Mo Mo, who could only attend pre-primary school education. All observed events and interviews were conducted by the researcher unless specified. All quoted comments and dialogues are excerpts from official documents or from interviews and conversations recorded with the consent of the young people and their counsellors.

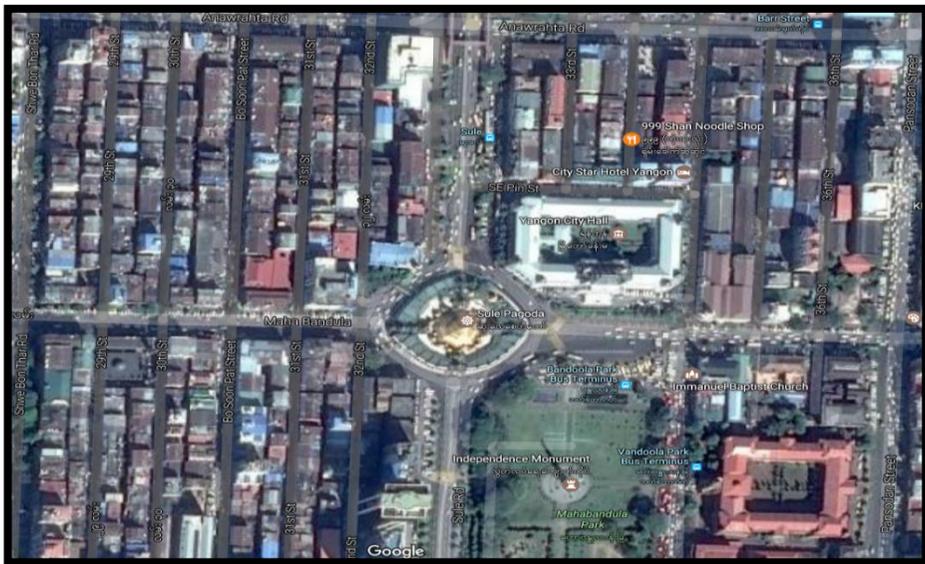


Figure 2. 2. Field Research Sites – Sule Pagoda and Surrounding Areas (Source: Maps Retrieved from Google Maps, December, 2016)

2.2.2. Research Design and Process

Natural and Overt Participant Observation

Methods of observation include overt or/and overt participant observation and various forms of non-participant observation. Generally considered to be a core component of the ethnographic method, since

early February of 2016, I started observing six locations such as gourmet factories, restaurants, as well as monastery schools. After visiting to Hlaing Tharya, Hmowbi town and South Okkkalapa, doing research and meeting youth in the centre of the Yangon city between the 29th street to 36th street become more feasible, rather than areas with factory workers, due to possibility of receiving the consents from their guidance and youth themselves. After conducting a few natural observations, the participant observation became "overt", in which the subjects of interest to the researcher are made aware of the researcher's aims and purpose before the period of participant observation commences. As I was in each location at least once a week in a location over the three months, I can immerse in the activities and lives of research subjects, while at the same time able to maintaining the kind of professional distance that allowed me an adequate and objective recording.

As mentioned, this research is fundamentally rooted in the interpretative social anthropology approach and largely influenced by critical sociology and biographical methods. It was adopted as a means of recording the aspects of the subjects' social lives, often omitted from the more conventionally written historical record. Biographical methods were applied in order to collect the spoken accounts and personal reflections on the subjects' pathways of dropping out of school, comparing their lives before and after public school education. Applying biographic methods often tends to have a particular interest in oral sources for what they reveal about history and memory. Thus, oral histories are not regarded as straightforward representations of the past but 'as a means of examining how individual narratives are socially and culturally constituted as part of an on-going explanatory and relational process (British Library, 2015, p.13). The importance of the oral tradition 'as a means of creating and maintaining shared memories,

understandings and identities inform the approach of oral historians' (British Library, 2015, p.13), who aim to encourage natural narratives from their respondents and this unique characteristics of methods provided me detailed spoken accounts and personal reflections on the pathways of twelve youths.

In-depth Interviews on Youths' Life and Learning

Although some of the youths participating in the research were more than 17 years old, consent to their participation in the research by the youth counsellors had to be obtained. False names were used in order to protect the privacy of research participants, their friends and colleagues at the workplace. Also, the names of the people at the workplace such as friends and colleagues of the research participants' (often described as brothers or sisters in conversation), and their managers and bosses (often described as brothers, sisters during the dialogue). Initially, the biographical methods was used for initial sixteen individuals sharing similar school dropout paths, but this was later narrowed down to fourteen. Adopted as a means of recording the aspects of social life those are often omitted from the conventional historical record. Biographical methods were applied in order to collect the spoken accounts and personal reflections in recorded interviews on the subjects' pathways of dropping out of school, and comparing their before lives and after their lives in the wider context of space, times and place.

A final reason for applying biographic methods is because I have a specific interest in oral sources of the youths, who are the newly emerging group of people in transitional society and for what they reveal about their own history and memory of schooling. The method challenges the rather simplistic methodological and theoretical presupposition in international development and education-related literature – that of analysing the status of children and youth based on

their age, location, ethnicity and regions in relation to their poverty. In this regard, new scholarship in international development and education can be methodologically realized by oral statements of persons, who are not regarded as straightforward representations of the past but ‘as a means of examining how individual narratives are socially and culturally constituted as part of an on-going explanatory and relational process (Botterill, 2015).’ The importance of the oral tradition ‘as a means of creating and maintaining shared memories, understandings and identities informs the approach (Botterill, 2015)’, which aims to encourage natural narratives from the youth themselves. As natural and overt observations continued, semi-structured interviews were developed with biographical interviews the basis of the methodology. The number of biographic elements included depended on the depth and length of the interviews.

In the final draft of the research two of the subjects were omitted: a young man (a 21-year-old Burmese Buddhist ice cream seller from Shew Bo) and young woman (a 22-year-old Burmese Buddhist factory worker originally from outside Yangon) because of their age and the year they left school. More importantly, their comments and social interactions verified the conclusion that these two older participants needed to remain only as a part of the conversation because they had positioned themselves as older brother and sister providing active feedback regarding the younger participants’ perceptions of learning inside and outside of school.

2.2.3. Youth in the Learning Environment

Additional case studies made over a slightly later period of research compromised a group of infamous Yangon’s teashop boys. The longer the naturalist and semi-structured interviews continued, the more the youths started noticing that I, ‘the teacher from Yangon University’

or the ‘smiley Korean lady who is always asking questions’ was interested in education. Some of the youths then mentioned that they had heard about classes with Myanmar teachers and of boys attending language schools to learn English, Japanese and Korean for work overseas. The schools were paid for in advance by their ‘uncles’ (The critical role of these men in the social development of the young men’s learning and determining of their futures would be revealed later in the research and will be discussed.) Two youths I met during routine participant observations mentioned night classes held somewhere in their workplaces and known to be ‘only for the boys’. The youths expressed envy of those able to learn because ‘they have a lot of friends and kind uncles’.

The unexpected comments - from the boys who are working at teashops near Sule Pagoda - about those who ‘must be learning something at the community centres’ and ‘study with ease because they can study at their own workplaces’ led me to explore the learning activities for youth organized by Myanmar’s local education organisations. Meetings with Myanmar local education organisations and with youth in their learning environments developed in semi-structured ways. My aim of a focus group, which was not intended at the beginning of the research - was to provide an arena in which interested youth members described and discussed aspects of their beliefs, perceptions, and culture, and their personal experiences in and outside of school. These group discussions were to be guided by the interviewer.

Focus groups had distinct advantages. They included group interviews and discussion organized around a specific topic with a subset of the group of interest to the researcher, conducting a semi-structured. This Focus Group interviews (FGIs) was an invaluable

opportunities to grasp more specific interactions of learners who are out of school, while working during the day, which were able and for the researcher to receive deeper understanding regarding differences between learning at formal schools and learning in an out of school environment. Further, some language limitation throughout individual interviews could be recorded by both the researcher and the NGO in a more official manner.

Table 2.2.

In-depth Interviews of Two OOSY

no	age	sex	occupations	ethnicity	religion	language	hometown	left
1	19	M	Shopkeeper	Chin	Buddhism	Chin	Hakahr	G 7
2	20	M	Shopkeeper	Chin	Buddhism	Chin	Hakahr	G 8

Table 2.3.

Focus Group Interviews of Ten OOSY

no	age	jobs	ethnicity	religion	language	hometown	left school	joined
1	20	Cook	Burmese	Muslim	Burmese	Magway	G6	9months
2	16	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G5	6 months
3	16	waiter	Burmese	Buddhism	Burmese	Ayeyawady	G2	9 months
4	18	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G4	2 months
5	16	Cook	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G9	1.5 year
6	18	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G10	4 months
7	17	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G7	4 months
8	21	waiter	Kayin	Christian	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G8	1.5 year
9	17	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G10	1.5 year
10	10	waiter	Burmese	Buddhism	Burmese	Yangon	G5	7 months

From among the many organizations in Yangon working with children and youth. I have chosen to observe and conduct an interview with MyME. This is a young and dynamic NGO, which does not necessarily work in similar patterns as other international non-governmental organizations or other local civil society organisations in

Myanmar. The group has been working exclusively with street and working children and youth in unique ways, such as facilitating learning rather than teaching, emphasizing roles of leadership, adaptation of technologies, and flexible learning. Even more interestingly, the physical facilities for learning opportunities are provided inside or next to the workplaces, thus ensuring that that the youth do not have to quit their jobs while learning with the organisation.

The focus group discussion, which took place literally in a tea house where the youth were working. Focus group interviews benefitted from a variety of social and cultural elements, enabling progressive dialogue among the group members and highlighting areas of common interest that might not be raised in a one-to-one interview. Such topics included their relationships with each other, the individual and collective processes of migration and mobility, and being a part of family and community.

The group characteristics were vastly different from the boys and girls in ‘naturalistic setting’, which consists of all Buddhist except one Muslim and one Christian. This individuals from the focus group from the organisation consisted of three Burmese and seven Kayin ethnic group. Unlike in the twelve individuals in ‘naturalistic setting’, in the focus group at the local NGO, the seven Kayin boys are notable. The seven Kayin youths in the focus group at the local NGO are notable. They are migrants from the central dry zone of Myanmar, different from subgroups of Karen in border areas who are better known in the west. These Buddhist Kayin often show cultural similarities with Buddhist Barman and more than their Christian kind of Kayin. It was visible that all of the Kayin youths were Buddhists in the focus group.

Again, in the process of final analysis, two young men aged 28 and 31 respectively, who were working as waiters in the same tea houses

and attending the same evening classes - were omitted because of their age and their social relationships. In the process of re-analysis, their positions in the learning environments clearly stood out in that they were critical of others' perceptions of learning inside and outside of school. Therefore, the two were excluded from the list of group members, but their interactions with the others remained in the observation notes and thus in the narratives that are recorded in Chapter 6.

2.2.4. Education Specialists and Youth Leaders

Conducting semi-structured interviews with eight education specialists, NGOs, youth leaders and entrepreneurs at the forefront of education projects in the field also provided me with critical, honest and often humble perspectives on the education system. Interviewing these fascinating, critical, and dedicated Myanmar people from October to November 2016 opened unexpected doors.

Table 2.4.

Interviews of Education Specialists and Youth Leaders in Myanmar

No	Name	Organization
1	U Peter	Agency fir Education of the Poor Rural Youth
2	U Myo Win	Smile Education and Development Foundation
3	Daw Tin Myat Htet	Myanmar Youth in Action
4	U Thant Thaw Kang	Daw Khin Kyi Foundation
5	U Tim Aye Hardy	myME
6	Three young Entrepreneurs	Youth Social Force
7	Daw May Pearl Thwe	Smile Education Training Centre
8	U Tin Maung Win	KMSS - Myanmar Caritas

The initial aim of the research was narrowed down to analysing the relationship between *school* – the structure as a social institution and

individuals – the oppressed or marginalized agency. However, after including interviews with leaders of eight different civil society organisations, the research became richer in terms of its historical background as well as the cultural aspects of learning and its relationship to the young people's shifting locations, identities and new learning or lack of learning opportunities after being out of school.

Lastly, literature reviews were continued at all stages from the very beginning of the research. From 2014 to 2015, extensive studies continued on the topics of structure, institutions, schools and their links with inequality. In 2016, observation and interviews assumed greater depth and took unexpected turns. Literature reviews evolved into an understanding of the cultures of schooling and of learning as well as an exploration of the young people's locations and spaces of learning.

2.2.5. Trustworthiness, Reliability and Validity

Holistic Research Methods

A variety of qualitative methods were applied at every stage of the research. Based on the nature of the topic, I intentionally did not focus on quantitative methods and analysis. Three main groups were interviewed. First, in-depth interviews as semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight intellectuals and education leaders. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve Out-of-school Youths, who had not participated in any formal or semi-formal education and learning while in Yangon. Third, focus group interviews were conducted with ten out-of-school youths who were receiving semi-formal learning opportunities in the evening from a local NGOs specializing in working with out-of-school children and youth.

It is critical that all of these methods were designed as part of validating various elements of findings as multi-dimensional methods.

For ensuring multi-dimensional context of their lives and learning more systematically, there were several methods were utilized. During the field research, the research locations for the observations and interviews were pre- and post- visited. All of the interviews were orally translated consecutively, not simultaneously during the actual conversations and interviews. Except for the interviews with eight education and community leaders and experts conducted in English, all of the remaining interviews were conducted in Burmese and orally translated subsequent to the actual conversations and interviews and not simultaneously. All transcripts were written for formal interviews and core informal conversations from Burmese into English. Observation notes describing the circumstances, non-verbal elements of respondents such as body languages and their social relations with others around them were written up after each interview, providing critical aspects for later research analysis.

Consent in the Process of Research

Various consents were received for the purpose from various participants. The most important and strict consents were prepared in regards to the twelve youths for the participant observations and recorded conversations. The consents were from both youth themselves and their guidance. The components of consent for participating research included ; (i) purpose of this study, (ii) benefits of the research, (iii) research procedure, (iv) methods, (v) risks and discomforts, (vi) confidentiality, (vii) rights and (viii) further questions. A simpler version of oral consents were discussed and received from education, youth leaders, and a focus group participants. Not only for ensuring appropriate process for the consents from participants was important, but more importantly, having the code of ethics of research process was crucial throughout entire process. A general principles from the Code of

Ethics from the American Anthropological Association (AAA), was a critical basis for the whole research process¹². More importantly, more detailed guides were adopted in this study was the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA)¹³. Among the criteria in the guidelines, advance consent, relations with and responsibilities towards research participants, and responsibilities to the wider society were particularly relevant to this study.

Interview Language and Translation Guidelines

All qualitative research has both advantages and challenges. In the process of designing, conducting, translating and validating, interpreting and writing up all the interviews, there were certain procedural and methodological challenges. The first was the issue of language and translation. Two Burmese - majors in anthropology with honours - were hired as translators. One or two Burmese translators sat in on all the field interviews except for the regular natural and overt field observations that I took alone in a quieter manner. In terms of quality assurance of the translation, after passing two sets of assessments (a written test in English–Burmese translation and an oral interview in English), three translators were trained in the basic guidelines of the American Translator Associations (ATA) in the first a few sessions by the researcher. Each week the quality of oral translation was assessed for continuous improvement. But more importantly, for every single interview, there were both pre-discussions on the style of interviews and

¹² Details are available from the AAA ethics blog in the American Anthropological Association (AAA). It is important to note that version 2009 is applied in this study. <http://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1960&navItemNumber=665>

¹³ Details are available from the Ethics page as Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice from the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA) <https://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml>.

certain critical terms and vocabulary and post-discussions in order to understand and confirm cultural or linguistic findings. These post-discussions would include items such as context and content that might have taken place during the interview.

Ensuring Validity of Translation

The second challenge was that of enhancing the validity of translated data. In embracing the international nature of education and development in Myanmar and the fact that research is conducted in multiple languages, the issues of valid data are critical. While on-site research was ensured through oral translation, two methods were applied to ensure the validity of written translations. The first involved revision by the professional Burmese national English professor, who was a long-time colleague based in Yangon. In addition, the technique of random reverse translation by a third party was undertaken when there were key transcripts, in particular key conversations quoted in the research. The reverse translation for critical data was particularly helpful for ensuring validity of translation while considering particular attention to sensitive translation issues between English and Myanmar.

Field Advisors

One of the biggest challenge was to make conducting and analysing the field data more locally appropriate. To this end, a groups of Myanmar professors, provided me countless advices. Among numerus experts, Dr. Daw Mya Mya Khin, Dr. Daw Than Pale and Dr. Daw Aye ye Aung, who are highly respected academics who have conducted research about people of Myanmar more than twenty years as well as long-term colleagues who have researched and built research centre at the Department of Anthropology, University of Yangon. Throughout the consultations with Myanmar senior professors, research ethics and professional but culturally acceptable ways of researching

were introduced. These included the appropriate usage of language and etiquette regarding contact between men and women, permission and guidance being sought by the researcher from elders and counsellors with regard to body language and gestures, particularly the placing of feet and hands. But even more importantly, the advisors, and the researchers and tutors from Yangon University opened the door for the researcher in formulating the concept of *benevolent decision making* of educational and life choices by interpreting the concept of *Sedana, Dana, Anade. Ana. Hpon, Auwza* (explains in detail in chapter 6). The table in Annex illustrates the basic flows of field research and the data collection process. Although it appears neatly summarised in the table, the process of research was dialectic, involving conducting the literature review and field research, and writing up and then went to back to the literature review again and again.

2.3. Facing Dilemmas in Fieldwork

There are constant dilemmas every day in field work and even more in conducting studies in foreign countries. Researching in developing countries is always difficult due to a lack of proper research infrastructure, high cost for research, social and cultural differences and the vast amount of government red tape impacting the granting of official and cultural approvals.

2.3.1. The Less Visible Youth

The most predictable and also the most fundamental dilemma concerned the *Less Visible Youth*. Most of my naturalistic interviews were conducted in various parts of Yangon apart from the industrial zone, where I was not able to obtain the research permission. Hopefully, this will be granted in the near future. Another problem encountered was that

of initiating conversations with young girls and female adolescents, as consent from their counsellors was extremely difficult to obtain. Most workplaces of young girls and female adolescents are in more private and even intimate realms - other people's living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and laundries - so contact with these subjects in the public realm of the workplace was less easily available than with the youths.

It required three times more time and effort to observe and interview the appropriate number of girls in their workplaces than it did with the youths. Even when interviewed, they were often quiet or else their opinions were often undermined by the group of aunties and sisters present. The contributions of these others were also recorded, but what does this situation indicate about the position of the young female migrant working in Myanmar? As mentioned, it was extremely difficult to isolate the interviewee's opinions without getting constant comments about her statements from the people around her. With the increasing number of interviews, it became evident that their social interactions with their aunties, older sisters and peers indeed represents the reality of life for these girls, the details of which are described in the chapter on "benevolent sons and daughters". However, it must be stated that gendered communication, education and learning were included as critical aspects of this research and should be further explored in the future.

2.3.2. Confronting Cultural Norms as a Female Researcher

When research, investigation and work are focused on 'the Other's' villages, communities, schools, hospitals and countries, the position of the female researcher is dramatically impacted by the local context. In carrying out monitoring and evaluating development and education programs in Africa and Asia over the past ten years, this researcher

suffered having stones thrown at her face, discrimination, ridicule, harassment and even exclusion as a woman – unbearable and painful humiliations for ‘aid worker’ in international development. Urgent change is needed, both systematic and cultural: these challenges still persist in the everyday lives of female international development and aid researchers and humanitarian workers. It must be said however, that in 2016 the discrimination was felt more subtly and religious doctrine was more authoritative in 2016. The subtle teaching of appropriate etiquette started with learning respectful positioning of the feet, appropriate handshakes and even not ordering a single pint of beer in the respectful public locations. Since Buddhists consider the head the most sacred part of the human body and feet the dirtiest, one’s feet must be placed or not placed in certain positions and directions according to the venue.

Sometimes interviews got out of hand, partly because of the subject matter of the interview questions and partly because of my gender. For example, when interviewees went into detail about their initiation ceremonies and the nights out smoking, drinking and their lucky encounters with street girls, the conversations became quite wild. Another reason might be what could be interpreted as the researcher’s inappropriate behaviour, such as drinking a beer on a very hot day with the boys I regularly chatted with. Unfortunately, the ‘uncles’ of the boys showed up and started bragging about their own drinking, taking drugs and having fun with girls on the streets, which made the translator burn with mortification and anger. I realised that the whole conversation was for the benefit of the foreign woman drinking a glass of beer in public next to a construction site. It was not the obvious sexist comments and gestures that bothered me, but the responses of the most polite boys I have known who talked about their mothers and younger sisters in a way

that disturbed me. When they joined in with their ‘uncles’ - this was the moment that I needed to show respect for local culture and etiquette. Despite wishing to acquire more data, one look at the translator’s face when they started making rude jokes told me it was time for a confrontation.

2.3.3. Key Informants in Aid and International Development

Another dilemma concerned key informants and ultimately impacted the research for this thesis. My prior experience of working in international aid and development influenced the speed with which I was able to set up and formulate interviews with key informants such as major donors and organizations working in the general education sector in Yangon. Unfortunately, the dialogues and interviews were often diverted into the aid framework discussion. In February and May for example, some of the interviews were largely dominated by possible ‘education project items’ and discussion was diverted into possible funding scales and OOSC feasibility, rather than dealing with the more difficult and complex issues of Myanmar youth. As a result, the initial period of interviews narratives in February and May were excluded in the main thesis, even though the interviews enriched me about the understanding the issue, I had intentionally focused on Myanmar education specialists, groups and NGOs that are not associated with projects with Korea or the organisations that are funded by the Korean government's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). This also may explain the absence of works of major INGOs, UN agencies and Korean NGOs that are relatively well known in Myanmar.

CHAPTER 3.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Structure, Schooling and Educational Inequality

In Myanmar's rapidly changing context, young boys and girls who have dropped out of secondary schools in contemporary Myanmar are living in a transitional time and space of change. While still attending school, it was evident that their lives were heavily determined by the structure that was 'given'. At the same time, stratified educational inequalities impinged on their lives and those of their families, on some more directly than on others. However, once they dropped out of school and arrived in Yangon as young migrant workers, their lives and learning opportunities dramatically changed. This chapter will review the literature that defines not only the past and current studies on schooling and educational inequalities but also theoretical and conceptual literature around liminality of communal and individual changes. The links between *Outer Process of Liminality* and *Internal Process of Liminality* will then be established and discussed, and a theoretical framework for this dissertation presented in order to construct a concrete conceptual framework and hypotheses for the research.

3.1.1. Sociology of Schooling and Educational Inequalities

One way to conceive of this context is to say that individuals carry out their lives in a social structure. In this regard it was natural to explore the perspective of critical sociology since formal educational institutes in many countries are often utilized as a means for perpetuating class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities (Acker, 2006), rather than

focusing on developing systems of formal schooling of high quality and providing for the needs of society by preparing students for their later roles in their communities and in society in general. At this juncture, traditions of critical sociology provide some critical perspectives on root causes of inequalities in education, contextualizing formal schooling in the so-called developed world as well as in developing countries. Apart from income, ethnic, and gender inequalities, the 'educational heritages' - which still linger from colonial times and the more recent authoritarian governments - are still heavily present in the modern education system.

How is the role of the school depicted in the literature on the subject? Contextualizing roles and functions of schools and schooling from the production and reproduction theories such as those found in the writings of Radicals and Marxists has changed conventional wisdom about the roles of schooling. These theories challenge the notion that schools were undoubtedly established in order to reduce the widening economic, social and political gaps between blacks and whites, workers and middle class, men and women. Lawrence Cremin's *Transformation of the School* can be seen as one of the classic works that challenges assumptions about education for the lower classes, working class students, blacks, and Hispanics.

Samuel Bowles (1976) revealed the role of schools in reinforcing hierarchy, thus achieving the opposite of the egalitarianism. Hebert Gintis (1976) explored the unequal faces of schooling in capitalist America. Michael Apple (1982) focused on ideology and curriculum, showing that schools were essentially undemocratic. Further, Jerome Karabel (1979) emphasized the fact that education institutes essentially mirror the relations of dominance found in the workplace. Schools are instruments of social reproduction, lacking a theory for concrete social relationships in the classroom and intimate social relationships between

the student and the family, the teachers and the peers because the assumptions underlying this social reproduction theory are that what is happening in the classroom is only dependent variable of social change. In this regard, exploring the process of social and cultural changes occurring between agencies and their social relationships cannot be explained.

Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1971 and 1981) that fill out the gaps on the process- what Bowles, Gintis, and Apple left out - by highlighting the process of how working class lads constitute themselves 'as political and social subjects, defining themselves as the *Other* in the process. His social analysis draws attention to the cultural and subjective level of social relationships within the school, the most intimate details of everyday life providing the basis for a persuasive theory that schools reproduce the labour force. Rather than focusing on critiques of Marxist theory, he shows the intended consequences of the oppositional culture in the school in which working-class youngsters, by opposing the aims of education and its mechanism of social reproduction, constitute themselves as working class subjects (Aronowitz, 1981). Willis' detailed ethnography dealing with the wealth of statements and analysis of 'working class lads' also opens up the door for queries on the emerging opportunities of these youths for their societal mobility in the more globalised world. Structurally, at a macro level, it is intrinsically about inequalities, but how do the concept of mobility and inequalities came about together in contextualizing the position of the new generation of working class youth? And how are these young people who drop out of school with the intention of never being educated again going to survive in an unequal globalised job market?

Since the publication of the works by Cremin, Bowles & Gintis, Apple, Karabel and Wills, the links between political and economic factors and education enrolment and achievement have been extensively studied in both academia and policy circle, influenced by sociology, anthropology, psychology, and the sociology of education. Again, since the late 1990s and early 2000s, studies on educational inequalities have received more attention. As shown in various international studies, more than two-thirds of the 85 countries for which data was available have experienced an increase in income inequality as measured by the Gini Index (UNRISD, 2014). With the greater visibility of global and national inequality, research is increasingly being conducted at various levels of theory and policy, including a greater number of case studies on the issue of inequality and its impacts on education, health, and wellbeing. Most of this newer academic literature has identified the political and economic factors leading to or perpetuating inequalities in education enrolment and retention such as *Neoliberalism* (Apple 2001, 2005; Colclough, 1996; Mason & Hawkins, 2007), *political economy* (Collins, 2004; Holsinger, 2005), *politics* (Dale, 1989; Marginson & Mollis, 2002) and *poverty* (Narayan, 2000; Reimers, 2000). It is worth noting that most of these academic works are from the disciplines of sociology and sociology of education. Among numerous works and the disciplines, the notable works covering research into characteristics of educational inequalities are on the topics of *socioeconomic status* (Ellwood Jencks, 2001; Pritchett, 1999; Treman, 1989), *ethnicity* (Persell, Arum & Seufert, 2004; Deboosere & Bastiaenssen, 2007) religion (Driessen, 2002; Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006), *social class* (Erikson, 1992; Jonsson, Mills & Müller, 1996; Stromquist, 2004), *gender* (Breen, Luijkx & Muller: 2010, Eder, 1995; Stromquist, 2005;

Klasen, 2002; UNICEF, 2007) and *disabilities* (Carrier, 1986; Heward, Cavanaugh, 2001; Losen, & Orgield, 2002; Peters, 2003).

In recent years, a notable number of works have appeared which have identified factors that lead to or perpetuate inequality in education. These factors include but are not limited to unequal opportunities for educational attainment (Breen & Johnson 2005; Connolly 2006; Shavit & Blissful 1993), but they are intrinsically linked to the act of dropping out of school due to the students' individual demographic characteristics. In both academic and policy literature, it would be relatively easy to focus on doing headcounts of dropouts and collecting data on the demographic information of such *Outliers* who are the victims of structural inequalities of Myanmar society and education. However, not being able to go beyond contextualizing the issues based on the position of - as I call- *Economic and Education Nexus or Individualization of dropping out issues with Gender and Ethnicity Labelling*, would miss a number of significant opportunities to understand the dropout phenomenon which is becoming increasingly global. It would also be difficult to approach the kinds of inequalities prevalent in the private and public realms of daily life with any kind of true understanding.

When analysing inequalities in education, it is evident that most academic literature has been dealing with finding relationships (or confirming causality) between four aspects: economic characteristics, demographic characteristics, education enrolment, and academic achievement. In other words, there is clear quantitative and qualitative evidence of conceptualizing relationships between economic difficulties (i.e. children and youths from poor families tend to leave school earlier) and individual dropouts' demographic characteristics (i.e. children and youths from certain ethnic and linguistic minority groups tend to quit schools at earlier grades).

A close look at Myanmar's contemporary education would suggest that based on this critical sociological perspective, critical theorizing on the formal education system is strongly valid. As the evidence in chapters 3 and 4 demonstrates, there has been the long history of structural inequities both in education and society at large. The marked educational inequalities are related to much greater political and social discrimination; thus, there are clear relationships between class, gender, ethnicity, and educational inequality in contemporary Myanmar. It is also important not to omit the fact that formal education in Myanmar 'inherited' the British education system and was then 'militarized' by later military governments (Myo, 2014). The political and socio-cultural stratification was intensified by government authorities for three decades, during which time related ministries, municipality education offices, school principals, and teachers underwent militarized authority, which greatly impacted the children and youth. Thus, it is reasonable to say that Myanmar's formal schools – as a public realm of power – have for more than three decades been a place where children are exposed on a daily basis to political inequalities of class, gender, and ethnicity.

3.1.2. Social Anthropology of Structure and Social Relations

Looking at literature reviews as a basis to examine theories implemented in the context of adapting theory of schooling and educational inequalities, the following sections define and review relevant theories that are associated with Victor Turner's theories of structure and anti-structure with the aim of providing a theoretical framework with which to address the proposed research questions. This part offers a systematic outline and discussion of Victor Turner's anthropology of *Structure and Anti-Structure* and the concept of *Liminality*. Attention is also given to Turner's initial sutural-functional

analysis, to the advancement of his methodological framework and processual mode of analysis, and to his conception of anti-structure. This exposition will serve to elaborate on some critical matters in the research of liminality: space and location for the lives and learning for the youth of Yangon, Myanmar. Next, the study of ritual in the notion of liminality will be and lastly distinctiveness and limitations of his work will be analysed with reference to other approaches in symbolic anthropology prior to the 1980s and to the modern and postmodern application of his works in the 1990s and the 2000s.

Before entering into a detailed discussion of Turner's concept, it is critical to place him in the border historical context of anthropology. According to the book, 'A Tribute to Turner' (1985)¹⁴, he was offered a grant from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute to carry out fieldwork in an African tribe by Max Gluckman, the exiled South-African anthropologist and spiritual leader of the Manchester School. After studying anthropology at University College, London.¹⁵ In 1950, Turner moved to the Mukanza village in the Mwinilunga district of Zambia (previously Northern Rhodesia) (Deflem, 1991, p.22). Here Victor Turner conducted his doctoral dissertation (Turner, 1954-55), among the Ndembu, later published as *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Turner, 1957) (Deflem, 1991, p.23). Turner collaborated with the prominent structural-functionalists in the British social anthropology tradition: Meyer Fortes, Edmund

¹⁴ In the later part of Turner's life, especially between the 1970s and early 1980s, Turner's work received widespread acclaim. Some of the most notable reviews of his life and extensive discussions of his work can be found in Bouissac (1985), Collins (1976), Edwards (1972), Grimes (1976), Porter (1975), and Seneviratne (1983).

¹⁵ Turner decided to study anthropology at University College, London, after completing his studies in English language and literature in the same university (1938-41) and serving as a non-combatant soldier during World War II. As part of his anthropology studies he attended the seminars of Meyer Fortes, and Edmund Leach who become critical thinkers in social anthropology (McLaren, 1985, p. 19),

Leach A. R, Radcliffe-Brown and Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard. But more importantly, Turner studied with Max Gluckman, who for many decades exerted a strong influence on his theories and concepts (Deflem, 1991; Manning, 1995; MacLaren, 1985).

Gluckman made him acquaint with conflict theory and political anthropology. In this context, his emphasis on ritual as a means of social transformation has a clear connection to Gluckman's emphasis on social processes. Marxist-influenced theory came to dominate the field of social anthropology in that time, stressing conflict and conflict resolution, and exploring the ways in which individuals negotiate and utilize existing social structures (Manning, 1990). The juncture at which social¹⁶ and cultural anthropology merged in the 1960s and the 1970s provided the momentum to place Victor Turner's theory into academic perspective. According to Gluckman's structural functionalist approach, studies of ritual are of secondary importance; a careful examination of a society's principles of social organization must come first.

In Gluckman's structural functionalist approach, the role of rituals is to sustain a society's equilibrium and secure solidarity among its members (Son, 2014, p.41). Rituals are looked upon as mechanisms to ensure societal unity, although according to Gluckman and in this, he diverges from the classical functionalist view (Son, 2014, p.43), this unity may be achieved despite social conflicts and competing for social

¹⁶ As for development of social anthropology, I argue that it is important to note how Turner was, himself, 'in betwix and between/ the two schools of anthropologies. While he went more 'interpretative', British school of anthropology, strongly influenced by Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault, anthropologists Peter Worsley, Rodney Needham and Edmund Leach focused on issues of power and hegemony. This was followed by anthropological shifts in focus to gender and sexuality from 1980s and 1990s, as well as to topics dealing with the relationship between history and anthropology. These themes became the focus of an entire generation of anthropologists under Jean and John Comaroff at the University of Chicago.

norms and values. What many rituals, ceremonies, events of the rebellion of the existing system often do is precise to enact social conflicts. Turner's main theoretical advance soon after he moved away from Gluckman and then he published his doctoral dissertation was to demonstrate how rituals are more than just social glue for the maintenance of the social order, and how rituals are *processes*, not states, in the social world, which itself is *a world in becoming, not a world in being* (Turner, 1974, p.24). Turner also moved away from the narrow perspective of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, going beyond classical British social anthropology by defining rituals as a case of ritual performances containing dynamic symbolic manipulation. In this way, Turner wanted to introduce the "human coefficient," as he called it (Turner 1974, p.33), and show how the social is not something over and above the individual, but how principles of social organization both affect and are manipulated by concrete individuals and for instance, how society and the individual come together (Deflem, 1991, p.17).

It is critical to note that Turner went beyond British structuralism in stressing the inter-structural phase of liminality and the related notion of *Communitas*. This meant a shift in his work away the British social anthropological form of social-structural analysis. According to the latter a social-structural perspective, the Durkheimian argument largely prevails that ritual is 'a mere reflection and perpetuation of the principles of the social order' and resonance of' such an approach may be found in the work of Max Gluckman (1954; 1958).

According to Deflem's comprehensive reviews on Turner's procedural symbolic analysis (1991, pp. 1-25), Turner, had more emphasised the culturally purposeful elements in rituals both among the Ndembu as well as in modern Western society. In this way, Turner's work comes closer, for instance, to that of Clifford Geertz. However,

Turner was later critiqued by Geertz (1980) for applying his mode of analysis *too generally* to rituals of all kinds, times, and places (Geertz in Defelm, 1991, p.23). Some will therefore argue that Turner had paid insufficient attention to the particulars of the locally significant context in which ritual forms of action take place (Defelm, 1991, p.25). Despite this criticism, there are similarities between Turner and Geertz, both men sharing a common interest in the humanly meaningful elements of ritual (away from society's functional requisites). Geertz (1973) has argued against functionalism in a manner similar to Turner, maintaining that culture is not merely a derivative of the social structure, but that it refers to meaningful structures embodied in symbols of social relations, to "*webs of significance*" (Geertz 1973, p.5) that should be studied interpretatively. In Turner's ritual studies we find akin interpretative approach, which is more demonstrative of American cultural anthropology than to British structuralism. This change of perspective possibly coincided with his mobility in time, space and intellectual *Communitas* to the United States, where he continued to develop his theories on liminality in complex societies.

2.2. Re-visiting Victor Turners' Liminality

2.2.1. Liminality and Communitas

Having adopted the procedural perspectives stressing the dynamic processes of conflicts in societies from Gluckman and the processual view on ritual from the Dutch anthropologist, Van Gennep, Turner repetitively discussed the significance of the liminal, intermediate phase in the social process. Appointed professor of social thought and anthropology at the University of Chicago in 1967, he published *The Forest of Symbols* (Turner, 1967), *The Drums of Affliction* (Turner, 1968), and *The Ritual Process* (Turner, 1969). Turner spoke the concepts of *liminality and communitas* at length in the three books, leading him away from the exclusive study of *Ndembu* ritual and to the focus on sociocultural phenomena in complex societies.

Turner first introduced his interpretation of liminality in 1967, drawing heavily on Van Gennep's three-part structure for rites of passage. The focus was fully on the mid-stage of rites of passage - the transitional or liminal stage. He distinguished that "the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'" (1967, p.95). That is, the position and status of liminal individuals is socially and structurally ambiguous. This idea was further developed in a concise definition of liminality that would inform his future writings: "Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (1967, p.97). Turner also pointed out, with reference to Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger*, which liminal individuals are socially contaminating, and thus

dangerous, to those who have not gone through the liminal period. In addition, liminal individuals *have* nothing: “no status, insignia, secular clothing, rank, and kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows” (1967, p.98). The group of liminal individuals is not a typical social hierarchy but a communal group in which all are equal.

In "Liminality and Communitas," Turner began by defining liminal individuals or entities as "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony" (1969, p.95). He then continued to illustrate “the non-structure or anti-structure” that he continuously indicate as in "betwixt and between" through such concepts as the "realm of pure possibility" and structural invisibility. Turner's processual symbolic analysis was a critical advancement in anthropological research on ritual since, by its focus on ritual proper, it transgressed the traditional framework of anthropology of the Manchester School.

It was Turner's notion of social drama in combination with Van Gennep's leading work on rites of passage which, I believe, led Turner to analyse ritual not simply as a mechanism for redress, but as humanly significant cultural performances of an fundamentally processual nature. Ritual not only takes place within a social process but is itself processual. In his studies of the liminal phase in ritual, Turner showed that ritual is not just a response to society's needs but involves humanly meaningful action. In this way, Turner's mode of analysis has presented critical alternative for often all-too-static social-structural analysis, and it may continue to stimulate research on ritual and thus contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the role of ritual in thoughts and in action.

The term ‘liminal’ first appeared in a psychology publication in 1884, but the idea was only introduced to the field of anthropology in

1909 by Arnold Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Scott, J., A Dictionary of Sociology, 2014). Van Gennep described rites of passage such as coming-of-age rituals and marriage as having the following three-part structure: (i) *separation* - disengagement in which the individual is symbolically removed from society and his/her own identity;; (ii) *liminal period* - the liminal stage in which the individual is secluded; (iii) *reassimilation* - the reunion or post-liminal stage in which the individual is reintegrated into their new social status. The initiate (that is, the person undergoing the ritual) is first stripped of the social status that he or she possessed before the ritual, then inducted into the liminal period of transition, and finally given their new status and re-assimilated into society.

However, it was not until the second half of the 20th century that the terms “liminal” and “liminality” gained popularity through the writings of Victor Turner. Turner borrowed and expanded upon Van Gennep’s concept of liminality, ensuring widespread usage of the concept not only in anthropology but in other academic areas such as sociology, education, and social work, psychology and communications¹⁷. The second phase of Van Gennep’s model – that of liminality – laid the basis for an understanding of what it is to be ‘in between’. For Turner, liminality, in terms of social structure and time, is an intermediate state of being ‘in between’ in which individuals are stripped of their own usual place, place time, identity and their constituting social differences while being on the verge of social or personal transformation (1990). Liminality brings out a state of

¹⁷ In the late 1970s and 1980s numerous studies appeared, some on applied liminality, and were discussed in such diverse sources as the anthropological studies on mass culture (Lyons and Lyons 1985; Manning 1985; 1938; Salamone 1988; Trosset 1988), and, with increasing interest, theological studies (Arbuckle 1986; Gilhus 1984; Holmes 1973; 1977; McKenna 1976; Moore 1984; Nichols 1985; Perdue 1981; Senn 1982; Smits 1976; Worgul 1979).

Communitas, which for Turner is a reactively structure-less state based on relationships of equality and which is relatively opposed to the normative social structure (1990). Communitas gains its social significance through the deconstruction of social order.

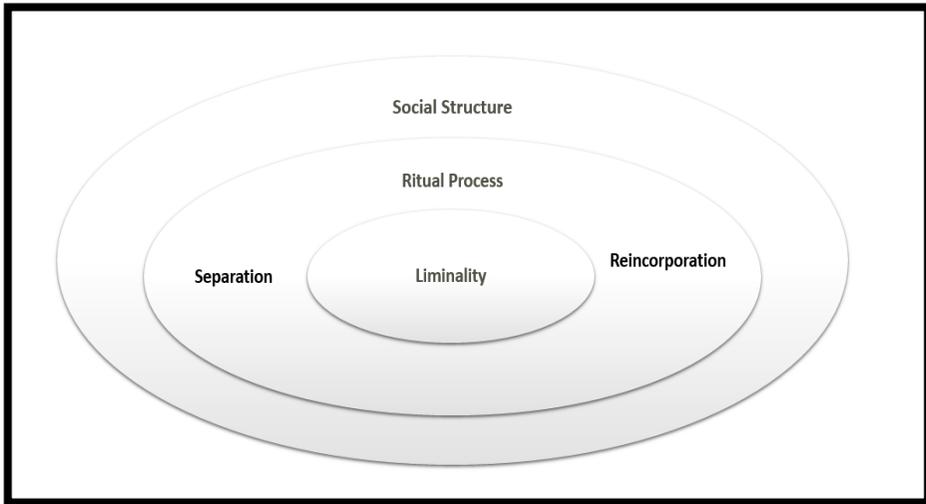


Figure 3. 1. Visualisation of Genep’s Passage of Rituals
 (Source: Author, 2016)

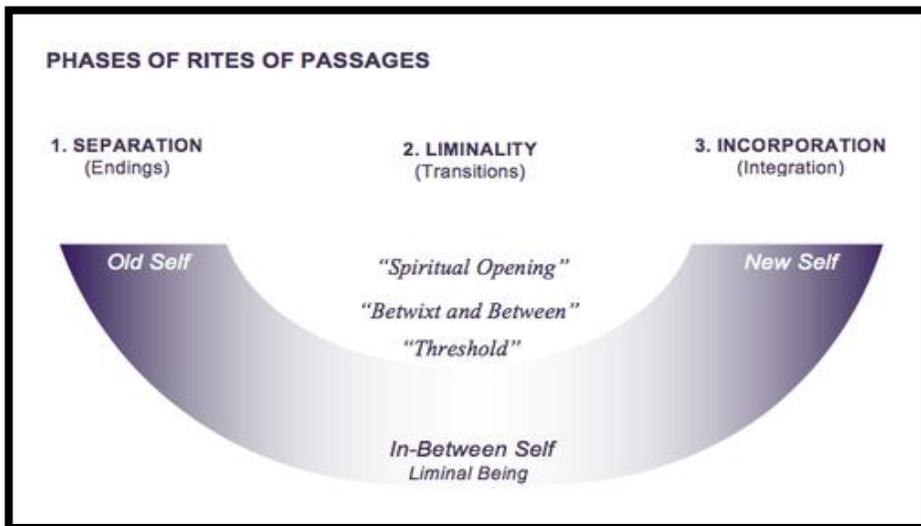


Figure 3. 2. Visualisation of Turner’s Passage of Liminality
 (Source: Wendling, G., Global Learning & Exchange Network, 2012).

3.2.2. Structure and Anti-Structure

Turner proposed that “our basic model of society is that of a ‘structure of positions’” (1967, p.93), and he defined the period of liminality as “an inter-structural situation” (1967, p.93). His model of *communitas* or human interrelatedness, has a number of cultural manifestations, of which liminality is only one. The other two are marginality and inferiority. To express their relationship to social structure in spatial terms, they lie in between (*liminality*), on the edges (*marginality*), and beneath (*inferiority*).

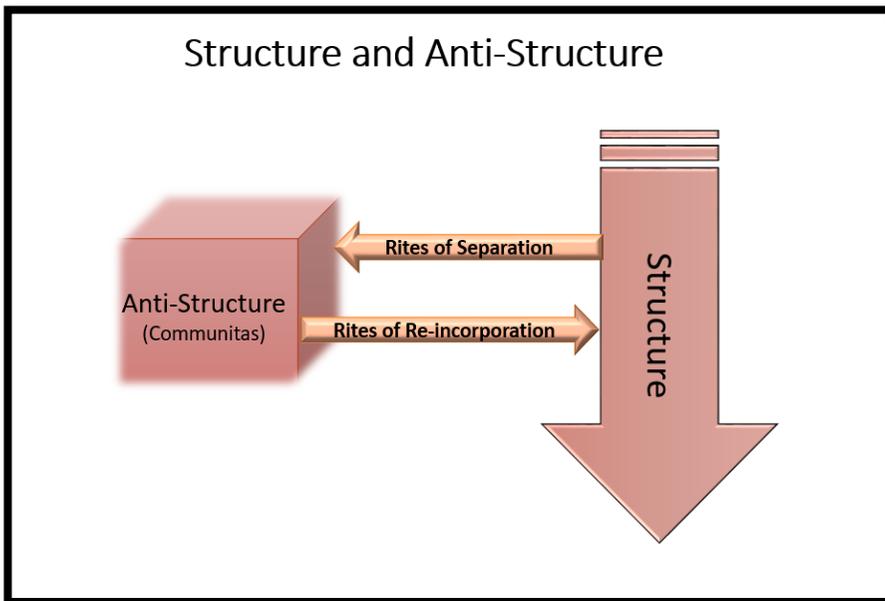


Figure 3. 3. Structure and Anti-Structure

(Source: Turner, 1967)

Turner’s book, ‘Passages, Margins, and Poverty’ is mainly focused on providing a clearer definition of *communitas* and showing its dialectical relationship with social structure. Yet, since liminality is a cultural manifestation of *communitas*, what Turner articulates here has a direct bearing on the subject at hand. He first rewards his three-fold division of the manifestations of *communitas*; these manifestations are

now *Liminality, Outsiderhoods, and Structural Inferiority* – which will be also adopted in the interpretation of the text. This space of created *communitas* can be characterized by structural inferiority, outsiderhoods, anonymity, and lack of a relative hierarchy of gaps between structure and anti-structure. The individuals who are going through liminal process are seen as or perceived by themselves to be relatively invisible, anonymous and in a ‘betwixt and between’ states (Charles La Shure, 2005). While Turner’s concepts of liminality and inferiority remained more or less untouched, an important development took place in his view of “the edges” of social structure (Charles La Shure, 2005).

For Turner, liminality is one of the three cultural manifestations of *communitas*—it is one of the most noticeable expressions of anti-structure in society. However, even as it is the antithesis of structure, disbanding structure and perceived as dangerous by those responsible for maintaining structure, it is also the source of structure. While chaos is the source of order, liminality represents the unlimited possibilities from which social structure arises. In the liminal state, as Turner states (1979), ‘human beings are stripped of anything that might differentiate them from their fellow human beings—they are in between the social structure, temporarily fallen through the cracks, so to speak, and it is in these cracks, in the interstices of social structure, that they are most aware of themselves’. Yet liminality is a ‘midpoint between a starting point and an ending point and as such, it is a temporary state that ends when the initiate is reincorporated into the social structure (Turner, 1979)’.

Another point that must be raised is the ambiguity of Turner’s three-part division of the *Cultural Manifestations of Communitas*. It is impulsive to categorise and organise, and such categorisation or

classification are particularly helpful in studying many kinds of different phenomena. As a rule, however, the stricter the individual categories, the less useful they are in the organization of the various elements of an entire system. That is to say, categories with strict and narrower definitions tend to cover less ground and conversely, looser categories cover more ground but can be ultimately less useful in defining the specific elements. Therefore, scholars are continually trying to strike the right balance (Charles La Shure, 2005). In Turner's case, it is possible that he has erred on the side of looser categories. If we acknowledge this, as Turner does, that liminality can exist outside of this scope, the boundaries of liminality can be much more blurred (Klein, 1996, p.106).

In order to understand the mobility of people's lives in various types of space and time in a more open way, it is important to note that the concepts of liminality, liminoid (a term developed by Turner for a more complex modern setting and extensively used in recent literature), and *Communitas* have evolved over the three decades. Looking at the space of *separation* from the "Old Education System" and passing through *thresholds* into "Urban Slums of Yangon City", may seem dissimilar from Turner's ethnographic works on small rural villages of Endem peoples in Zambia. Yet, as Turner argues, the cultures of pre-literate, pre-industrial societies, normally limen *Communitas* became apparent and were noted through dramatic rituals and ceremonies (1973, 94). A positive torment of explicitly formulated views on how men – regardless of their urban or rural, tribal or modern settings – may best live together in harmony in the liminal space of *Communitas*.

There is no doubt that Turner's theories have had widespread influence, with numerous researchers adopting his concept of liminality in popular culture and theological studies. His strong legacy can be seen in writings by Morris (1987) on *urban hippies* and liminality, Sharman

(2001), Menjivar (2006) and Wels and Spiegel (2011) on migrant workers, *liminality and their socio-cultural relations*, show strikingly prominent Turner's legacy today. With regard to the issues of education, learning and youth, there are two main areas of research. The first is *children and youths in transition*, both as individuals and groups, with researchers Matthews (2003), Ann and Rivera-Sánchez (2005) and Walton (2013) viewing *youth in transition* from the perspective of liminality in various countries. Ball and Moselle (2015) have focused on *migrant children* living in the Myanmar-Thailand border area in living liminality. This study describes the uncertainty and hardship faced by migrant children who have to learn to quickly adapt to future stresses and opportunities. It must be noted, however, that regarding issues like social protection and education, the Turner style of *Communitas* is not necessarily a space for relative freedom for children and youth living on the margins of society.

The more recent literature on liminality which is devoted to presenting and analysing *learning and professional development for transitional workers, teachers and principals in training trips and seminars*. Borg (2014) depicted the importance, both positive and negative, of liminality for 'in between' mobile project workers, showing how they practice being 'betwixt and between' and develop a form of 'liminality competence'. Lake (2016) has also introduced a case study on the meaning of education with a training program for ambitious school principals. In addition, Griess (2014), Hawkins and Edwards (2013), Cook-Sather (2006) and Tempest and Starkey (2004) have explored various types, forms and meanings of liminality in relation to organisational learning. However, with regard to Yangon's migrant workers, *'Adult life course, Learning, Liminality, Getting stuck, becoming unstuck: Agency, identity and transitions'* (Field, 2015) has

been found the most valuable. In this work Field (2015) presented studies of eight participating adult learners and their socio-cultural understanding of the 'betwixt and between' status. Unlike Turner, Field's findings indicated that some of adult learners were in the state of being 'stuck' and not experiencing liminality as wholly emancipatory.

As has been shown, researchers exploring fluidity of identity and social relationships among the young have adopted Turner's theories and concepts, applying them to larger and more complex scales of urban settings in many different countries with societies that are either developing or developed, modern or postmodern. Turner's vast influence on contemporary academic literature in the 1990s and 2000s would indicate the value of revisiting his theories that formed the basis for an immense range of research projects that included small villages in Zambia, hippie communities in New York, youth learning centres in Stockholm, migrant youth's lives in Guatemala city and a community centre for migrant workers in urban Bangkok.

In other urban settings, the concepts of liminality and liminoid have provided colourful, realistic and often painful explanations of conditions pertaining to the emergence of extensional communities. As Turner predicted already in the 1960s, the world will become more connected and nomad (mobile in the current term), so that understanding the flexibility and mobility of social relationships in modern and industrial societies will be critical to understanding the conceptualization of the lives of people (the micro level) and their relationship to the larger (or macro) scale of the social structure. While hippies and digital nomads were the subjects of studies of liminal beings in the developed world, the emergence of the power of the powerless living on the margins of various cities and communities became the new area of research. Migrants, street youth, child labourers and the homeless were

the new subjects of studies by various sociologists and social anthropologists investigating the status of being liminal.

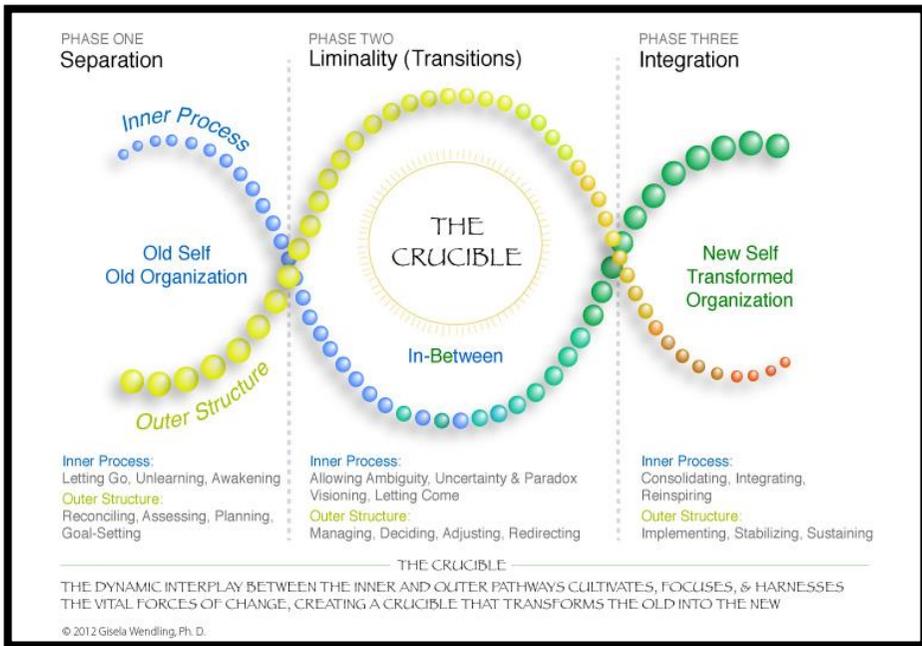


Figure 3.4. Dynamics of Structure and Anti-Structure Explored (Source: Wendling, G., Global Learning & Exchange Network, 2012).

In evaluating Turner's concept of liminality and liminoid, some important points should be considered. First, the concept pays particular attention to the marginalized spaces and locations of people who are structurally outside of structure – out of school being outside the most important social institution. Second, it is inclusive enough to embrace various processes, forms and types of persons of all races and ethnic groups. Turner affirmed that "in both religious and secular, fairly consistent link is maintained between liminality, structural inferiority, lowermost status, and structural outsiderhoods on one hand, and on the other such universal human values as harmony between all mean, (...) universal justice, comradeship and brotherhood between all men and

women, the equality before God, the law or life force of men and women, young and old, the persons of all races and ethnic groups (Turner, 1969, 1997; 134)". And finally, most importantly in the context of migrant learners, of special importance is the underlying hint of challenges embodied in all Turner's utopia-like formulations - the persisting adhesion between equality and ownership of being in and out of the liminal space.

3.3. Conceptual Framework

References and areas of research encompassing this work are set down as follows: general overviews on the development of varied frameworks that encompass regional approaches and cultural variability of liminality (Blantin, 1976, Bretell,2000); the intersection of urbanism, urban poverty, the urbanization (Fox;1977); the integration of the individual, ethnic groups and communities linked to larger socioeconomic and political processes and more in shifting spaces (Turner, 1969; Hannera,1980; Leeds, 1994; Low,1996); children and youth in transition, both as individuals and groups (Matthews, 2003; Ann and Rivera-Sánchez, 2015; Walton, 2013; Ball and Moselle, 2015); and more importantly, the various types, forms and meaning of liminality with regard to organisational learning and adult learning (Cook-Sather, 2006, Field, 2015; Griess, 2014; Hawkins and Edwards, 2013; Lake, 2016; Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

Victor Turner's theory of *Structure and Anti-structure* and *liminality* – of being 'in-between' - evolved organically as a naturalist way of doing research. By adopting an interpretative perspective from social anthropology, Turner's theory provides a theoretical angle with which to look into the shifting culture of people and social institutions (such as schools) in contemporary Myanmar. Being primarily micro-subjective in perspective, it provides the analytical framework to explore in detail youth perceptions of school and schooling. At the same time, it allows for flexibility for the sociocultural construction of reality in the micro-objective perspectives.

Let us consider the current situation in Myanmar in the light of Turner's theory on liminality. Since 2015, under Aung Suu Kyi's new government, Myanmar has been going through dramatic economic and social changes. Myanmar's formal education system is now in an

intermediate state of being 'in between'; between old and new, between authoritarian and democratic. In the waves of these changes, schools and individuals are stripped of their usual forms of educating and being educated.

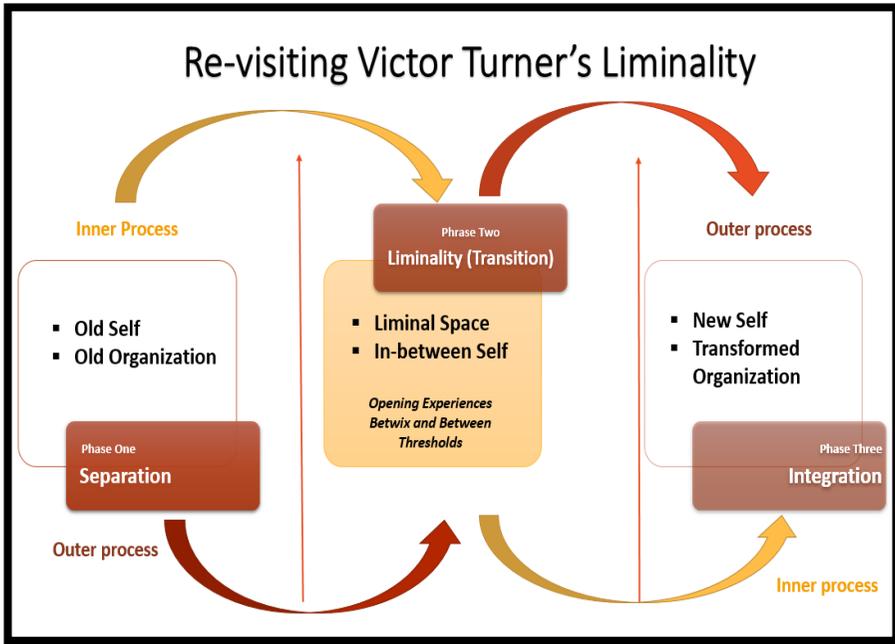


Figure 3.4. Conceptual Framework Adopted from Turner's Theory on Liminality and Communitas
(Source: Author's, 2016)

In the culture of everyday school life, shifting relationships and notions questioning the value of education are creating the conditions for an evolving liminal stage after being so long inside the school 'structure'. At the same time, with the rapid urbanization taking place in recent years, young adolescents – as individuals - are becoming one of the major groups migrating to and settling in rapidly developing urban centres such as Yangon and its surroundings. These new waves of

young migrants have left their hometown, family, and school for an in-between urban space where, living without social security, without a health system or a national education system, their ideas and aspiration for learning are taking on a fluid shape. Linking theories of liminality and the lives of Yangon's young migrants inspires the notion of providing different education and learning opportunities for children and youth on the verge of fundamental transformation. It is also time to put this notion into practice.

CHAPTER 4.

THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN MYANMAR

4.1. History of Educational Development in Myanmar

Changes in the education system are not always in step with a country's progress. The progress and decline in quality of education are often by-products of political and social development. Not all countries, indeed, have always been suffering from a lack of education through their history. Myanmar was once admired due to the widespread literacy of its people, and it had one of the highest quality of education standards in Asia in the 1950s. It is often introduced in popular literature in Myanmar that education had always been given high priority in society since ancient times, with the monasteries acting as the main centres of education. This popular belief of education being important in the 'Culture of Myanmar' have shown x, y and z (add recent speeches from famous politicians and leaders). Likewise, the strong tradition of monastic education has been highlighted as Myanmar's unique evidence on how education has been valued. After the traditional era, Myanmar's history of modern education can briefly summarize into six phases, as shown below: (i) Traditional period; (ii) British colonial period; (iii) Post- independence period; (iv) Military governments; (v) Democratization under military period; and (vi) Period of New Generation.

4.1.1. British and Japanese Colonial Education

Prior to the British colonial period, as mentioned, Burmese Kingdoms had strong monastery education, focusing on literacy, arithmetic, and religious studies. Education and religion were

inextricably connected, as the Theravada Buddhist order, or the Sangha, functioned as the core educational foundation for the natives. Certainly, the tradition of monastery education does not relate to the education of non-Burmese kingdoms and other ethnic groups. However, at least, in the Burmese literature, it is reportedly stressed that the education in Myanmar has long been considered as 'important.' However, monastery educational opportunities were highly gendered. Boys were taught at monastery schools, where they would have both religious and academic learnings. Those schools gradually gave way to public schools, but many young men continue to receive education in monasteries (Oxford Burma Alliances; 2014). Chai (2014) explained that the strong links between religion and schooling is reflected by fact that the Burmese word for school (*kyaung*) is the same word referred to the monastery. Although the education was of a religious nature, the monastic schools ensured that Burma had a high literacy rate for the public, that of about 60% as the majority of Burmese men (but not women) were at least able to read and write their letters in the era (Harvey, 1946).

The early form of the westernized education was introduced by King Mindon (1853-1878) who established two Anglican missionary public schools in Yangon and Mandalay. Education received from the formal schooling established by the British ironically contributed to the nationalist movement was; one hand, more number of people had received higher degrees to enter official governments positions, most available posts had been filled by 1930; on the other, education empowered the Burmese people to fight for liberation from their western colonizers, which may be not a part of intentions of colonial education (Cady, 1958). In the 1920s, Burmese nationalists began to establish private schools that were independent of government, which nurtured nationalistic ideals (Hillman, 1946).

4.1.2. Renaissance of Intellectualism and Education

With the escalation of the nationalistic spirit in the 20th century, the educated Burmese claimed education reforms and opened national schools that endeavoured to rebuild a sense of Burmese national identity (Cady, 1958; Campbell, 1946, Chai, 2014). In Burma's Independence in 1948, Burma's Renaissance of Education and Intellectualism (1948-1962) was bloomed for a short period of time. The Education Reconstruction Committee Report describes how a wide array of school reforms such as bilingual curricula, vocational training, and health education was introduced in that period (Oxford Burma Alliances; 2014). Free education was guaranteed at state schools. Burmese was used as a medium of instruction at state schools while allowing English at the college level; and the creation of new textbooks that highlighted the spirit of Burmese nationalism. These changes led the independent Burma with the highest literacy and best quality of basic education in Asia in the 1940s and 1950s. The changes were also happening in an extensive network of missionary schools that actively employed foreign teachers that taught children English and other subjects. In particular, celebrating intellectualism and its high-quality national university, Burma had constantly developed its social and educational standards whilst it was overjoyed with its freedom upon gaining independence. Burma was expected to become one of the fastest developing Asian Tigers of the region in the 1950s. (Cady, 1958, Fuqua, 1992).

4.1.3. Militarization and the Dark Age of Education

The period of Military Government Period (1962-1988) and Military Government Period (1989-2010) was the *Dark Age* of Myanmar's education. After the Military Coup de 'tat in 1962, Burma went through isolation and severe impoverishment. Public education

was internationally and systematically commodified for political purpose. Oxford Burma Alliances describes in details (2010) the atrocities of nationalization of public education. All public schools were nationalized and educational standards began to fall dramatically (explain more why the nationalization process was negative). In higher education, a two-year regional college system was introduced and the ban on English as the medium of instruction in all institutions was enforced.

Since the 1990s, the new structure of education system has been very weak and the State Peace & Development Council (SPDC) organised irregular commencements for universities (Fink, 2012). As another series of students' strikes in 1996 and 1998 resulted in another 3 years of closures of tertiary education of Burma. After the re-opening of universities in 1999, the government scattered universities into 'pieces' in different regions around the country. After continuous close-downs of several key universities by the SPDC, further decreases in the education system, enrolment, and quality of education were seen (Fink, 2012). Throughout the *Dark Age*, Burma's public education was shown as the lowest national priority in public and basic education, and it had the lowest national investment in education infrastructure and teachers. It is fair to say that the glorious past of intellectualism and the vicious decline in quality of education were by-products of Burma's three decades of political and social development.

Myanmar today still has unqualified teachers, very little resources, and aging materials. Myanmar's modern social system, the education system that was known as one of the best in Asia in the past, is now in an abysmal state. According to the United Nations Development Programmes Human Development Index, Myanmar ranks 164th out of 168 countries (UNDP, 2013) in public expenditure on education,

spending just 1.3% of its GDP on education. In Myanmar, education is only compulsory for five years in 2013, and the majority of students drop out after this short period; according to UNESCO, approximately 50% of Myanmar's children are enrolled in lower secondary education (UNESCO, 2010). This is in stark contrast with international standards and even compared to its neighbouring countries in the Sub-Mekong region.

4.1.4. Democratization under Military and Recent Reforms

The Comprehensive Education Sector Review's works (2013), as well as the WIDE's statistics (2015), show that Myanmar's education currently faces numerous challenges. The education system has disintegrated, and students now spend very little time in school, with few making it to university. The crumbling education realities described by Myanmar's U Ung Myo Min, director of the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB) provided serious issues about the quality of education in Myanmar. According to Ung Myo Min;

The reality of Myanmar's education is "harsh and oppressive". Public schools are poorly equipped and academic resources and materials are outdated. Students are "bored or feeling uninterested in learning and participating in school activities". Parents are asked to pay an annual fee, said to contribute to "building maintenance, school furniture, and school books", even though Myanmar has laws stipulating that primary school education is free (HREIB, 2012).

Table 4.1.

Brief History of Myanmar's Modern Education

No	Stage	Periods	Systems	Major Events in Education and Myanmar's Society
1	Prior to Colonial Period	Prior to 1885	Religious Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burmese Kingdoms: Strong monastery education, focusing on literacy, arithmetic, and religious studies ▪ Strong ethnic religions, languages, culture and arts of various Ethnic Group
2	British and Japanese Colonial Period	1886-1947	British Elite Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burma become British colony in 1886 ▪ Introduction of westernized Anglican schools by King Mindon (1853-1878) ▪ British public education system is introduced ▪ Widespread secular education and improvement of education for women
3	Post-Independence Period	1948-1962	Renaissance of Education & Intellectualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burma's Independence in 1948 and Education Reconstruction Committee Report published ▪ High level literacy among citizens, decent quality of basic education provided ▪ Highly influential intellectualism and high-quality national university existed ▪ Free education in state schools; the use of Burmese as a medium of instruction; and the creation of textbooks that highlighted the spirit of nationalism
4	Military Governments	1962-1988	The Dark Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Military Coup de 'tat in 1962, Isolation and impoverishment of country ▪ Burmese Socialism and commodification of public education ▪ Two-year regional college system introduced/ Ban on English as medium of instruction
5		1989-2002		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several close-downs of universities by the State Peace & Development Council (SPDC) ▪ Further decreases in education system, enrolment and quality ▪ Lowest national priorities in public and basic education ▪ Lowest national investment in education infrastructure and teachers
6	Democratization Under Military	2003-2014	Seven Phase Road Map of democratization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2013, Education system reform Initiated by Than ShweIn government ▪ Comprehensive Education Sector Review(CESR) Phase I launched ▪ The first phase of education reform analysis is delivered
7	New Generation	2015-now	New Education Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Education System introduced, BA students are accepted in major universities ▪ Comprehensive Education Sector Review(CESR) Phase II launched

Moreover, Myanmar's persisting inequality in education is affecting Myanmar's adolescents. The challenges found in the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (IHLCS) have strong effects on education inequality in Myanmar at various degrees. For those living outside of the cities, educating children often means not only paying the fee, but also paying for transport to school. The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), for instance, highlights the basic overlook of powerful influences of circumstances such as wealth, gender, ethnicity, and location, over which people have little control over, but which plays a critical role in shaping their opportunities for education and for life (WIDE, 2015), based on the Myanmar's Statistics based on the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS, 2000) and this provide some evidence on the overall trends on education inequality in each country. Statistics such as WIDE show Myanmar's education disparities between urban and rural, low income and high income, and Burmese and minorities. However, there is a significant gap has been shown between girls and boys, considering society's emphasis on female education. Consequently, the current educational system such as poor education facilities, high fees, distance, and teaching and learning style is often pointed out that it leads to the deepening of gaps between income, class, ethnicities and regions, and that it consolidates inequality within society (HREIB, 2012). The Myanmar CESR Phase 1.Rapid Assessment of the Secondary Education Sector (Dec 2012-Jan 2013) identifies the following critical issues and recommendations to be addressed in subsequent phases.

4.2. Recent Education System and Reforms in Myanmar

There are a number of Myanmar's educational challenges that are evident from the historical records as well as recent educational data presented. In sum, there are numerous challenges that contemporary Myanmar's education system and practices face. The key findings below are one of the highlights from the national level quantitative surveys. They are; *first*, the current problematic educational system leads to a poor quality of education environment. *Second*, the current education system has created, maintained or reinforced the disparities between low income and high income, urban and rural, within urban areas, girls and boys. *Third*, literacy rates and primary school enrolment are acceptable, while high primary and secondary school dropout rates and low retention rate are critical issues in contemporary Myanmar's education. *Fourth*, there is a significant gap between girls and boys, considering society's emphasis on female education. *Last*, it is clearly shown both in interviews as well as the results of CESR Phase I, there needs special attention needed on The recent indication of improvements in secondary school transition and retention rates need to be continued. There remain significant differences in access and achievement rates by geographic location, poverty incidence, and gender. students who are most at risk of not entering secondary education or of exiting before completion - identification of the main reasons for non-entry or exit of specific groups of students direct and indirect costs of schooling to the family, adequacy of facilities for adolescent girls, the location of schools and availability of transport.

The areas that are not mentioned in the major policy and technical literature are system and its culture of education in Myanmar. The current education issues found in recent quantitative and qualitative data show that Myanmar's education is embedded with *Inheritances* – as I

call it – from the past. There have been strong influences of the *British Inheritance* in Myanmar's education. The current education system is unchanged based on the British system established during nearly a century of the British presence in Myanmar, which naturally promotes a pyramid shape educational system. In several interviews in October 2016, with various education leaders, there was realisation as the interview evolves around the structurally hieratical system of Myanmar's education. One research participant had realised in the course of interview and commented,

[I think we inherited this system] from the British government and the painfully elitist system is already set up. I think this kind of [hieratical] system of education for few made sense in the past but now it should be different. You know we [need a lot of educated] people in your society. Not just one or two. So, I don't know why they haven't changed this pyramid education system but that is also maybe intentionally discriminating against the large portion of children and students. This is inherently elitists. We need to build strong public education system from basic.

Apart from British influence, inheritance or leftover – whatever term used in the past and current Myanmar's education discourse, they are still strong remains from the *Military Inheritance*. Three decades of military governments structurally and *systematically commodified education as ways of oppression*. Basic education as Investment in this sector is accorded a low priority by the government. Higher education particularly higher education was often perceived as a potential threat by the authorities who exercise strict control over educational institutions. As numerous critical sociologists such as Bowls (1971), Bowls and Gintis (1976), Carnoy (1972), Ogbu (1997) have argued,

Myanmar's educational system has served functions of reinforcing and perpetuating social inequalities arising from differences in class, ethnicity, and gender.

Myanmar has undergone several of its unsettled phases recently—in 1988, 1990, 1997, 2003, and the unrest in September 2007. During these periods, the “overtones of millennial Buddhism” described by Spiro (1970, 172), which might have represented the post-independence era of the 1950s and 1960s, were no longer felt as strongly. It can be argued that in both historical evidence as well as recent data of structural inequalities in Myanmar that Myanmar's education show stark examples of how an educational system can intentionally serve some political purposes, ensuring the status quo for the few haves and guiding people of lower status into subordinate positions in society. In other words, Myanmar as a nation confirms the claims of critical sociologists, emphasizing the links between brutal political intentions, perpetuating social class for few, and the fulfilment of one's education. It is confirmed that students of low socioeconomic status have not given the similar opportunities as students of higher status, no matter how excellent their academic ability or desire to learn.

Table 4.2.

Challenges of Secondary Education Sector by CESR

Sub-Sector	Critical Issues	Recommendations to Improve the Situation	CESR Recommendations
The Education Law and Policy	<p>Education law and related policy instructions need to be reviewed and updated.</p> <p>There are various types of secondary school and more consistency is needed in the implementation of instructions for school upgrading.</p>	<p>Review of existing regulations, guidelines, and instructions to improve school performance and management.</p>	<p>Undertake a comparative study of international Best practice to strengthen education management and strategic planning.</p>
Access to Secondary Education	<p>The recent indication of improvements in secondary school transition and retention rates need to be continued.</p> <p>There remain significant differences in access and achievement rates by geographic location, poverty incidence, and gender.</p>	<p>Improved reliability and systematic analysis of disaggregated data on school enrolment, dropout, retention and repetition rates will provide education planners with the information needed to better target resources.</p> <p>Strategies to improve access to Secondary Education: (i) the introduction of a school readiness program for Grade 1 children, especially in rural areas and for poor families with no access to ECE; (ii) targeted support to students who are most at risk of not entering secondary education or of exiting before completion - identification of the main reasons for non-entry or exit of specific groups of students e. g.: direct and indirect costs of schooling to the family, adequacy of facilities for adolescent girls, the location of schools and availability of transport; (iii) a grant funding program to support students from poor families including</p>	<p>Further disaggregation of data on access education is needed including identification of information gaps and inconsistencies in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) data</p> <p>A study of out-of-school youth would provide substantive evidence to inform future strategies for more equitable access to secondary education.</p>

		guidelines and procedures for disbursement, stringent monitoring mechanisms, and impact analysis	
Restructuring of School System	Restructuring of School System from 11 to 12 years will impact on all subsectors of the education system and its implementation will require detailed planning and preparation. Students enter primary school at 5 years old, they complete primary school at 10 years old and secondary school by 16 years old. This is younger than other ASEAN countries. It impacts on over-age completion and dropout rates.	Restructuring is highly complex and impacts on many interlinked subsectors: curriculum framework, textbook development, student assessment, teacher competencies, teacher training, teacher deployment, school infrastructure, family finances, school financing, entrance to higher education, TVET and the labour market.	The process of restructuring is highly complex and impacts on many interlinked subsectors. Education TVET and the labour market. A costed Implementation Plan for Restructuring of the Education System is needed including realistic timeframes, sequenced tasks, allocation of responsibilities/strategy for communication to all stakeholders (CESR Phase 3). Practice in education sector reform may provide useful models and lessons learned from which to inform the process.
Teacher trainings	The pre-service curriculum will need to be modified and In-service teacher training will be needed to familiarize secondary school teachers with the new curriculum reforms as they are introduced into schools.	Continuing professional development needs to be strengthened through, for example, the development of teacher competency standards linked to the assessment of teacher performance.	
Data collection and educational planning	Improved data collection and analysis of teacher supply and deployment of teachers will enable the system to be more efficient and equitable.	A capacity development plan should be prepared to provide opportunity to teacher educators, school leaders, subject leaders and CPD leaders and mentors to gain new skills and approaches to upgrading teaching quality and learning outcomes	

(Source: Author summarized key findings from the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) Reports on Secondary Education Assessment: 2013)

4.3. Myanmar’s Dropout Phenomenon

Dropping out of school is a pivotal example of challenges that contemporary Myanmar’s education system and practices face. In a 2014 survey, 17.9% of children of lower secondary school and 42.9% of children of upper secondary school were out-of-school. As the seriousness of problems is shown in the table below, the number of out-of-school youth (OSY), for instance, illustrates various economic and social issues.

Roughly, we know that we lose about one million students [who] drop out of [the] education system every year in Myanmar. Let’s look at the primary data. The number of students in primary level. And then, we look at the secondary [level data]. You’ll see that one million are missing every year. A then, only 30% of the high school kids [who] attend and then passed [the] matriculation exam. [...] It is natural to ask questions, “it is about 70% dropout after the fourth grade?” “Why do the kids stop going to secondary schools? What has happened and why this still happening is” (Tim Aye Hardy, in an individual interview with a leader from an NGO working with OOSC/Y, 2016)

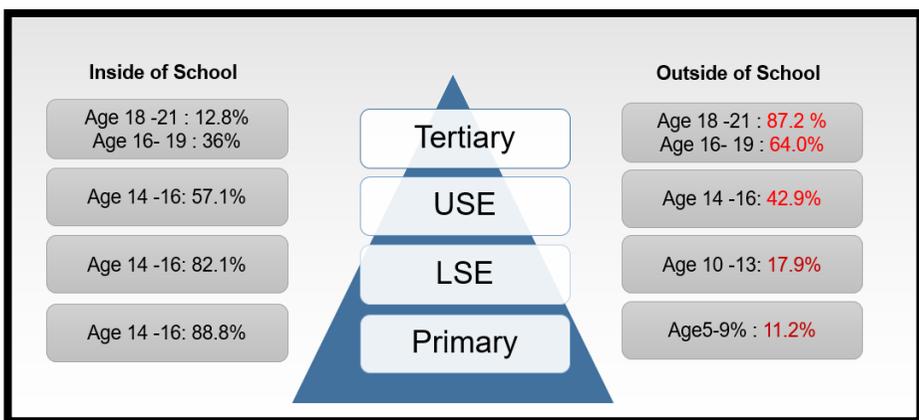


Figure 4.1. Status of Out of School Children and Youth in Myanmar

(Source: Data from CESR Phase I, 2016)

The table below reflects underlying reasons of being out of school. According to the IHLCS(2015), in the section of out-of-school youth, the estimated share of OSY among primary age children may largely capture children starting late and those who may have turned age 5 just prior to the survey: the 11.2% of children who are OSY in this age group. The share of OSY rises rapidly in higher age groups, with 17.9% and 42.9% of children of Lower Secondary Education (LSE, middle school) and particularly Upper Secondary Education (USE, high school) age being OSY, rising further to 64.0% and 82.7% among youth aged 16-19 and 18-21. Excluding the age 5-9 group noted above, the leading reasons for being out-of-school are once again direct costs and what is termed “lack of interest”.

Table 4.3.

Numbers of Children who Have Never Attended School and Reasons

	Age 5-9	Age10-15	Age 16-19	Age 20-29	Age 30& above
Share Who never attended formal schooling					
	8.7%	2.3%	3.4%	4.4%	12.6%
Reasons					
Costs not affordable	19.3%	47.3%	46.1%	45.0%	27.8%
Personal illness	11.2%	12.9%	8.0%	6.5%	2.8%
Lack of interest	13.1%	28.1%	22.0%	24.4%	14.3%
Care for family	0.2%	2.6%	7.3%	8.5%	15.3%
Agricultural Work	0.0%	3.5%	9.0%	7.4%	13.9%
Other (non-agricultural) Work	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%	2.0%
School Too far	1.6%	1.1%	3.2%	3.8%	19.4%
Other reasons	54.4%	4.3%	4.0%	3.7%	4.5%

(Source: Analysis Paper on Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey-IHLCS: 2015)

Table 4.4.

Transition Rates, Dropouts, and Repeaters (SY 2010/2011)

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
Transition Rate	87.6%	87.0%	84.5%	78.5%	76.3%	31%
Repeaters	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	1.1%	2.1%	4.4%
Pass and Exit	9.9%	10.8%	13.6%	15.7%	15.1%	3%
Dropout Without Pass	2.4%	2.1%	4.6%	4.6%	6.5%	61.3%

(Source: Analysis Paper on Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey-IHLCS based on the EMIS data comparison: 2012)

The Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) Team observed in the 2014 survey that a large share of responses for "lack of interest", which was cited in nearly one-third of cases of 10-15 year-olds who have never been schooled, and they wondered what it meant by "lack of interest". Also, according to the IHLCS (2015) results, the importance of understanding how many children never enrol in school is mentioned once again, and the main underlying reasons are in question. In this context, the Comprehensive Education Sector Review Team observed another large share of responses for "lack of interest", which were cited in nearly one-third of cases of 10-15 year-olds who have never been schooled. The meaning of y "lack of interest" should be more examined. In several interviews with educations specialists, the reasons are suspected but no one confirmed with concrete research results.

The table on the next page presents the details of figures from respondents who are in all age groups. Once again, the large share of OSY reported a lack of interest. This is rather puzzling. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded survey, predicts that it is possible that the noted "lack of interest" variable at least partly

captures parents and/or children's low evaluation of education because of inadequate infrastructure, equipment, and books, as well as poor perceived quality of teachers and even learning environments (JICA, 2015) that are intrinsically related to the issues of quality education. The table on the next page illustrates the comprehensive picture of estimates for shares of children/youths in different ages who have never attended any formal schools and their reasons.

Interestingly, the recent Asian Development Bank (ADB) analysis of household data for the Philippines shows a very similar phenomenon. At least in the Philippines case, dropouts or other forms of exit from the schooling sector (e.g., between primary and LSE levels) due to "lack of interest" appears to reflect both *demand side factors* (e.g., low parental recognition of the value of education) as well as *education quality-related issues* (e.g. issues with teachers, curriculum and textbooks, teaching and learning process, assessment and evaluation) (ADB, 2012). The latter, in turn, may range from students' and parents' perceptions that the education offered is not relevant to the real world, to a dynamic wherein rote-based instruction and classroom overcrowding promotes a cycle wherein children with weaker academic and socioeconomic backgrounds are allowed to slip increasingly far behind, become marginalized and or stigmatized, and then eventually drop out. The potential explanation in the Myanmar context merits further assessment may be needed in the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR).

IHLCS responses suggest that other *supply-side factors* such as distance to schools or lack of teachers may be less important. The fact that "illness" is cited less frequently for reasons for leaving education compared to children who never entered schooling is at least consistent with the explanation that disabilities are being enumerated as "illness", and that disability is a more significant deterrent to entry to school than

to progress once enrolled. The table below illustrates estimates for shares of various ages who are not enrolled and reasons for exiting from formal education. It looks at adolescent respondents in the age range of 10-18, who (according to normative ages in Myanmar) should have completed primary education. The left portion shows that 46.9% of these adolescents have indeed completed primary schooling and remain in schooling, while another 28.9% have completed primary but subsequently exited education. A sizeable share (12.6%) remain enrolled in primary school, while 11.4% have dropped out of or never commenced primary schooling, which suggests they will face the most daunting obstacles to participation in the modern economy. For this final group of adolescents, the right portion of the table then shows the responses for the reasons they are out-of-school.

Table 4.5.

Estimates for Shared of Children/Individuals, Not Enrolled

	Primary Age	LSE Age		USE Age	Higher Education Age		Others
	Age 5-9	Age10-13	Age 14-16	Age 16-19	Age 18-21	Age 20-29	Age 30& above
Share of whom are out-of-school	11.2%	17.9	42.9%	64.0%	87.2%	94.2%	99.4%
Costs not affordable	7.5%	33.1%	35.4%	27.4%	24.5%	20.3%	18.4%
Personal illness	2.1%	3.0%	3.4%	2.0%	1.5%	1.6%	1.5%
Lack of interest	5.9%	29.3%	26.6%	30.6%	29.5%	24.0%	18.7%
Got married/pregnant	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.8%	1.0%	2.1%	2.2%
Care for family	0.9%	6.5%	8.3%	8.1%	8.4%	9.3%	16.5%
Agricultural Work	1.2%	7.7%	9.4%	11.9%	12.2%	11.2%	11.3%
Other (non-agricultural) work	0.5%	3.3%	6.6%	7.0%	6.7%	7.1%	7.0%
School too far	0.4%	2.4%	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	3.3%
No teacher	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
No school supplies	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
No school clothing/shoes	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bad weather	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Finished at least undergraduate and diploma	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	3.0%	7.8%	16.8%	7.5%
Never started school	77.3%	12.2%	5.9%	4.8%	4.7%	4.8%	12.6%
Other reasons Or not reported	3.6%	2.4%	2.0%	2.6%	1.6%	1.0%	0.8%

(Source: Analysis Paper on Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey – IHLCS, 2015)

In the tables below, it is probably encouraging that supply-side measures (e.g., factors like ‘school too far’ and ‘no teacher’) are not cited as key reasons for the lack of entry to or for exiting from education. At least for primary education, physical access does not appear to be the most binding constraint. However, this should not be interpreted as saying that supply-side issues are not important. It is possible, for example, that the noted “lack of interest” variable at least partly captures parents and/or children’s low valuation of education because of inadequate infrastructure and equipment/books, and/or a poor perceived quality of teachers.

Table 4.6.

Estimates for Shared of Children/Individuals (10-18), Not Enrolled

Categorized Status of all 10- 18 years old	10- 18 years old who are (i) OSY (ii) have completed primary school	
The share of 10-20 years old who are: Completed primary and still in school – 46.1% Completed primary but now OSY – 29.8% Not yet completed primary and still in school-12.6% Not Completed primary and OSY – 11.4% Total: 100.00%	Share OSY and non-completers	11.4%
	Share of whom are out-of-school	
	Costs not affordable	32.4%
	Personal illness	2.8%
	Lack of interest	22.7%
	Got married/pregnant	0.4%
	Care for family	5.4%
	Agricultural Work	6.5%
	Other (non-agricultural) Work	3.9%
	School Too far	1.2%
	No teacher	0.0%
	No school supplies	0.0%
	No school clothing/shoes	0.1%
	Bad weather	0.0%
	Finished at least undergraduate and diploma	0.0%
Never started school	23.0%	
Other reasons Or not reported	1.6%	

(Source: Analysis Paper on Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey – IHLC: 2015)

Likewise, another area for further investigation is to assess the relative importance of reasons for dropouts from middle school and high school, as well the differences in reasons for leaving schooling among children from rural versus urban areas. While such analysis will continue during CESR, the

CESR Team proposed further analysis to try to explain EMIS-based findings, suggesting that between 1 in 4 to 1 in 5 primary completers in recent years had not proceeded into middle school.

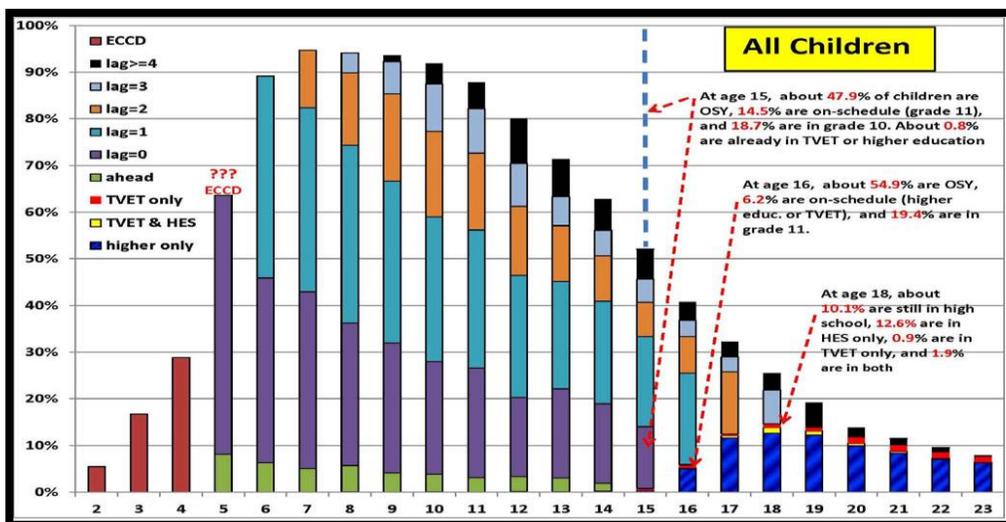


Figure 4.2. Indicative Age-Specific Enrolment Profiles
(Source: Analysis Paper on IHLCS, Ministry of Education, Myanmar. 2015)

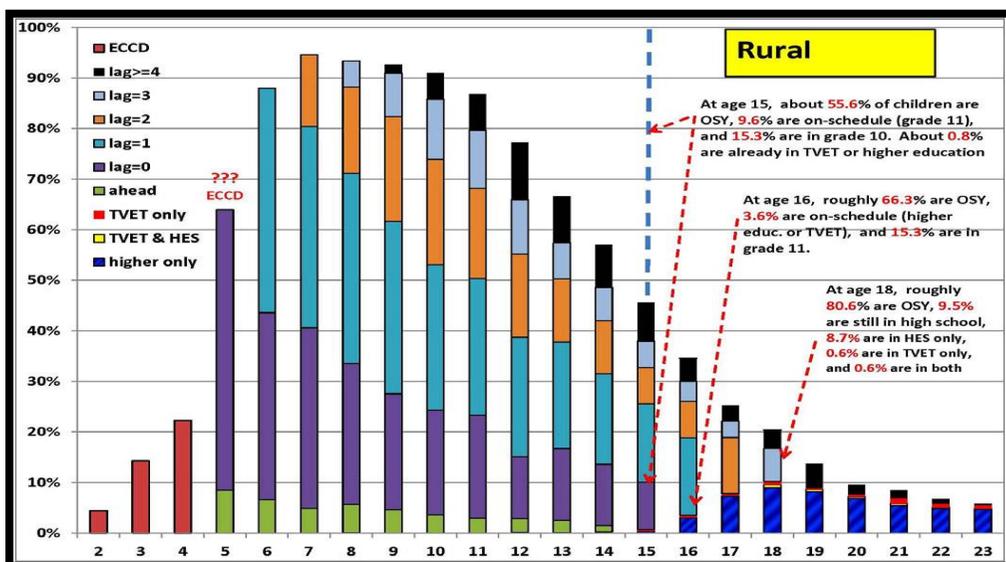


Figure 4.3. Indicative Rural -Specific Enrolment Profiles
(Source: Analysis Paper on IHLCS, Ministry of education. Myanmar; 2015)

In summary, dropping out of school is a microcosm of challenges that contemporary Myanmar's education system and practices face. The key findings below are one of the highlights from the national level quantitative surveys. They are; *First*, Myanmar has shown one of the world's highest dropout rates; 17.9% of children of lower secondary school and 42.9% of children of upper secondary school are out-of-school.

Second, there is a clear trend that the older the students are, the more they drop out of school. Figures show that 11.2% of children who are OSY in this age group. The proportion of OSY rises rapidly in higher age groups, with 17.9% and 42.9% of children of LSE (middle school), and particularly USE (high school) age being OSY.

Third, except for the age 5-9 group, the leading reasons for being out-of-school are direct costs and what is termed "lack of interest". However, it is recorded in several policy forums, seminars, and interviews that the policy makers and experts are not certain about what is meant by "lack of interest" in social, cultural, and educational contexts.

Fourth, the highest level and intensity of dropping out of school are expected to relate to the quality of education. The culture of education and quality of education a need to explore. For example, school dynamics wherein memorization-based instruction and classroom overcrowding lead to children and youth become not interested in school lives and schooling in general.

Fifth, such large number of drop outs are not seen in all neighbouring countries in South East Asia, except in the Philippines.

Thus, there is a common inquisitiveness on the meaning of "lack of interests" in Myanmar, and the ways of capturing the complex picture of understanding drivers of dropping out of school. In this regard, this research is a journey, to put it very simply, about finding out why so many young students have never enrolled or left formal education. Now extensive figures

from previous research from CESR, JICA and ADB have clearly shown the challenges without knowing the full picture of driving forces of the dropping out of school Phenomenon. The investigation may turn to the streets of Yangon, where numerous youths who never enrolled or left schools will provide their live and critical insights for understanding this astonishing educational Phenomenon in contemporary Myanmar.

CHAPTER 5.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The life of an individual cannot be adequately understood without references to the institutions within which his biography is enacted.

C. Wright Mills

5.1. Breaking Away

Schooling can leave great memories for many, but for many school dropouts in Myanmar, it is an unlikely case. As Myanmar's schools are often perceived as symbols of the *old*, the breaking away from formal schooling - in the middle of the semester and in the middle of school year - do not seem to be a very surprising event for many. While in some classes in lower and upper secondary schools, half of the students are often 'missing', skipping classes constantly, leaving schools and moving to Yangon, Bangkok and Singapore become an integral part of the daily lives of Myanmar's secondary students.

Breaking away from formal schools occurs in various forms, types, and process in Myanmar. Some individuals - migrants in new working environments - go through traumatic experiences of shock, anger, fear and loneliness at a new harsh working environment. However, some individuals experiences initial excitement of living in a new city of Yangon. It is observed that some individuals, particularly mostly girls, instantly become a strong part of social, cultural and religious lives of owners of the business they work for. For the boys observed and interviewed expressed their excitement and pride of being a worker, who can now earn living. They also heavily criticised their schools quite heavily, empathizing their satisfaction of separation from the *Past*. This chapter highlights the most direct narratives on their experiences of poverty in the schools, disappointments, and frustrations in experiences on

formal schooling on the teacher and students relations and teaching and learning style. Their strong criticism, dissatisfaction, and rejection about formal schooling was spoken very loudly. This chapter depicts how the separation from the Old was represented by the School as an Old and the Past.

5.1.1. Leaving School in Poverty

The most basic, obvious and explicit dimension of leaving school is entrenched general and personalized issues was poverty. Htet Htet Lin, Zin Min Htet, Myo Mint from Ayeyawady, Lun Thu and Khin Nwe from Bago commonly describes the situations of leaving homes and schools. Zin Min Htet and Myo Mint who started in grade 10, depicted their classrooms”. A lot of boys are leaving hometown. Maybe, not many girls are quitting school. Maybe more than half of boys are gone in grade 9. Oh, I also left right after the grade 10 started”. Bearing in mind that men are known significantly more likely to migrate than women with double the number of men migrating in Magway and Ayeyarwady regions than women (World Bank, 2016), boys and girls from the central Myanmar confirmed the increasing migrations, especially in recent years, as Myanmar undertakes a wide-ranging economic and political transition. This migration patterns¹⁸ across regions reflect a lack of year-round income generating opportunities locally. In school, experiences and feeling of being poor at school and discovering relative poverty in unpleasant ways during daily schools activities were easily verbalised by the Yangon’s youth. One of the participant of education leaders, U Peter opened up his remarks on the issues of poverty in formal schooling and said,

¹⁸ It also indicates a dependence of small- and medium-landholding households on labour provided by family members, which have some important similarities. In both regions, landless households are more likely to have family members migrating than the rest of the population.

“Of course, public schools are supposed to be free. Students cannot survive without private tuition. Teachers – with such a low salary – often provide private tuition in the afternoon and evenings. It is very important for students. If the private teachers are from their schools or their homeroom teacher, that is much better. Students who can afford the private tuition can study the exam papers in advance, so they achieve better than others. (Continues on the lack of welfare of public school teachers). So in reality, public education is not free. Only test scores are the basis for judging students in secondary school, money becomes a really important issue every day at school. In other words, money helps students' success even in public schools. It is true (Peter, 2016)”.

Just like Peter described how there were economic burdens for continuing education in rural areas, Mo Mo (17), Myo Myint (17), and Zhin Min (17) commonly come from poor families that could survive with communal supports. It is not easy to find out how poor they are but it is possible to confirm that their families constantly received some kind of help from the and relatives such as sharing food, sharing child-rearing duties and receiving small amounts of cash. However, regardless of such family and communal help, their families seem never to have been able to pay for any kind of educational costs. Further, all the young people interviewed either explicitly mentioned or hinted that school was a place where they ‘re-discovered’ their poverty. Mo interested who left school at grade 10, shared her unhappy feelings about being poor at school. She mentioned that he will sit for the Matriculation Exam again, but will never go back to attend any public school. She also described ‘*a kind of invisible inequalities*’ in schools that become visible through various school donation ceremonies where local companies, leaders, families, and parents of students donate in the public sphere.

[In an individual interview]

Researcher (On feeling of poverty at school) Can you give me an example?

Mo Mo Schools have a lot of festivals and events. Most of important days, there are donation ceremonies. I have a different religion so I feel awkward having to attend all the Buddhist donation ceremonies. But my friends were friendly so I did not pay attention to the donation ceremonies when I was young. When I grew older, then I noticed things.

Researcher Noticed? What did you notice?

Mo Mo Some students from rich families donate a lot. Many times a year. Have special speeches and blessings also. You know, the principals, teachers and ... (pause) money. Schools are very poor so donation ceremonies are important (continued to explain the importance and necessity of donation ceremonies).

Researcher Okay. I understand the school was poor. You mentioned that you did want to attend all the ceremonies. How did you feel about the situation?

Mo Mo You know. I don't need blessings because I have a different religion. Three of the girls in my class who donate a lot to schools were very popular to the principal and teachers. They received a lot of blessing.

Ah! The important thing is that I got to know that my family is poorer than the three girls'. (pause) That is a discovery!

Researcher Discovery?

Indeed, for many youths, poverty was the most critical and visible drivers of dropping out, but throughout discussions, just like the case of Mo Mo, who started noticing and 'discovering' that there were structural inequalities were very much present in their daily lives at formal schooling. School donation ceremonies, for instance, favouritism for girls who can donate a lot, receiving more Buddhist blessings, feeling uncomfortable as a Muslim student and the minority - were one of the events of inequalities within schools become visible. Like Mo Mo (17), Zhin Min (17) also worked at Myanmar's most popular twenty-four-hour convenience store. Zhin Min also expressed in details about how being poor affect him and his experiences coping with unpleasant experiences at school and 'Uncle X' who is, in fact, a superior to him at the convenience store, gives a sharp rejoinder to Zhin Min's statement on his family and education.

[In an individual interview, evolved as a group interview]

Zhin Min *My family was so poor. So poor. My father is a seaman somewhere in the Middle East. But we [haven't] heard from him for a long time. I don't remember his face. So for a few years, my family was very poor. I looked after younger sisters and brothers when my mother works.*

'Uncle X' *Oh, come on. Who does NOT take care of a family? Often we did not have enough food. Then, aunts or somebody neighbourhood gave us food. Indeed, I liked the food from U Win Win's family more than my mother's. (Zin Min chuckles while looking at his friend. Two boys including the older one, called Uncle started to chuckles together for sometimes.) Anyway, there was nobody pay for our education. I am power [or strength] for the family*

as a first son. I do what I can.

'Uncle X' I told you schools are for the rich kids. Rich kids like over there (he pointed out the university students looking boys at the other side of the park). We have our jobs to do. Focus.

There is one who has found for daily work and business is a young migrant, *Myo Myint*. An energetic fruit-seller as well as a former tea shop waiter, *Myo Myint* happily works in and around this famous historical site. He is an 18-year-old school dropout who was willing to express the frustration he had felt about school and to explain his decision to leave.

[In a group discussion]

Myo Myint At one point, my family could not pay anything. Nothing. Simply nothing. One day [I realized that] all of us – my younger sister, younger brother and I did not pay the annual school fees. Then, I knew that we were poor.

Friend X (Giggles) Oh, that happened to you, too?

Myo Myint I thought that was just a one-time thing. But [when] I saw my younger sister cry [after] her homeroom teacher scolded her for the money in front of the whole class, (with a very firm voice) I decided not to go to school anymore.

Friend X Yes! That's it!

Myo Mint We always had enough to eat. We were not starving but my mother clearly couldn't send us to school. I still don't understand why my mother didn't have money for school. Anyway, I was useless so I left at grade 8. I left school because I am a Man (spoken with confidence in his voice).

Now I earn for my family and myself.

Friend X (touching Myo Mint's head) That's the Man!

Researcher Now, do you know why your parent decide not to pay or could not pay for your school fee?

Myo Myint I do not know. All matter's now is that I MAKE my own money.

'Uncle Y' Sayama! I am listening in. One thing do not understand. Who wants to pay when you know your children will fail and not have a paper [certificate] after all the years of going to school? Without certificate, it is not easy. But now it is okay. No problem at all!

The fulfilment of one's education is closely linked to students of low socio-economic status – shown in the cases of Myo Myint, Mo Mo, and Zhin Min- commonly cannot afford the same opportunities as their peer groups, regardless of their academic ability or desire to learn. Barriers like the cost of education, but also more subtle cultural cues in daily life at school undermine the promise of education as a means of providing equality of opportunity. In other words, each of these narratives of Myo Myint and Mo Mo and Zhin expresses the concerns of these school dropouts regarding structured or limited opportunities in schools that are intrinsically connected to their economic and social backgrounds, rather than their educational aspirations and capabilities. Their situation leading them to drop out of school was not only about school accessibility issues such as 'no money for fees', 'school too far' or 'lack of transport' (as explained in chapter 3 and 4) but more about economically and socially structured and constructed learning.

5.1.2. Issues of Quality Education

Inquiring the detailed the school experiences to dropouts who are often perceived as the *Failures*, *Underachievers* or *Outliers* in society, may fundamentally lead to only negative perspectives on formal schooling. Throughout the observations and interviews, as expected, there were endless problems and challenges of schooling were addressed. However, most of the concerns from youths were not mere complaints, but critical issues of Myanmar's issues of quality education.

In particular, while students experience through teachers and peers. Their dissatisfied experiences with quality of education were largely evolved with the issues of quality teachers. Many comments were in regards to teachers' instructional style, supervisory support, assistants for students with special needs. The first concern was on dissatisfaction with teachers' teaching styles.

[In a group discussion with three young entrepreneurs, who established and run a youth leadership social enterprises]

Entrepreneur A *Why are we unhappy about public schools? Wow. So many. You know. We are all survivors of public schools.*

Entrepreneur B *Survivors!*

Entrepreneur A *I am so unhappy because teachers just recite, recite, and recite. Never look at our faces.*

Entrepreneur C *No, no. There are really nice and kind teachers.*

Entrepreneur A *Of course, they are good teachers in my school. But the point is to get good scores in the exam. Nothing else.*

Entrepreneur B *Teachers really discriminate a lot. We actually know. The boys who do not go to tuitions cannot catch up and those who receives tuitions from famous teachers or homeroom teachers can answer all the questions very well.*

- Researcher* *How do you boys know what is the 'good teaching style' or 'bad teaching style'?*
- Entrepreneur C* *Well, I think it is pretty clear.*
- Entrepreneur A* *Ah! After I had several private teachers, I knew that they are different teaching styles. The teacher in the NGOs and private tuitions have different active styles. We have a class and then we divide and do something with friends. I loved it very much. That the time I got to know about leadership. Now I am a university student but I am a youth leader to teacher other students to become leaders. We want to teach differently!*

Using the word of 'survivors', three young entrepreneurs who succeeded in the public school system and managed to go to university. With well-known founder, who is a very active youth leader, these three young entrepreneurs seem to have pretty critical voices of contemporary public education of Myanmar, while accumulating experiences by running a youth-led youth leadership social enterprises and we can observe that he empathized, 'Ah! After I had several private teachers, I knew that they are different teaching styles. The teacher in the NGOs and private tuitions have different active styles. I loved it very much. We want to teach differently! (Three young entrepreneurs, 2016)'. In the middle of interviews, these active and smart entrepreneurs had realized the meaning of good quality of education means to him during the interview.

As mentioned earlier, the issues of a lack of quality education are represented as teachers' instructional style, supervisory support, assistants for students with special needs. This comments from school dropouts are primarily rooted in how is taught within formal schools and practised as forms

of teaching, giving assignments and proving tests. U Myo Win vividly described (2016), “very text [...] based assignments. No creative assignments. Students in formal schools know do/s and don't/s. Here, Myanmar education, "Yes" and "No" only, "good" or "bad, and "right" and "wrong”. That's only. No alternative. No, that way. They never thought. Oh! Yes and No, good or bad, and right and wrong. So, that's all. "True" and "False", right? Nobody thinks and just pick answers. This is all because of exams, paper, and matriculation exam”.

[In an individual interview with an education advocate]

U Myo Win So, I think [apart from financial reasons is that the main factor of quitting school]. [Another one of course... is the curriculum, teaching techniques], [...] and the [teachers' capacity to be engaging]. And, also [a] lack of school supplies. And then, the size of the classroom. If you [have] 60 [or] 70 people in one class with one teacher. Can you imagine? You can't really engage with the students. So, the kids have to work. So, they can't really focus on the school. I think that those are the contributing factors.

I think that [it] is also connected with teacher's salary and then the ratio between teachers and the students. And also, the teachers [have not been trained so they don't have the capacity to teach properly]. So, if you are a teacher, as I said before, you have a 60, 70 people in a classroom. You haven't been provided proper skills or experiences and also you don't have proper school supplies. Your salary is very low. You can't teach how are you going to [effectively

teach] those 60 or 50 students in one classroom. The teachers are very much the source of learning itself. So after for if the students want to learn more about it, they would go to the teachers who are open to private tuition. The fewer students there are the better you know are being treated and the better their grades are? So, those are the things are that make people not interested in education!

Exactly, and [schools are also of a] very dominant type. And, [school does not support people's happiness]. Student always goes away. If you are a primary student, they don't want to go school. That's why parents [are bringing them to the school under force]. Because [the schools lack an environment for fostering happiness]. [The perception is] that school means teaching, memorizing, presiding, repeating, beating. That's [our] way. That's the education of now. No place for playing, no place for creating, [that's the environment]. What are we going to about this?

At the global reports empathized the aspects below: the issues of decentralization of education governance, investing resources for enabling school and classroom environments, more and effective Investments in teachers, emphasizing teaching and learning processes, improving access and equitable learning simultaneously and monitoring progress in learning the outcome? On the other hand, the very meaning of quality of education is for Yangon's youth derives from their very honest and realistic account for dissatisfied experiences on the quality of education was largely evolved with

the issues of quality teachers, teaching and learning experiences, teaching and learning methods and styles geared for matriculation exam.

5.1.3. Structured Failures in School life

In the central part of Yangon, where large-scale construction of luxury buildings is taking place, there also large populations of migrant youths work. Sixteen-year-old Lwin Mon is an enthusiastic girl with the great appetite for work and opportunities in the city. While discussing reasons for her failures in her school. She had a lot to say in a very articulated way, by describing her typical weekday when she was still studying in the school in 2013. Lwin Mon comes from a poor family but did not starve. However, she was ‘handicapped’ by the lack of time for doing homework due to her jobs, lack of finance to go to any private tuitions and lack of a computer and mobile phone at home, which most of her classmates had. Like others in her position, she had to rely on the school system or friends’ mobile phones for access to any sort of technology. As this her experiences in school shows, students from poorer families in Myanmar have to contend with helping out at home, contributing financially to the family, restrained in poor study environments, and missing material supports from their families. Such students are at the severe disadvantage in an education system that is more easily understood and completed by students of richer or higher social classes.

[In an individual interview]

Lwin Mon I was a girl from a poor home, but I always wanted to do well in school. I know that I am a good girl and popular (with friends) at school. I enjoy listening to friends' worries. (All of sudden, she had a big smile) You know, I am good at it! So I think that's why I was popular at school.

But after school, I was always too busy. Every day I was assigned papers that were usually due on Friday. On Monday, from afternoon to evening, I babysat my younger sister while my mother worked. Because my father divorced my mother after my third brother was born. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, I worked stocking shelves and cleaning floors in a local supermarket after school until 9:00 p.m. I was lucky to work only three days in the supermarket. By Thursday evening, the only evening I might have available to work on that homework, I was so exhausted I couldn't bring myself to start the paper.

My mother thought she would like to help me, but she was so tired herself that she wasn't able to give me the encouragement or support I needed. There was no one else I could ask because my mother was the only one in her family who got as far as grade 9. Some of my friends at school said it is easy to look up answers on the phone, but I do not have a mobile phone. I often did not finish my homework or just submitted the paper that I quickly copied from the textbooks. I was afraid that if I didn't go to private tuition, I fail my exams and I wouldn't be chosen for speeches on behalf of my class any longer. You know what? I received bad scores that year. The year after I didn't represent my class any longer. Now I've left school. It turned out that all my worries become true.

The case of Lwin Mon and other construction workers clearly shows relations between systematic failures, poverty, and inequalities in formal education. Matriculation Exam based system is deeply linked high level of failing and repetition of grades that have a significant impact on students that

eventually pushed out of school and is more likely to never go back to school in their lifetime. Myanmar's education in the past is arguably the bluntest living example of how politics can rule all levels of national education from its philosophy, principles, policies and educational practices as well as the lives of students.

The school dropouts - who started grade 10 but failed Matriculation Exams or those who started grade 10 but did not attend the Matriculation Exam - express their experiences going through grade 10. Lun Thu is a 17-year-old boy who left school in grade 10 is well-dressed and listening to very loud music on his LG mobile phone with a fancy white earphone. In a regular observation day around the traditional market near East Gate of Shwedagon Pagoda, the conversations about his life outside of school started relatively easily while taking a break from his job at a City Mart Convenience Store. However, the conversations moved on the experiences of his failures in school and his younger brother's failures, his face turned red. With genuinely worried voice, he questioned, "What is the point of all that high school education anyway?" Zin Tun Tin, a 20-year-old girl working at an ice cream stall near where Lun Thu works also emphasized that passing the matriculation exam is fundamentally about finance.

[In an individual interview]

Zin Tun Tin *Attending all the classes at grade 10 seemed irrelevant. The curriculum and what we [did] at school are separate. Some of [our] friends who [came] to all the classes at grade 10, we call[ed] them – one with no brain with a good heart. I think [the] results of [our] national matriculation exam [are] related to [family financial problems]. You really need to invest a few years in private tuition to be able to pass it.*

I really hope that Myanmar people can finish their education without spending too much extra money. I want to change this because children become a kind of sacrifice [in] this situation.

There was no shortage of young people around Sule Pagoda, who are so called ‘out of school’. Right next to Sule Pagoda, there is the Mahabandoola Park, the luxurious headquarters of the Bank and a historic Methodist Church, the park provides a sanctuary for all; students, maids with children, young people who have either finished or are on the way to work. The park is also the focal gathering point for youths like *Zhin Min* and *Lwin Mon*, looking for jobs either in Yangon as well as abroad, and it was not difficult to find young boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 20 who had dropped out of school when they were in lower and upper secondary school. As the director at the AEPRY (Agency for Education of the Poor Rural Youth) suggested that their mobility – reasons for leaving schools and moving to a new city is primarily in financial reason, the environment and opportunities were unfavourable for them.

It is prominent that the youths are extremely critical about their school lives, in relations to both economic situations, quality of education as well as the culture of schooling. In a way, in order to break away from the past, youths seems to highlights the problems that they have faces, often very colourful and occasionally aggressive expressions of the exam system and contusions experiences of failures. On the other hand, they all show the empathic attitude of their family financial status and some did not even *aware* their level of poverty until they are interviewed. There is either a strong sense of rejection (in the case of most of the boys) or stronger nostalgia (in the case of girls) about their memories of schooling.

One striking aspect occurred throughout the participant observations and interviews was that youths themselves collected memories of their experiences in formal schools, re-analysed their experiences of dropping out of school and conceptualized the complex reasons for dropping out - poverty and its linkage with private tuitions, poverty and academic failures, parents' decisions to "not to borrow money for education" and socio-culturally expected roles for sons and daughters from their families and peers. Despite differences of the process, separation from the old – schooling in their hometown- and transition to the everyday flow of activities involving a passage through a threshold state or *limen* into a real world, leave some of the youths in a vacuum of security, growing and learning. Especially, some of the youths who are not exposed to any of the learning opportunities at all, by the exaggerated uselessness of completing any education by uncles, aunties at workplaces removed them from everyday notions of growth of well-rounded development of teenagers.

4.2. Shifting Lives and Learning in Liminality

Lun Thu is not a school boy any more.

He learned real, real things.

He is a man after that night.

Lun Thu's friend from work (November, 2016)

4.2.1. Anonymous Arrivals

The dark, poor, and militarised city of Yangon is on the verge of disappearing. At least it is on the surface of the city. Under the After three decades of isolation, Myanmar's largest and the most commercially important city, Yangon, is now undergoing drastic dramatic economic and social change. The widening gap between the wealthy and those living in poverty is visible through the city. On one hand, decades of economic stagnation have resulted in slums, shanty housing, and poor infrastructure. On the other, the city's skylines are changing rapidly and the increase in wealth is reflected in land and real estate prices that have been skyrocketing since the 2010 election.

Standing out amidst the new extravagant buildings and the many construction sites throughout the city is a 2000-year-old landmark, Sule Pagoda. While religious pilgrimages and foreigners are overwhelmed by the predominance of Shwedagon pagoda, for many of Myanmar's internal migrants, Sule Pagoda is the place to be. Whilst it is still a religious and spiritual place for many, the city's dynamic entrepreneurial growth is strongly evident in Sule Pagoda. The base of the temple is fully surrounded by small shops, tea houses and internet cafes. This is significant in that it not only reflects the city's amazing development but also because it provides places of work for hundreds of construction workers, waitresses and enthusiastic youth entrepreneurs, many of whom have migrated to the city from other areas.

Youths in contemporary Yangon are on the move, in the process of having moved from somewhere and always on the way to somewhere else. As explored in the chapter 2, the youth are becoming one of the major groups of new migration, as urbanization is becoming apparent in recent years. The new waves of young migrants who left their hometown, family, and school have started settling in the bustling space of Yangon and surrounding areas. Almost all of the young people observed and interviewed are originally from outside of Yangon, mainly from dry areas such as the Irrawaddy and Bago regions. It is known that youths from the states like Kayin, Kayah, Kachin, Chin States, they may prefer cross-border migration to Thailand, Malaysia. If they are 'lucky', some managed to Singapore and Korea. It seems there is an influx of migrant youths who left their hometown and are on the move for new lives again and again. This 'modern' types of mobility of migrant youths has been in border areas for at least few decades, but now it is becoming more visible in daily lives in Yangon, since the migrants from central Myanmar is also pouring in the city.

The initial experiences of youths in Yangon had found with relative freedom. Working in the city, around the Sule Pagoda and the streets of 10th to 45th is hard, long and tiring, but also there are plenty of excitements for youth from rural areas. As Turner argued that liminal individuals *have* nothing: "no status, insignia, secular clothing, rank, and kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows" (1967, 98). The group of liminal youth enjoys not a typical social and strict religious hierarchy in their hometown but a communal group in which all are seemingly equal in the first few weeks after arriving in Yangon.

One who has found for daily work and business is a young migrant, Myo Myint. An energetic fruit-seller as well as a former tea shop waiter, Myo Myint happily works in and around this famous historical site of Sule Pagoda. He is

an 18-year-old school dropout who was willing to express the frustration he had felt about school and to explain his decision to leave. In a new settlement in Yangon, youths can be easily socialized and easily met ‘older brothers and uncles’ who know and seen a lot more than their families and friends back at home.

[In an individual Interview]

Myo Mint *Mmm... (With bored facial expressions talking about the past) can I talk about Yangon now? I don't want to talk about the school any more.*

Researcher *Yes, of course. What was your first impression of Yangon? How did you feel?*

Myo Mint *Bright. Very bright. A lot of lights.*
Yangon is fun. There are no teachers beating me. No school anymore. Older brothers are really nice. They know a lot of cool things. When I was working in a grocery shop in my hometown. It was boring. Yangon is fun and full of opportunities for new jobs.

[In an individual Interview]

Researcher *What was your first impression of Yangon? What was the first thing you remember?*

La Min Ko Ko *Bright. Very bright. A lot of lights.*
It is beautiful. They are many beautiful things.
They are also children's parks. Also, they are rides.
Yangon is full of beautiful things.

Just like Myo Mint, Zin Min Htet felt very happy at arrival in Yangon. Especially, Myo Mint and Zin Min Htet both come from Ayeyawady without prior experiences of visiting Yangon, the first impressions was rather strong. Also, their nature of work (in service industry) and their level of education (completed grade 9 and partially attended grade 10) may have granted them in terms of their job choices more flexible than others, those who worked in collective manufacturing industries. Zin Min Htet added his satisfaction on his new status, secular clothing, and life styles. He said, 'I am freer now. There is no ranking in Yangon. There is no poverty in Yangon. I am just like anybody. This is a good feeling'.

On one hand, some youths started noticing other influx of youth workers and started exchanging new information on the whole level of different education. This learning opportunities are seemingly everywhere for youth. They are only 'one click away'. According to boys, especially who finished at least grade 9 such as Min Thet Mg, Zin Mn Htet and Myo Mint, they are more proficient in using mobile phones are much more interested in learning. Min Thet Mg, 19 year old, shopkeeper at the convenience store said, 'Education is everywhere in Yangon. I don't need to go to school any more. In the city, you can learn everywhere. There are a lot private schools to teach everything. Of course, education is in my hand (while pointing his LG mobile phone with a big smile)'. On the other, the initial excitements of arriving in the city has gradually faded out, the imagines space and time with 'no strong ranking, a kinship position' also had deteriorated. Their imagined life in Yangon, just like Turner's expressions on 'nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows and friends had disappeared much faster than they can ever imagined.

4.2.2. Becoming a Man at Work

It did not take long for boys such as Lun Thu, Aung Maw Khant and La Min Ko Ko to realise that 'the new adult world' is neither freer nor equal than their 'discriminatory' 'military like' old world of *Schools*. When they started working more hours, the realities turned into 'harsher' than they imagined. A polite and humble group of boys, who works in the Happy Zone and the traditional market in the Shwedagon Pagoda areas described changes in their lives works. Among those boys, Lun Thu had colourful expressions about his 'terrible' and 'boring' life in his old world of school and very positive experiences in moving Yangon. However, even for Lun Thu, works become harder than he imagined and continuing his education is less likely to happen in near future.

[In an individual interview]

- Lun Thu* *Of course, life is now better. Yangon is great!*
- Researcher* *Has it changed after started working in the construction sites?*
- Lun Thu* *Mmm... yes. The job is hard.*
I get up very early and finish very late.
- Researcher* *Do you miss your school?*
- Lun Thu* *Yes, of course, in schools...*
- 'Older brother'* *Schools are useless.*
- Lun Thu* *Working is harder than I thought. It is a little bit different.*
- 'Older brother'* *You know you are very lucky to have a job*
You are the man who supports your family.
No time for study and shit.
Not anymore.
- Lun Thu* *I know. I know.*

It is true that working as low-skilled labourers in shops and small construction sites are harder than they imagined, but for some boys, there are also pretty important and meaningful events happened in the first few months after arriving at workplace. At construction sites, no ‘newbies’ like Lun Thu will be settled without initiation ceremony in his hometown. Very few boys were – before moving to Yangon - already experienced *Shinpyu*, which is the Buddhist ordination or a form of initiation or ceremony. In Myanmar, like in many parts of Buddhist countries, it is critical for him to be a novice for a certain period in his lifetime for or a Burmese Buddhist male (Boisvert, 2010). As gaining *Nirvana* is the ultimate goal for any Buddhist in Myanmar, having experiences of becoming a novice enables him to gain Karma (often called, Merit) which will enable him, in turn, in his better lived for the future and to gain *Nirvana*. It is widely believed that by entering the order of *The Sangha*, as a novice in this life, it will greatly improve his *Karma* in gaining *Nirvana* in later lives. Also, not only he will gain *Karma*, his parents will also gain the same *Karma* as him. Thus, this is the most crucial event for both the boy and the parents in his life course in Buddhist families in Myanmar (Boisvert, 2010).

It is not difficult to say that it is the Myanmar accepts that boys who is around the age of 10 years have to join *the Order* as a novice. Although there is no definite fixed age for entering the order as a novice, but it is known to be under the age of 19 years and 3 months. Various popular literatures mention that the ages of 19 is very important for Burmese Buddhists. It is a widespread belief that in Buddhism, a person becomes alive at conception, so at 19 years and 3 months, he will be 20 years old. He will usually stay in the Order as a novice for a few weeks, often a week to a month, but may be more for more devoted families. In the monastery, the boy will learn basic principles that are essential in becoming a good Buddhist and it is often said that ‘the true learning’ takes place before the boy becomes a ‘full adult’.

Among six boys, there is only one boy who indeed initiated before he comes to Yangon. This was rather unusual. Aung Maw Khant who almost become a monk in his hometown, explained that he learned all the essentials in the monastery. He wants to learn how to use a computer, but he still believes he is somewhat passed in a critical learning stage. Apart from Aung Maw Khant, none of the boys had experiences their *Shinpyu*. When Lun Thu attempted to lie about the fact that he maybe did *Shinpyu*, he said, ‘no money, not *Shinpyu*. And I went to a temple for the ceremony. That counts something’. Interestingly, while Lun Thu’s colleagues stated joking around the fact that ‘Lun Thu is maybe not a man yet’, Lun Thu had a biggest smile. He slipped through a hint by saying, ‘there is another way possible to become a man outside of temple (all giggles)!’ This ‘alternative way of becoming a man’ was much more common than I expected. Many boys had experienced a sort of an event called, ‘going out with brothers and uncles’.

[In an individual interview]

Researcher Can you tell about the night out? When you go out with brothers and uncles from your work?

Zin Tun Tin (Giggles) Do you drink alcohol?

(Giggles) How can I tell Sayama (female teacher or aunt in Burmese) about going out? (looking at his older brothers)
[inaudible] I cannot!

Zin Tun Tin It is very shocking. Because I need to be a strong man. Supporting families, paying for things for my mother and younger sisters and brothers. So I do things. Heavy drinking, chain smoking, non-stop chewing betel nuts are for start-ups.

‘older What?

brother’ You were not a man before.

*You probably looked a bit like the poor boy with no money.
Now you're different.
Now I know you're a man.*

According to Lun Thu, Zin Min Htet, Min Thet Mg, Myo Mint, and their work friends and managers, this 'going out' is 'a very important adult time'. Also, they stressed that it is very important that the boys should have these experiences before he turns 19 years old. When the boy becomes 19 years old, he is too old for 'this'. The night is set up by more experienced 'uncles' or 'bothers'. This is a day for drinking cheap whisky and rum, chain smoking and chewing betel nuts excessively. This event is taken a place on a day off, depends on working hours arrangement. Because the next day, nobody asked what happened the night before, the boys can be free and can do 'all crazy things' and to do whatever they want. Lun Thu's work friends describe that 'Lun Thu is not a school boy any more (while giggling with face turned red). He learned real things. He is a man after that night. We cannot tell the details to Korean lady (everyone laughs)'.

Later, when his work friends are not around, Lun Thu explained, '[The whole process] was so scary. The whole world looked very different. But when I started chewing betel nuts, I was very very happy. It was like being in a different world. One day, I was in a different world'. Next morning, on the way to the construction sites for building a luxurious shop on Ka Bayar Road, Lun Thu felt something different. He became an adult. His ill behaviours did not mean anything on the next day. His experiences of a form of *modern day Shinpyu* was as if the enactment of some dimensions of the crisis and ill behaviour that brought about the enactment of separation from the structure of everyday life. Zin Tun Tin's successful transition from arrival in Yangon into the workplaces was highlighted by the 'night out' ritual. And these boys have

experienced departing the world of *Old* that was symbolized as *Schooling* and then now entered into *real* world – boys called it, ‘in the adult world’, where he can ‘learn real things’.

The other day, the discussion over the worth of continuous schooling over having jobs took a place in the far south of the city's downtown. There were a few boys who works in renovations of stores and cafes also expresses their strong opinions that it is extremely hard to pass the Matriculation Exams ‘without good three-year investment’. Their narratives are another saga of economic poverty and lack of learning opportunities within and outside the school system, but also strong critique about the quality of education of Myanmar's formal schooling. Especially, 17 years old called Zin Zin Htet who this boy left school in grade 10 is intelligent and shy but stated his experiences quite directly in a very calm manner. Also, Zin Zin Het and his friends relatively have good work experiences and started earning decent livings.

[Interview with Zin Zin Htet becomes a Causal Group Discussion]

Zin Zin Htet *[The] good thing of going to [...] private tuition is pretty clear. In grades 9 and 10, you need to study with teachers who are strict, but they deliver skills and some knowledge. Well, we will never go back to formal school. Never.*

Friend X *Yes, Who wants to go back to school? Schools are useless. School teachers only recite. I was so bored.*

Zin Zin Htet *Yeh, maybe.*

Friend X *No, no. All the boys at work know schools are useless.*

Zin Zin Htet *I went to grade 10 in the beginning of the year. So I know that you can learn something.*

Friend Y *Oh, did you go to grade 10? That is a waste of time (three*

boys giggled altogether)

Friend X *Grade 8 and 9 are waste of time too.*

Friend X *(While laughing) this guy has a good heart. Very kind for nothing. Everyone knows you don't do anything at school.*

Zin Zin *(while giggling with his friends) One time, [I realized that]*

Htet *I could not catch up with anything. So I took private tuition at grade 4 and 5. Then, I was wondering why I have to study the same things twice, as studying is not my favourite thing. Anyway, no one explained anything at school!*

Friend Y *See, they were all decided. All that time for nothing!*

The case of Zin Zin was working relatively easier jobs at convenience stores shows this social interaction with peer groups, to feed each other's perceptions of the importance of having jobs and uselessness of continuing the further studies. Often laughing away when Zin Zin and his friends talked about their experiences in schools. Some totally rejected schooling itself and often tried to persuade his peers to understand how 'useless' it is going to school. Boys during the continuous discussions started comprehending that the reasons that they dropped out were 'somewhat necessary' or 'already destined'. The process of building perceptions among migrant youth workers and their peers, 'older brothers' and uncles in regards to the uselessness of certificates.

Not only Zin Tun Tin but also other friends and colleagues emphasized the uselessness of formal schoolings. When Zin Tun Tin explained about his experiences of settling into his workplace, his 'older brother' are feeding comments to him, by saying 'schools are useless', 'you are the man who supports your family. No time for study and shit'. His past back in school and hometown were portrayed as 'the time looked a bit like the poor boy with no

money' by his colleagues. The constant feedback from his colleagues about being a man continued in almost all the interviews with boys.

In the previous chapter on quality of education, Myo Mint describes how important it is for leaving school and filling duties as a Man. His friend X encouraged him by saying, 'yes, that's the Man!', while Myo Mint had never directly described such as 'going to school was useless for me'. One of the older brother figure (called as a brother, although he is indeed his work colleague) made a conducting remark style comments by saying, "Sayama! I am listening in. One thing. One thing you do not understand. Who wants to pay when you know your children will fail and your children will not have a paper (high school certificate), after all, the years of going to school. Without the certificate, it can be difficult. But now it is okay. No, Problem!" He made very clear not for the researcher but for the newbies that their 'choice' of dropping out of school was reasonable and responsible.

Their refusal of importance on diplomas, credentials or eventually formal education and schooling were being evolved in somewhat in the stark similarities with Paul Willis's classic ethnography, *Learning to Labour*. The strong resemblance between the 1960's working class lads in Birmingham in the UK and the 2010s' working boys in urban Yangon were an unexpected encounter. These individuals are – bases on *communal condemnation*, rather than *individual condemnation*, which was used in Willis' descriptions on the working class lads' choices- striped from their own usual place, location, time and identity, and their constituting social differences while being on the verge of social or personal transformation.

4.2.3. Social Relations of Good Daughters

On the other side of the city centre, the back streets of the traditional markets and small shops and stalls in beautiful parks around, times seems to

stand still for hundreds of years. On the other side of Htet Htet's shop on the East side, the South Gate of Shwedagon Pagoda is quieter and calmer side with splendid views of golden Pagoda and followed by gardens and parks. Linked to the People's Park, there is a hidden Youths' gem, an amusement park called Happy Zone. Compared to construction sites and ever-busy tea houses, young workers of near Sule Pagoda seems to work in relatively safer and relaxed working environment. Though the big sign of "Happy Park" installed everywhere overlaps with the faces of youth workers, looking at their youth customer who came with families and their girl and boy friends in arms. Among many shopkeepers, a group of young girls became quite friendly and comfortable enough to talk about their lives and learning.

During the interview with girls in the area - Yin Yin New, Khin Nwe Nwe, Kanung Sat Naing, and Kgat Nyunt Luu, there were continuous reoccurrence of the words and expression on *Ana* and *Anade*. Not having equivalent expressions in English, which has a very different western interpretation of lifetime politeness (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015). It is known to be characteristics or feeling of self-restraint on being assert. People do consider or require best interests of others to take priority over one's own interests. In other words, it is often characterised by a *hesitation*, *reluctance* or *avoidance*, to act is based on the fear that it will offend someone or cause someone to lose face, or become embarrassed (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Myanmar, 2015).

20 years of ice cream seller, Khin New Nwe who failed the matriculation exam and left grade 10, has a bit more detailed feelings about *Ana* with her experiences of schooling and working. She extensively describes her experiences of failing exams while using the expressions of *Ana* in every third sentence.

[In an individual interview, followed up by a series of group chats]

Khin New Nwe *When I failed the exam, I was very surprised. A moment later, I started worrying because I was being treated like a burden [to] the family. I feel Ana. Oh, I feel Ana.*

Researcher *What do you mean by a feeling of Ana? (Conversation went on about Ana)*

Khin New Nwe *Because I was always a good daughter. I was only afraid of my family's feelings.*

Khin New Nwe *So I decided to work. When start[ing] work [...], [...] everything became convenient and comfortable for everyone. I think I made [a] good decision for everyone.*

Researcher *Do you think the decision of leaving school is right for You?*

Khin New Nwe *I am not sure. Leaving school was good for me or not. Okay. Let me think about it [now] (She wanted to talk about other issues and did not find the answer until the end of the interview)*

On the other side of the Happy Zone of Shwedagon Pagoda, there is a dozen of shops that are tucked away behind small factories and well-known shops selling Buddha products. Selling and haggling with local customers, a Burmese girl explained about new detergents from Thailand. The grocery shop that Htet Htet Lin works in is located in a small back alley market that is known to be only log time local customers. In appearance neglected and dingy, it is in stark contrast to Myanmar's religious and spiritual centre, the magnificent gold-leafed and diamond decorated Shwedagon Pagoda which dominates the area behind the shop. When Htet Htet Lin's grocery store shop owner is absent, she seemed in charge of shop management and exclusively money and

receipt she was holding.

Htet Htet Lin (with a very small voice) My shop owner knows that I have a guest today. I am talking...

Lady Aren't you supposed to finish writing up the recipe?

From shop across Let me see. Let me see.

Younger shopkeeper Sister, auntie asked you to finish...

Htet Htet Lin (The girl wrote two more items on the receipt and stopped. Then she stared at the receipts and continued with the interview) Then.... I started losing

Lady From shop across Did you finish doing the thing? Right?

Researcher (Changing the topic) Oh, do you have new sprays for bugs? How much are the new ones? (Conversations continues on purchasing the spray)

Htet Htet Lin I started losing interest in school. I think the stress push[ed] me away. At that time, my family's financial situation became much worse. Then, I really had no choice. The whole process was very confusing. I quit school in 2013 when I was in grade 5. Then I moved to Yangon. (Her voice shook slightly and tears built up).

Lady From shop across Did you give the lady a receipt?

Most of the young workers around East and South gates of Shwedagon Pagoda uses the experiences evolved around *Anade* and also these expressions were implanted in the course of discussion on 'good daughter', 'good son', 'strong son' and 'sharing daughter'. There are mixed expressions included. Some express their happiness of being able to provide the financial means to the family, but at the same time, their nuances and body languages express – social pressures and economic and emotional burdens on youth workers, expectations from grandparents, parents and their siblings. While social norm of giving and sharing are important aspects of Myanmar's everyday social lives, young workers of the Happy Zone expressed that they are genuinely happy about supporting families and feel great proud in their good acts and deeds. The striking example is the case of Htet Htet Lin. The whole process interviewing her represented her struggles to resist social pressure, hard acceptance of power and some level of fear of distressing others.

There were notably much more drop out boys were visible or approachable than girls socializing in the public spaces. Of those interviewed in these public spaces, more than 90 percent were boys, whilst this invisibility of girls lead the research to explore more into the 'traditional' or - I call it - intimate' realms of living, learning, and labour. In the previous chapter, it was emphasized that there are notable differences between boys and girls in enrolments were, whilst significant dropout trends appeared common for both boys and girls. The drivers for dropping out of school and the patterns of their lives after settling in Yangon varied according to gender.

Commonly, most of boys and girls who wanted to continue to studies and learning after moving to Yangon and how in realities difficult it is because of work, working hours, financial situations, priorities are usually for parents and younger siblings, they seems to be often caught in between. In comparison to the four girls mentioned about *Ana*, *Anade*, *Dana* or *Sedana* (benevolence

or generosity), Aung Maw Khant, a boy who works at a shop across from Khin Nwe Nwe and Kaung Sat Naing have different experiences and views on the *Anade*. He left school at grade 4 is excited to work in Yangon but he was quite clear that he still be a good son if he became a monk as he was recommended by his family. The 15 years old helper at Teashop at People's Park, as the youngest son in his family, always received love and support from devoted Buddhist mother. He also talked about his feeling of *Anade* because he does not support his family as much as he wanted. His mother needs more money, but since he is young, his economic contribution for the family is quite minimum. However, as a boy, Aung Maw Khant who also went through Buddhist initiation ceremony was treated in different light. According to the owner of the tea house, he may come from a poor family, but he as a boy may born with strong Hpon – the charisma¹⁹ that come to a man. Thus, he can be educated in any time soon and become important in the future. The teahouse owner said, 'I feel. I know he has strong Hpon. Even my husband treat him differently'.²⁰²¹

Clear findings were the commonalities from girl adolescents' fatalistic comments on schooling in the past. First, girl adolescents were often fatalistic expressions such as 'parents' decisions' or 'decided paths'. The words and

¹⁹ A man with *Hpon* is a leader who takes risks, settles disputes, listens to junior members, directs and commands without coercion, and often has a far-reaching vision that allows him to coordinate people's services and resources to make things actually happen. Notion of charisma may be found in the Burmese term *hpon*. Nash has described this concept as such that "a man of *Hpon* need not try to dominate, for his power radiates, and people come to him to give allegiance and to offer up services and trust" (1965, 272).

²⁰ Spiro describes monks to be equipped with something special that "accounts for the monks' prestige and position in Burmese society" (1970, 401).

²¹ Spiro states, "By cultural prescription, the exercise of authority (*awaza*) is a male prerogative, so any social status endowed with authority is, by cultural ascription, a male monopoly" (1997, 13). Spiro attributed a gender-specific value to the exercise of power, but most of my informants said a woman was not excluded from having such a quality. His essentialist viewpoint on "female inferiority" has not helped to further our understanding of gender relationships in Myanmar. Nash stated that he was not exactly clear as to the notion of a woman's *hpon* and he spells it as *Hpon* (1965, 52).

expressions of *Ana* and *Anade*, *Dana*, *Sedana*, were used so often that there was no necessity in translating when the discussion revolved around the cultural reasons of leaving schools.

More importantly, girl adolescents observed and interviewed had very distinctive body language. The body languages such as hand gesture. It was observed that girls seem to take great care about all the interactions with hands. The gesture of placing one hand firmly under the elbow of an extended arm to owners, customers and even '*Korean Sayama*'²² – was taken very seriously. Second body language caught the researchers' eye' were their feet. Whilst Buddhist consider the heads to be the most sacred part of human body and feet are held to be the dirtiest. Whenever our conversations evolved into the deeper, discussing the family, family responsibilities, mothers, sisters and brothers and their devotion to Buddhism, girls often re-adjusted their posture and made sure their feet were not heading the researcher.

Throughout any interviews that I conducted with girls, I did not see any of feet or soles of girls during the interviews on the chair, floor and even in the ground with dirt. This was rather drastic contrast to boys observed and interviewed. Boys perceived themselves that they had already 'became a man' around the age of 16 and this was socially accepted by the uncles, older brothers and friends in their workplaces. In this context, boys were hitting each other's' heads, pointing things with their feet and did not place one hand under the elbow when passing objects to older visitors such as researchers.

Despite the stark differences in their physical appearances in public realm, verbal and non-verbal expressions between boys and girls, their decisions of leaving schools and seeking employment wherever they can go were commonly rooted in their devotion to their family. There was no

²² Sayama means an educated middle aged woman or teacher, or married woman in Burmese.

questions on that communal decisions. One hard to miss aspect was the meaning of what they perceived freer and more prosperous liminal space of Yangon was becoming very clearly not emancipatory for everyone.

After a long day of continuous interviews around Main and East Gates of the glowing golden Shwedagon Pagoda in October of 2016, the Burmese translator had unnoticeable facial expressions – not sure whether she was sad or worried. While she cited an old Burmese Proverb about good sons and daughters of Myanmar, the sun is about to set and Yangon’s boys and girls are was already busy cleaning and packing goods for sales for next day of work.

Tharr ka “arr” pal phyit pa ay “kyarr” ma phyit say nak

Thamee ka “htee” pal phyit pa say “mee” ma phyit say nak

Good sons are strengths for family

Good daughters are umbrella for family

Bad sons can be a tiger for family

Bad daughters can be fire for family

-Myanmar Proverb

4.3. No Way to Return

The school is in no use. There is no way I go back to school because of my busy schedule. Teachers should come to me.

Teachers should come to teach me. That'd be a change!

Anonymous boy (December, 2016)

Being in betwixt and between schools and jobs, a big city can be intimidating, exciting as well as confusing, while the liminality itself an opening experiences for youths. But in the Youth's expressions and perceptions, feeling of being in between was uncertain, but always exciting. This continued only until the realisation of harsh working environments and a lack of opportunities for changes in learning and employment. Meanwhile, the passage is consummated in a relatively stable state within working and living sphere for migrant youth workers. By virtue of this, he or she is expected to behave in accordance with certain traditional norms and ethical standards by the social structure surrounded and of social positions in the very system of such position (Turner, 1969, 1997; 94). The passages of migrant youth workers' integration, re-integration or another possible separation are not yet clear until encountering narratives and social relations of migrant youth workers who receive regular education right at right space of work.

4.3.1. A Few Lucky Ones

So called, teashop boys, who are more likely to be waiters at restaurants and cafes in other cultures, are often depicted one of the symbols of Burmese hospitality, generosity and even some sense of naivety in numerous popular literature about Myanmar. One of the field sites for the thesis was teahouse around Yangon's landmark, Sule Pagoda. As introduced in previous chapters,

this temple is filled with not only religious but also commercial activities, which practically provides hundreds of jobs for children and youths. When it comes to education opportunities, youth workers not only their employers and parents expresses their realistic and practical answers. Among the practical and uneducated youth entrepreneurs, there was one boy who sells betel nuts was passing by. He exclaimed, 'The school is in no use. There is no way I go back to school because of MY busy schedule (with emphasising the word of 'my' while opening the eyes wide open). Teachers should come to ME. Teachers should come to teach ME. (With pointing his chest. The laughter of his friends followed". (Giggles while rolling eyes) that's the change!'

For these young workers, entrepreneurs, and shop owners simply going to school is unrealistic. As the betel nuts seller explained, it may be unrealistic due to time constraint, but it is more likely that they make 'rational choice' between giving up incomes for their family and themselves and going to schools which issue 'useless certificate' without really skills. In this regards, finding an NGOs, referred by local teashop boys near Sule Pagoda and in the street of 36 was a rather unexpected journey.

Indeed, there was a group that exclusively works with street and labour children and youth with unique ways of working such as facilitating learning rather than teaching, emphasizing roles of leadership, of, adaptation of technologies and flexible learning and more importantly providing learning opportunities physically inside of or next to youth's working places that ensure the youths do not have to quit their jobs while learning with this organisations. The comments from other tea shop boys, describing them as those who 'must be learning something at the community centres' and 'study with ease because they can study at their own workplaces' was in turn was rather accurate depiction of the youth who were indeed played and learned (they seem to pale

rather than study on the surface). The group of boys who were attending evening class fewer explained in details in chapter 3, but there was visible

By asking the same questions of the boys and of the girls in a 'naturalistic setting', the group interviews with the boys at the NGOS was also primarily an exploration of their beliefs, perceptions, and culture about their own experiences within the school and outside of school. There were a number of critical aspects that were identified. First, their experiences of breaking away or separation from the Old and the Schooling as traumatic as those who are not in the group. Especially, experiences and feeling of being poor at school and discovering relative poverty in unpleasant ways during daily schools activities were easily verbalised by the Yangon's youth was found in common. Therefore, their mobility – reasons for leaving schools and moving to a new city has also explained as primarily in financial reason. However, strong resemblances with critiques on their school lives, in relations to both economic situations, quality of education as well as the culture of schooling were striking. Expressions such as 'teachers, only recite, recite and recite', 'teachers who beat all the time', 'feel ashamed of being poor' were all expressed in the course of describing their experiences of schools.

However, their expressions about their transition process were much 'smoother' and their status and living and working conditions were much more 'stable'. By noticing their close social relations – as some called it 'comradeship' – was due to the referral system of migration, according to the boys in the group discussions. Almost of half of boys were from the Ayeyawady regions and another half of the Kayin group migrated from the same region were all part of the referral from families, relatives, and friends. Separation from the old – schooling in their hometown- and transition to the everyday flow of activities involving a passage through a threshold state into a real world did not seem to be such harsh or dramatic experiences for these

youths. This maybe because they do not necessarily live in a vacuum of security, but with the strong referral system of job seeking between family members and friends, as soon as they arrive, they were already a part of *Communitas* of living, working and learning (with the support of the education activities within their workplaces). In this sense, the experiences of being in liminality in urban Yangon were vastly different from those fourteen youths who did not belong to any ethnic associations and educational community organisations.

Other notable differences were their detailed description on their situations about learning as well as aspirations for future learning were quite detailed. Most of all, they also had problems from former schooling experiences and they did not achieve academic successes, there was no exaggerated uselessness of completing any education and further there were no negative feedbacks from uncles, aunties, and brothers in regards to disregarding education and learning both in the formal and informal setting. Below is the part of natural conversations were held in the between two different focus group interviews between 'older brothers and youngest boy' in the class. The older brothers did not ridicule the comments of the younger one and provided very realistic recommendations for steps of learning and the workable attitudes for learning.

[In a naturalistic conversation between older brothers and one younger one]

Boy A I think I want to be a chief.

Brother X Good Idea. But you need to be a good waiter, first.

Three years of more hard work to be a good waiter

Boy A Three years? That's too long.

Brother X Yes, also you need to be a good waiter. You need to memorize all the menu and prices, first.

- Boy A* *Okay then, I can be a chef.*
- Brother Y* *Yes. Make sure you know how to count better, though.*
- Brother X* *Ah, ask Tun Tun. He is very good at counting. He memorized everything also. And don't skip the math class.*
- Boy A* *Do you know that I missed last math, class?*
I like to attend mobile phone repairs class, not the class with counting.
- Brother Y* *(While patting on Boy A's head) Hey, little one. You need to finish the basic course. And then, you can come to the higher level course with mobile phones.*
- Brother X* *The facilitator said, 'nothing is free'. You remember?*

The biggest group discussions was with this group to oversee enabled progressive dialogues between themselves and it highlighted areas of interest such as their social relations. After all, these social interactions – first observed during natural conversations become more visible throughout the interviews, which can overlook in a one-to-one interview. The conversation above shows positive feedback from the older ones to younger school drop out in daily conversations. The older ones stated their opinions and advice for the younger ones, touched the head of the younger boys and made fun of him, but not to any degree of harshness.

In a much-unexpected location, not in a large and fancy International organization or not in NGO offices or schools, young boys gathered to learn within the restaurants, where they physically worked during the day time. There seems to be an opportunity for *Communitas of Learning* was being provided in a very casual environment. This learning space was kind enough to youth not to ask them to quit jobs, give up incomes for NGO's financial or in-

kind subsidiaries and flexible enough that facilitators –not teachers - come to the workplaces for class with their curriculum in mobile phones, brave enough to persuade the owners of teashops for benefits of learning and more importantly, realistic and warm enough to foster social relation between boys regardless of their age, class, hometowns. In a relatively loose learning environment, where most of the boys are not even registered in the education system, they are in good enough betwixt and between the positions that assigned and arrayed by custom, relations and social relations of learning.

Regardless their hard day work, low salary for many of under-age children and youth migrant workers, there are provided temporary safe space for learning and social relations. There was age differences and age hierarchy, but they were relatively freer or looser social order of ethnicity, religions or ranking. All of them were boys, thus it was not possible to explore gender differences, and however, there was the clear lack of authoritarian relations between teachers and students. Rather, on some occasions, teachers were treated by students, just like one of the older brothers. Having a sort of complementary social relations within this experimental *Communitas*, there were some elements of opposition in being temporarily classless. Probably, these boys at the NGOs are the only ‘a few lucky ones’ as La Lin Ko Ko who are able to work and learn at the same time.

5.3.2. Not All That Emancipatory

Flexibility and mobility are typically viewed as endemic features of late modernity, leading to increased emphasis on the importance of transition during life course for anyone. Maybe some who have been optimistic about the future in Myanmar in terms of their bright future for economic prosperity, social and cultural changes for better lives and even opportunities to finish secondary schools and getting into technical colleges or universities, if they

wish to do so. However, among twelve youths, who are migrant youth workers, school dropouts with poor family backgrounds, not belong to any formal education institutions or community centres, previous experience of ‘failure’ is particularly damaging. All of the participants show reticence in putting themselves in situations where they have previously experienced failure in schooling. Collective histories of failures are also evident among the youth. Although their collective histories can be results of enforced as a social and cultural construct for them, individuals such as Myo Mint, Zin Min Htet, and Mo Mo, Lun Thu, Aung Maw Khant and La Min Ko Ko choose the paths of their older brothers as these are assumed as known both chose manual work following their families.

Is going back to formal schooling or even a possible option for migrant youth? Is going to back formal schooling necessary for them? Boys and girls participated in the interviews had seriously asked themselves. It is almost natural for boys and girls those who are working full time that does not have any opportunities for creating *Communitas for socialising and learning*, seems to suffer from barriers of lack of social relations and lack of learning networks and further rejection of archiving not only for them but also for their family. Peter who works with rural boys who migrated in Yangon are concerned, but overall positive about the future of his boys’ resetting in a new city, new life and of course new learning opportunities for vocational trainings and skills development for their profession. One of education specialists and leaders who participated in the research, U Myo Win from Smile Education and Development Foundation (2016) commented,

“You know that is right like generation like those people who are born after 1960, 1970 like our generation you know. We are products of the socialist government and also military government time. So, we suffered from socialist is 60 years. The military is 22 years. So, you see that is a

long time. So, for us, we have to struggle a lot. We have to struggle a lot. But, the younger generation is very fortunate. There are a lot of options you know. A lot of scholarships, potentials. Our generation we are done. We have not much choice whatever available no money also. Slowly the mind-set[s] of the students are changing. As the country is moving forward to intellectual sector and intellectual business. Many people are nowadays attending [for the certificate]. Last three or four years, certificates [become] very popular. Many young people are going to study computer and other marketing managements and human resource management. I'll say that many people are getting interest[ed] in education. Soon, they see the value of education. They will begin to see. Soon. Very soon!"

Generalized social bands have ceased to be has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into multiple of structural ties such as superior and worker relations. There was a contrast to individuals in the natural setting of observations and interviews, those youth who have no learning opportunities or what so ever indeed leave the boys and girls not being able to seek further education or not even learning in their community education. Probably previous notions on ‘young people should go back to school’ is important, but this concept itself may needs alternatives. What if there were more learning opportunities in communities? What if the classes come to the workplaces of the youth workers? What if government led long distant education become more substantial and more meaningful? One day, while interviewing one of the boy participant, on 34th street, there was one bright and pleasant boy passed by and said, ‘the school is in no use. There is no way I go back to school because of my busy schedule. Teachers should come to me. Teachers should come to teach me. That’d be a change! (2016)’.

As the observations, interviews, and discussions continued, it is becoming more critical that becoming in economically marginal with Myanmar's unique concept of family responsibilities persistent labouring, caring and warm social relations with shop owners and aunties in the traditional market, are often turned into strictly business oriented approach, when it comes to the girls' desire expressed for their learning and future jobs. Not only there is no positive feedback on desires of learning, rather schooling is looked down upon, graduation is portrayed as useless and aspiration for education is seen as mere stupid fantasy. Some recommendations and sporadic suggestions and their guides for better lives for the youth were also in the owners' benefits.

CHAPTER 6.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Theoretical Perspectives

6.1.1. On Liminality, Outsiderhoods, and Structural Inferiority

On liminality

As discussed in Chapter 3, for Turner, liminality in terms of social structure and time is an intermediate state of being 'in between' in which individuals are stripped of their own usual place, location, time and identity, and their constituting social differences while being on the verge of social or personal transformation (Turner, 1990). In Chapter 5, the detailed narratives of the twelve boys and girls depicted their experiences and perceptions - Looking at the space of *separation* from "Old Education System" and passing through on *thresholds* into an "Urban Slums of Yangon City". The initial experiences of youths had found with relative freedom. It is shown in their narratives that, the group of liminal youth enjoys what can be considered a freer and not typically social and strict religious hierarchy in their hometown but a communal group in which all are seemingly equal in the first few weeks after arriving in Yangon. These individuals are – bases on *communal choice* rather than *individual condemnation*, which was used in Willis' descriptions on the working class lads' choices- striped from their own usual place, location, time and identity, and their constituting social differences while being on the verge of – imagined - social or personal transformation.

Unlike Victor's idealistic and positive account on liminality as a dialectical space for transformation, the liminal space for the Yangon's migrant youths cannot necessarily be seen as the pre-stage for transformation.

Rather, the liminal space for the youths is the time and space for complex interplay between realization of their structural realities of labour and internal struggles to become someone new. Was Turner's concept on "non-structure or anti-structure" that Turner continuously referred to in "betwixt and between" which is perceived as the "realm of pure possibility" and structural invisibility (1969, p.97) relevant to today's migrant youth workers in Yangon? Was this anti-structure or *Communitas* stay as reactively structure-less, relatively dialectic based on relations of equality against the existing structure (Turner, 1990) and eventually opposed to the normative social structure?

The research has found that Yangon's migrant youths in the anti-structure, through boys' modern day *Shinpyu* of 'becoming a man', they experiences in liminality in their own cultural terms. The liminal individuals or entities as "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony" (1969, p.95) can be found especially for boy participates in the study. For one night out with having drinking, chewing betel nuts, smoking and possible sexual experiences created opportunities for them to in "betwixt and between" through and "structural invisibility (1969, p.97)". For Yangon's young migrant workers, during the 'night-out, rather than having a Buddhist initiation, *Shinpyu* in a more traditional ways, they did experience temporal structural invisibility, that they can do 'anything' they want and they can cause problems and be rude to older' for forgiven for one night out.

However, the study have found that this temporal experiences of initiations whether they are 'proper' Buddhist or modern form of 'having a fund night out' limited to only boys. Especially those youth who are ding in manual works that provide critical changes Myanmar's future. In Chapter 5, *Structured Failures in School life of Youth* explained in details that despite differences of process, separation from the Old – schooling in their hometown-

and transition to the everyday flow of activities involving a passage through a threshold state or *limen* into the real world, has left some of the youths in a vacuum of further learning. They are not being educated in the daily lives as if individuals in workplaces do not acquire much complex skills and knowledge and they are destined to be ‘a manual worker’ without any further formal or community education. There are indeed going through the process of dropping further to be as cheap manual labours. In this process, the boys participated, learned new life skills in the process of becoming a man for adopting new ‘working class attitudes’ such as sexism, while the girls further go deep into fatalistic process of fulfilling the work and domestic roles as a woman for their shop owners and aunts.

On Structural Inferiority and Outsiderhoods

In ‘Liminality and Communitas,’ Turner perceived anti-structure as “realm of pure possibility” and “structural invisibility”. However, in order to discuss the pure possibilities, which already embrace the sense of positivity, the findings from Yangon's migrant youth on the topic of *Communitas* hints at somewhat less hopeful directions. The research also clearly shows the underlying assumptions about the youth workers that fact these young workers are as only ‘labourers’ who work, earn livings, but not perceived as active citizens, who contribute to formal and informal economy, contribute to their families, marry and start their own families. And therefore, they should be beneficiaries of national and city social services such as basic health and education as well as protection and safety.

Here it is critical to mention that this research is primarily about an individual going through an initiation process of change. However, if one million youths are going through a similar pattern of process – leaving school due to poverty, experiencing a lack of quality education, experiencing issues

with families and then migrating inside and outside the country - with few receiving opportunities for further learning, this has strong implications for society and the current social change. The survey from the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) the harsh realities of education system reform in Myanmar still suffered, which is shown with disturbing records, that the 17.9% of students of lower secondary school and 42.9% of students of upper secondary school were out-of-school children and youth.

One needs to be cautious about generalisation from my findings or making replications for the results in other youth groups in different countries may be difficult. However, the findings of micro studies and their implications for macro picture are hard to miss. As explained in chapter 1 and 3, currently 10.5% students in primary school age, 15 % students in lower secondary school age and 40% students in upper secondary school age In this logic, some may argue that at least there will be one million kids who will become one million uneducated and unskilled 18- 20 years old in five years' time. Especially in the case of the lower secondary and upper secondary dropouts with low skilled manual works - the youths participated in this research were not very aware that of their busy working life and resettlement in Yangon was not preparing them for better working opportunities, however, education and youth leaders interviewed throughout the research are becoming increasingly concerned that most of the youths will lack any accumulative knowledge, skills, adequate communication skills or confidence required for future jobs. Many warn that if these youth stay the way they are and cannot be adopted in the changing work environments, then they cannot be 'usable' in the emerging market. As it can be found in Chapter 5, the in-depth Interviews with U Myo Mint, U Thant Taw Kayng, Daw Pearl Mayng (2016) confirmed uneasy and difficult picture of Myanmar's contemporary education.

It is argued that to contextualize the situations, process and future of these youth, it is critical to explore them as liminal state of being. While these youths are in liminal stage is quite evident, their status does not seem to be an idealistically objective and experimental status of being which supposedly leads to transformation of community or oneself, unlike Turner's idealistic arguments of liminality where structure and anti-structure dialectically evolves to create the experimental time and space and provide basis for future transformation. Missed or misunderstood real opportunities and the treacherous approaches of accepted opportunities, become the collective myth of the future of the youths.

Rather, it is more likely the stage of liminality will lead to a transformation state of marginality and *inferiors*: in other words to be on the margins of the powerful persisting structure. As the terms "marginal" and "marginalized" are well established in social science, as often someone who has been marginalized has been pushed to the edges of society and out of position of power or influence. The study challenges the gendered day-to-day learning and life options for youth. The cases of girls participated in the study explained that girls are not supposed to have Hpon (spiritual charisma) from their 'past lives'. Therefore, they have to work harder, earn harder and share more to gain more *Merits* to become better in the next live. Girls with stronger aspirations for more education and learning, there are 'born with' complicated stigma that dominate their process of life - dropping out, moving out, working, dreaming of studying again. Girls are constantly – as structurally inferior beings- become socially and culturally construct themselves to become more benevolent, generous and merciful ones for their families and communities.

In the real lives for Yangon's migrant youths, these standards are not always mutually exclusive. Both refer to a position of absolute or relative powerlessness, and those in this position have no choice in the matter of

working and learning at the same time. The contribution of this ethnographic account, theoretically is that there are ironic interplays that exists in the passages toward re-integrations into *New Community*, *New Organization* or *New Self*. This *communitas* that Yangon's youth migrant workers live in is neither more emancipatory than *Old World of Schooling* nor is it the space for transformation for leaning for the marginalised migrant youth.

6.1.2 On *Communitas* of Learning

At construction sites, no 'newbies' like *Zin Tun Tin* will be settled without an initiation ceremony. Before moving to Yangon some boys had already experienced *Shinbyu*, the Buddhist initiation ceremony for boys in Myanmar. However, it was more common that boys experienced an event called 'going out with brothers and uncles'. This going out event is set up as a night of heavy drinking, chain smoking and excessive chewing of betel nuts, mimetic enactment of that has within it some dimensions of crisis and ill behaviour that re-enact separation from the structure of everyday life. These boys have experienced the departure from the old world symbolized as *schooling* and entry into the real world – the boys interviewed called it 'in the adult world', where one can 'learn real things'. *Zin Tun Tin* 's successful transition from his arrival in Yangon into the workplace is highlighted by the 'night out'. Of their transition process, the boys said this was much 'smoother' and that their status and living and working conditions were much more 'stable'

By noticing their close social relations – as they call it 'comradeship' – was based on a referral system of migration, according to the boys in the group discussions. Almost of half of boys were from Irrawaddy regions and another half of the Kayin group migrated from the same region and found employment and comradeship was as a result of referral from families, relatives and friends. Separation from the old – schooling system in their respective hometowns and

the transition to the everyday flow of activities involving a passage through a threshold state into a real world did not seem to be such harsh or dramatic experiences for these youths. This maybe because they do not necessarily live in a vacuum of security, but with the strong referral system of job seeking between family members and friends, as soon as they arrived in Yangon for work, they were already a part of the *Communitas* of living, working and learning with the support of the skills and learning activities within their workplaces). In this sense, the experiences of being in liminality in urban Yangon were vastly different from the group of fourteen youths (from the ‘naturalistic research’) who did not belong to any ethnic associations and educational community organisations.

Other notable differences were their detailed description on their learning opportunities in out-of-school learning as well as aspirations for future learning. Most of all, they also had problems from formal schooling experiences and they did not achieve academic successes. But more importantly, there was exaggerated cultural production – as if completing education is ‘useless’ for further jobs and from ‘uncles, aunties, brothers and sisters’. In the previous chapter, we contemplated the meaning of natural conversations that took place between ‘older brothers and a youngest boy’ in the NGO. The older brothers did not ridicule the comments of the younger one and provided a very realistic recommendations for steps of learning and a workable attitudes for learning.

Probably, there is some hope for Myanmar’s style *Communitas of Learning*. Throughout the interviews, Dr. U Thant Thaw Kaung from Daw Khin Kyi Foundation emphasised that ‘hope is here. Should not hurry. So many people waited so long for this democracy. The changes will slow but young people should be patient for the change. Changes are coming. But they will come in the Myanmar speed and in Myanmar way (U Than Taw Kaung,

2016). Most of all, this kind of community initiatives can open a door for strengthening Myanmar's alternative school system, supporting existing and new non-formal schools, mobile and boat schools and even developing stronger accelerated learning programs for average students. But more importantly, by offering social interactions between older and younger students, giving positive and realistic feedback, being able to learn in a friendly environment, while keeping their jobs was 'working out' for the youth workers. The older ones stated their opinions and advice for the younger ones, touched the head of the younger boys and made fun of him, but not to any degree of harshness. Temporary safe space for learning and social relations are available and relatively freer or looser social order of ethnicity, religions or ranking, although there were clear age differences and age hierarchy and sense of *Anade* visibly existed in space of these communities. In this communal space, *Dana* – being benevolent, being generous – and *Anade*, - feeling of empathy were shared. *Dana* was not only social and cultural pressured of younger ones by powerful monks, government officers, teachers or anyone who is richer than them. This is because we found glimpse of hope that there was value in being benevolent, generous to others, being empathic for families, friends were appreciated and valued among the members of learning initiatives that I have observed.

Their realistic assessment of their position needs another breakaway from usual working days. The systematic cultural self-adjustment of the migrant youth workers for a certain kind of binary ideas - whole notion of 'from a good son to a man', 'from naïve school lives to 'real world', 'from a little girl to a 'productive daughter', 'from a happy student to 'obedient shopkeeper', which makes them further step far from so-called 'transformation'. This is because they live in the day to day narratives of recommendations and judgment of the Culture of Anti-Education; 'Jobs are

just way of earning money’, ‘Don't worry. You are becoming a real man’, ‘every job is the same’, ‘To feed your family, you don't need a certificate’. Also, it is important to note that gender, ethnicity and locations variables share this characteristic, but the argument on domination and condemnations of the schooling, is certainly not automatic and direct.

There are numerous studies done on macro inequalities, and more recently micro-inequalities within the classroom. Youth experiences and agency become a reflection of structure. As Bowles (1976) Gintis (1976), Apple (2001) all explored old and new forms of educational inequalities, in Myanmar, there were apparent educational inequalities based on gender, locations, income persisted. It is evident that the root causes of inequality in Myanmar's education system are mainly due to political and sociocultural issues. Formal education in Myanmar's past can be perceived as a political and social reproduction of disadvantages and inequalities of Myanmar society itself. Thus, these inequalities have been and are currently being recycled through the education system and other social institutions in Myanmar which were established under former governments and still structurally lingers contemporary Myanmar's education system.

Further, Jerome Karabel emphasised that education institutes essentially mirror the relations of dominance in the workplace. Further, Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1971, 1981) investigated the most intimate details of everyday life that provide more persuasive theories and narratives in which people were defining themselves as the *Others* by highlighting the process of how working class lads' constituting themselves 'as political and social subjects'. However, there is a lack of understanding of educational inequities in liminality stage. Perceptions of youths in transition and youths on the move – both rich and poor.

6.2. Conceptual Perspectives

6.2.1. Outer Process of Liminality

In the *Outer Process of Liminality*, it is found that Yangon's dropout youths are pushed out of the social structure – school, which invisibly but symmetrically pushed them out through hierarchy of education. It is evident that Yangon's dropout youths left school based on the family's 'communal' choices that are the parents' 'communal choices' based on poverty and ultimate mistrust and dissatisfactions on a lack of quality education. The Interplay Between Poverty, System and Quality of Education can be seen in the youths collected memories of their experiences in formal schools, and the re-analysing of their experiences of dropping out of school and conceptualization of the complex reasons for dropping out- poverty and its linkage with private tuitions, poverty and academic failures, parents' decisions to "not to borrow money for education" and socio-culturally determined roles for sons and daughters from their families and peers. Despite differences of process, separation from the old- schooling in their hometown- and transition to the everyday flow of activities involving a passage through a threshold state or *limen* into a real world, leave some of the youths in a vacuum of security, growing and learning. Especially, some of youths who are not exposed to any learning opportunities at all, by exaggerated uselessness of completing any education by uncles, aunties at workplaces removed them from everyday notions of growth of well-rounded development of teenagers.

The interplay between unequal education system and lack of good quality education are shown in the collected memories of their experiences in formal schools and their re-analysed experiences of dropping out of school. It was observed that the youths were aware of the complex reasons for dropping out - poverty and its linkage with private tuitions, poverty and academic

failures, parents' decisions to "not to borrow money for education" and socio-culturally expected roles for sons and daughters from their families and peers. Despite differences of process, breaking away from the Old, symbolized as old fashioned, authoritarian schooling back in their hometown- and the transition to the everyday flow of activities involving a passage through a threshold state or *limen* into a real world, leave some of the youths in a vacuum of security, growing and learning. Specifically, some of youths who are not exposed to any of the learning opportunities at all, by exaggerated uselessness of completing any education at workplaces removed them from everyday notions of growth with education.

Poverty

The fulfilment of one's education is closely linked to students of low socio-economic status which were described in various cases in Chapter 6. Especially in the case of Myo Myint and Mo Mo from Sule Pagoda area, Zhin Min and Lwin Mon from the Mahabandoola Park area– who expressed the concerns about of school dropouts with regards to the limited opportunities found in formal schools which are intrinsically connected to their economic and social backgrounds, rather than their educational aspirations and capabilities. As stated in Chapter 2 the recent Myanmar Governments' Myanmar Governments' policy and strategic directions are changing, the situation leading them to drop out of school was not only about technical variables in national surveys such as school accessibility issues such as 'no money for fees', 'school too far' or 'lack of transport' (as explained in chapter 3 and 4), but more about how theirs economically and socially structured and constructed learning environment and opportunities were unfavourable for them.

Education System

In the *Outer Process of Liminality*, in the thesis, there were mainly three

aspects which were explored; first, relative poverty of family; second, structural failures of the formal schooling system; third, persisting issues of the quality of education. The elite structure set up by British administrators during the colonial period continue to perpetuated elite education system that inevitably leads to a systems of “Failure”, even for children and youth under the age of 16 (Myo; 2014). Further, it is evident that Myanmar’s formal schooling in the past had served an important social institution that contributed s-to both manifest and latent functions. As a result of the military governments keeping the “inherited” British education system, the new administration has a lot of a lot of challenges (Myo; 2014). From both policy and technical reviews as well as in-depth interviews with leading education specialists and youth leaders, the real issues of inequality Myanmar’s educational system with regards to accessibility, availability, affordability are confirmed to be deeply rooted in 30 years of Military governments and which embedded these inequalities into the very culture of Myanmar’s education today.

In turn, the challenging task of the ongoing Comprehensive Education Reform may provide fresh new opportunities to break away from the inheritances. Whoever this will be only possible if there is a close examination of the most urgent issues in Myanmar’s society - fostering the *New Generation* of the country. Myanmar has recently and is undergone and is currently undergoing a dramatic transition from being one of the most closed off and isolated countries in the word to joining the free market economy, now is a critical opportunity for the country to carefully examine and look for insights for re-establishing the fundamental foundations on how to foster their children and youths, rather than mechanically setting up the foundations of education for the sake of bringing up ‘workable and practical’ human resource for growth. As extensively discussed in the thesis, inequality is a political and socio-cultural construct, which is universally seen but represent particularities

of certain countries' challenges. It is also evident that the root causes of inequality in Myanmar's education are very much political and sociocultural issues. The formal education system in Myanmar's past can be perceived as political and social reproduction of disadvantages and inequalities of Myanmar society itself. Thus further, inequalities has been recycled through the education system and other social institutions in Myanmar under the former governments.

In the liminal phase of living in 'out-of-school' space and time, it is found that Yangon's migrant youths started discovered 'opportunities' of lives that new 'successful people' such as business owners, shop, construction managers whom are called as 'uncles, aunties, elder brothers and sisters'. The distinct rejections against structure of youths further enhances their mistrust about public - expressed as 'uselessness of schooling'. Yangon's migrant youths in liminality are placed in the middle of this anti-structure, which has deep mistrust of schooling, which is a representative symbol of the symbol of state, military governments, authorities' teacher. Indeed, it is confirmed based on literature reviews, expert interviews as well as youth's narratives, schools in Myanmar, as formal and social institutions which lacks quality opportunities for learning skills or gaining knowledge.

Poor Quality of Education

The quality of education was identified as being one of the critical aspects in the youth's decision-making when deciding to drop out schools. Their lack of satisfaction about the formal schooling was also involved with layers of complexity. Poor basic education infrastructure and conditions were indirectly described as challenges. Without realizing the long history of ~~in~~ insufficient public investment in building of the education system and fostering of next the generation with public supports as well as teachers' condition to continue their professions during the Dark Age for Myanmar's

education and intellectualism. Whilst teachers in public schools in Myanmar suffer from a lack of and unsystematic pre- and in-service training programmes for teachers, lack of in-service teacher activities on curricular and teaching methods and most of all, low salary lack of rank promotion, absence of incentives, the teachers are not forefront of educational reform of the country without much financial and professional supports. It is found that due to students experiences are mainly focused with teachers and peers, their dissatisfied experiences with quality of education was largely evolved with the issues of quality teachers and naturally, the first and the most visible concern was on dissatisfaction with teachers' teaching styles.

If receiving and completing a good quality basic education becomes not only the economic but socio-cultural burden for youths and then what are the core responsibilities of public schooling and parents in Myanmar? If these migrant youth workers with devoted sense of family and constantly supporting their family finances and contributing the tuitions for their younger brothers and sisters, in that regards, why they are not portrayed as contributors of national development, but for possible social problems and undereducated groups without skills, dragging down the speed of national development? These assumptions of youth issues in contemporary Myanmar should be in question. By paying close attention to the narratives of dropping out, there are evidence that choice of dropping out was seen as 'individual', 'rebellious', 'spontaneous', and 'unreliable' by 'troubled' youths.

6.2.2. Internal Process of Liminality

Perceptions on Learning Opportunities

The youths in liminality have shown their perceptions that their tendency that their current society's social arrangements as legitimate. From the youth's point of view, the social arrangement that stems from the *Past* is perceived as

unfair, unjust or even illegitimate. They feel that and indeed *survived* (for those who completed) or *escaped* (for those who dropped out) the *Past* which is filled with experiences of an unfair and unjust hierarchical relations with regards teachers and the authoritarian school system that in many cases is perceived as illegitimate. The youth's perceptions about *Now and Then* is full of ironies. Liminal youth upon arrival in Yangon tended to highlight what they initially perceived as a glamorous city life, full of job opportunities and 'wonderful' relations with colleagues and middle managers, who 'educate' them and offer 'real knowledge and skills'. Their perception is ironic because, At the same time, they ignored or almost transcended the harsh daily realities such as retention of identity documents, withholding of wages, debt based bondage, excessive overtime and harsh working and living conditions.

Their perceptions are ironic because the process of socialisation upon arrival at the workplace in Yangon. As described in the previous chapter, were all being actively re-educated about the value of education by their brothers, sisters, uncles and aunties. Whilst the streets of Yangon is full of newspapers, magazines and booksellers, the process of daily re-education in workplaces, for youths, the education itself become *a thing that is obsolete to life*. Their perceptions are ironic because in the perspectives of youths, in their perspectives, higher status, privileges and higher education certificates and similar rewards are 'earned' by individuals, not related to any system that may push them away. They think that they are the only results from their individual positions - being poor, having a lack of talents and displayed skills and more importantly a lack of being generous or lack of having Hpon. This individualisation of perceptions is culturally critical for the mind-sets of Myanmar's youth.

Gendered Perceptions and their Social relations

It is worth further elaborating on is the group of young boys that I observed during the study. When considering the boys' lives, jobs and learning of liminality – especially the vast differences in social relations in learning and working environments, the boys have shown critical cultural aspects that portray the future of Myanmar's youth, migrants, and formal and non-formal education and learning. Myanmar's boys are in various ways multi-layered a lot more than the 'lads' of the Willis' infamous ethnography, *learning to Labour*. Willis addressed the issues of how the reproduction of labour power – the indisputable function of schools – become subjectively apprehended. In his ethnography, Willis described the cultural elements of counter school culture such as opposition to authority, rejection of the conformists, blagging and wagging as disinvited cultural behaviours of the “lads”, having a ‘laff’ as a description of being powerful and cool – in a modern term – lad” (Willis; 1977). Especially Britain's lads' determination and exaggerated confidence, masculinity and toughness and some sort of chauvinism and machoism are not so related to boy youths migrants in Yangon. These appearances, the boys researched had some sense of both financial, cultural and religious fulfilment, even if this is temporary, than any values the people can imagine. Although their strong rejection to options to go back to formal schools are similar to all the groups of migrant workers in Yangon (both those who are exposed to education opportunities in the communities and those boys who are not exposed to any learning), their relative satisfaction and emotional comfort or pride (in some cases) about being able to contribute to their families' welfare.

There were also clear findings with regards to commonalities from adolescent girls and their fatalistic comments on the topic of their past schooling experiences. Adolescent girls were often had fatalistic outlook towards dropping out of school with expressions such as ‘parents' decisions’

or 'decided paths'. The words and expressions of *Ana* and *Anade* were used so often that it was not necessary to translate when the discussion revolved around the cultural reasons for leaving schools. More importantly, adolescent girls that were observed and interviewed had a very distinctive body language. Whenever our conversations evolved into the deeper topics, such as when discussing issues regarding the family, family responsibilities, mothers, sisters and brothers and their devotion to Buddhism, girls often re-adjusted their posture and made sure their feet were not pointing towards the researcher. Throughout all the interviews that I conducted with girls, I did not see any of any of the interviewees feet or nor the soles of girls feet weather they were on a chair. This was a rather drastic contrast to boys' overly exaggerated act of manhood. In the *Internal Process of Liminality*, the thesis explored how benevolence (or generosity) is a strong socio-cultural driver. The balance between school and work, deciding leaving to their respective hometown, dropping out of school, settling into new workplace and getting along with their managers and colleagues in transitional jobs.

6.2.3. Mechanism of Multifaceted Benevolence

There is old Burmese Proverb about good sons and daughters of Myanmar, the sun is about to set and Yangon's boys and girls are already busy cleaning and packing goods for sales for next day of work. While looking around the streets of Yangon, one can easily notice that there are numerous phrases are exhibited in the shops, temples and houses and some of them are; (i) *To venerate one's elders, to respect one's peers, and to be kind to the young and weak;* (ii) *Children are taught from young to venerate one's elders, to respect one's peers, and to be kind to the young and weak;* (iii) *Parents are believed to be solely responsible for their children's behaviour undisciplined*

either by mother or by father; and (iv) bad language from bad mother, bad body-language from bad father.

I observed when there are difficulties in life and when they noticed that they are more likely to be ‘stuck’ in their situations, working as low-skilled labourers and not being able to receive any further education, they *ignore* the issues or show a form of *transcendence* when they find themselves in the situation. In order to endure the daily uneasiness or un discomfort in these situations and they focus on the fact that the pay check will bring their families’ happiness, the choices of paying for anything, or choices regarding spending time in further education becomes a topic, which better be ignored or transcended.

First, it can be argued that the participating youths in the research have shown that the cultural mechanism of ignoring and transcending the difficulties are deep-rooted in the *acceptance of power*. This is embedded in their perceptions, behaviours and choices of education, employment and margination. In reality, Yangon migrant workers shown strong acceptance of power and authority – not only from their own families but also from immediate supervisors and business owners. While, in the western world, Peter Worsly, Rodney Needam and Edmund Leacher incorporated continuously under the influences of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault's notions of power and hegemony, in the world of Buddhist Myanmar, the unique political and religious authority and Charisma - so-called Auzwa - has developed (Kawamani; 2009). The strong cultural presence of *Anade for families, elders, and teachers* are stronger than their own suffering in their tough, unpleasant and demanding jobs.

Second, youths themselves semi-voluntarily accept the everyday power and authority which take away any educational opportunities from those who are legible for public education. The distinctive results that were identified in

the observations were the *Culture of Counter Education*. Anti-structure that exists in Yangon's youth in liminality was full of anti-education and anti-schooling which were reflected in comments such as 'schools are useless', 'high school certificates are not necessary', 'leaving school was the man thing to do', 'By leaving school I made everyone in the family happy'. The immediate solutions 'money rules which hints the potential promotion within the workplaces to be a middle manager in construction sites, tea shops, confirmed by the interactions with 'uncles, aunties, elder brothers and sisters'

Third, in this thesis symbolized term, which good sons and daughters of Myanmar culture live and make choices communally. This communal based choices are often expressed in an expression of *Anade*, which was described in the previous chapter. The idea of benevolence can consist of numerous aspects such as religious and spiritual devotion and karma, doing community goods and sharing, communal decisions and activities for the family rather than individuals or the younger ones. *Anade* is seen as being critical to Myanmar's unique cultural identity which plays critical roles in the making of any choices and decisions. Choice and decisions on the topic of education is very much not-free from this unique cultural influence of *Anade*. It can be argued that *Anade* may very well contribute to a strong sense of hierarchy and inequality within social relations and structure, as frankness and directness in public sphere are often considered aggressive or confrontational behaviour. Myanmar's social value involves a desire to prevent others from feeling uncomfortable or have a sense of looking bad in the public and private sphere. The feeling is also applicable for the circumstances when one wishes to behave in a certain manner but is restricted or restrained, for fear of causing the other party to feel anger, embarrassment or disappointment. *Becker's The Concept of Anade - Personal, Social, and Political Implications*, in John P. Ferguson. *Essays on Burma* (1981), describes various layers of Burmese

sympathy, pity and empathy. They are portrayed in the Burmese' daily lives in mainly eighteen *aspects*.

- Timidity in new social situations
- Fear of distressing others
- Desire to share or give
- Inability to resist social pressure
- Self-restraint
- Respect to elders
- Fear of offending others
- Consideration for others
- Prevention of aggression or confrontation
- Giving or receiving hospitality
- Loss of face and shame
- Response to suffering
- Etiquette, propriety
- Observance of sex taboos
- Failure to achieve
- Sense of duty

Whether Myanmar's benevolent culture can be perceived as structural burdens on the children and the youth of Myanmar may lead to some controversies. It is certain that religion is at the very core of Myanmar's culture that systematically, through the use of spirituality promotes notions such as gendered based roles and behaviours. Often, the burden of *Anade* was observed while observing and interviewing these youths their deep awareness of their responsibly towards their family. In this research, the role of being good daughters and sons was expressed by– both boys and girls to various

degrees, but can clearly be seen in the statements from some of the interviews below.

- Desire to share
- Respect to elders
- Sense of duty
- Fear of distressing others
- Inability to resist social pressure
- Acceptance of power

Girls and boys from Main Gate and East Gate in the Shwedagon Pagoda area was full of youth, working full time in the areas. They were mainly working in small and medium garment factory workers or service industries. Khin Nwe Nwe (20), Kaung Sat Naing (16), Kgat Nyunt Luu (20), Mo Mo all commonly describes their *strong sense of sharing*, but sharing whatever they earn with their parents and younger brothers and sisters. They all talked about the *Dana or Sedana* (meaning sharing, generosity and benevolence in Myanmar) were used quite often in their daily conversations. The differences is their sharing was geared toward their family members. Their *sense of sharing* came with *strong sense of family duty* for the youth migrant workers. An interesting case of Lun Thu (17)'s realisations and expectations for his younger brother. He was clearly the one who did not enjoy his schooling and showed quite strong resentment against his teachers. However, he expressed that "I regret about quitting school. Not because of me. But because of my younger brother. He needs education. I don't want him to quit school. I think this is my duty to pay for his education".

One hand, Aung Maw Khant, La Min Ko Ko (15) and Htet Htet Lin (18), their *respect to parents* comes along with *inability to resist social pressure*.

On the other, *fear of distressing others* were very important rules for Yin Yin Nwe (20), Min Thet Mg (19), Zin Min Htet and Myo Mint (17). They all uses expressions of *Ana* and *Anade*, which expresses their intentions for not to offend and stress others. These cultural explanations lead to their tools to make expected choices and behaviours for the good sons and daughters of Myanmar that partially disqualify themselves for their own freedom of finishing even basic education, getting jobs and becoming a real man or productive daughters. In the process, they are used to the ideas of acceptance for persisting structural power in the daily lives. While looking around the streets of Yangon, it cannot be unnoticed that there is the *Ten Parami* of Theravada Buddhism exhibited in everyday locations of shops, temples, and houses.

- *Dana Pāramī: generosity, giving of oneself*
- *Sila Pāramī: virtue, morality, proper conduct*
- *Nekkhamma Pāramī: renunciation*
- *Panana Pāramī: transcendental wisdom, insight*
- *Viriya Pāramī: energy, diligence, vigour, effort*
- *Khanti Parami: patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance,*
- *Sacca Parami: truthfulness, honesty*
- *Adhitthana Parami: determination, resolution*
- *Metta Parami: loving-kindness*
- *Upekkha Parami: equanimity, serenity*

In summary, the real hidden drivers of dropping out of school and positioning themselves again in the lowest hierarchy in the workplaces, rooted in complex culture of hierarchical benevolence.

6.3. Implications for further Research

Given that this study focused on twelve migrant youth living in city of Yangon, these school dropouts are the as the baseline for participation, further research could explore how individuals youth in different age group (much younger children migrant workers, who are heavily involved in illegal types of employment), different ethnic groups (specific ethnic groups of individual youth) as well as various occupational groups (male and female migrant workers in large scale of manufacturing industries). Similarities and distinctions could be made from cross-referencing the findings with this study.

Identifying school dropouts who continued on to their further employment in better working conditions and getting a formal or informal learning opportunities, after a certain period of time, could determine how they came to understand and make sense of their progression into their successful ‘adulthood’. The strict methods of longitudinal studies are more likely to have a lot of challenges, in considering the mobility of youth. However, even a follow up studies for a part of youths would provide a critical study for the pathways and meaning of mobility, education and social changes.

As this study engaged with twelve youths in their early stage of their migration, research could also further engage with other groups of youths, who are in the learning environment to study their understanding and sense making in the moment of learning under the influences of ‘out of school context’. The interpretations of experience would be recorded in real-time, and the sense-making and understanding of the experience would be captured progressively, thus allowing the researcher to analyse how experiences developed throughout the process of teaching and learning in the community centres. The researcher’s secondary interpretative perspective would also be more closely

linked to the context of learning, given that he would be serving in a non-participative observer capacity.

As this study seeks to understanding of the correlation between the former self of the participant and the participant's transition experience into migration to the City of Yangon, the study of 'sending communities and schools' in areas of Ayeyawady and Bago would also benefit from further study. This study's theoretical framework of liminality suggested that entrants would be stripped of their former selves as they began their respective journeys into the new being, however, findings suggested that the participants' past selves nonetheless impacted their liminal progressions due to their traumatic and unpleasant experiences of formal schoolings (*such as relative poverty, poor quality of education, authoritative teacher and students relationships*) as well as the cultural elements (*such as Anade and Sedana*) in their all aspects of day-to-day decision making. Going back and tracing back to their communities and schools may allow to go deeper into the issues within the context of classrooms and households. Further study into the participants' backgrounds and the roles their backgrounds played in their interpretations could provide insight into more detailed learning demands and opportunities for differentiated preparation.

As for identifying educational opportunities at work, there needs a national and regional scale of quantities research on skills development both in agricultural training in 'sending communities and schools' and technical vocational training in 'receiving cities and community centres'. In this context, further investigation linking education and development would be to draw multidimensional aspects on urban youths' lives and learning, including shelter, sanitation, education and skills development and sexual and reproductive health. As this study focused on the interpretation of dropout experience to develop themes that existed across participants, further study on

how those interpretations translated to reform practice could reveal how participant experience influences practice.

One final suggestion is exploring deeper into the researches on the new roles and functions of formal schooling and community education, which respect universally agreed principals of education, but rotted in Myanmar's unique culture of *Sedana* (Benevolence and generosity). At the time of implementing the Comprehensive Education Reform, it may be the most critical time for Myanmar to re-establish the very philosophy of the meaning of public schooling.

CHAPTER 7.

CONCLUSION

It is a difficult thing to explain how youths from poor families dropping out of school and why they let themselves. It is much too facile simply to argue that they have no choice. It is too simplistic to state that social structure - here as formal schooling - by nature is supposed to push these youth out of education because the very nature of schooling is a means of reproduction. However, these young dropouts are not invisible, regardless how poor these youths are. These individuals that I have studied over the last few years are far from wailing corpses. But the increasing number of dropouts, their increasing intensity and velocity of the migrant as the visible beings in the central Yangon is actually leading the whole system into the question with regards to the current model of public education that is clearly in need of revision.

The qualitative methods and participant observation used in the research as well as the ethnographic format of the representation were dictated by the interests of the researcher in the 'cultural' aspect of contextualizing the dropout phenomenon. That suited the need to record and have a more sensitive process, meanings, and interactions as well as an ability to represent and interpret Myanmar's symbolic articulations and practices in the liminal process of transformation. In particular the ethnographic account, with knowing can allow me a degree of activity, creativity and human agency within the object of the study to survive through the analysis and there for reach out to the readers' experiences. This was vital for the purposes where I viewed the culture of youth with mobility and learning in and outside of school, not simply as set of transferred structure in the conventional notions of socialization - nor the passive results of an action of dominant ideology downward - as in certain

kinds of *Marxism* and *Reproduction Theories* on education that were prevalent in the past.

This thesis intends to suggest that 'failed' poor youth in Yangon do not simply take up the failing curve of study and work, any than other kinds. Instead of assuming a continuous line of abilities in the formal schooling and occupational structure and then to work environments that under aged youths who are younger eighteen years old do have any learning opportunities in their lifetimes. Then, it is critical to conceive of radical breaks represented by cultural forms.

I have looked at the way in which school dropout youths in Yangon in which the youth's cultural pattern of 'Myanmar education's failure' is quite different and discontinuous from other patterns. This unique culture of Myanmar's migrant youth culture is not a neutral pattern, but a cultural aspect, a set of variables impinging on the school from outside- here I call it 'outer processes. It comprises interplays between internal and outer process; that of experiences, relationships, and ensembles of systematic forms of relationship which not only set particular 'choices' and 'decisions' at particular times within homes, schools, workplaces, but also structure and more subtle cultural and religious culture of *Benevolence* really and experientially, how these 'choices' come about in their back home and are re-defined in space of liminality.

A linked and subsidiary aim of this thesis was to examine important and central aspects of Yangon's migrant workers' culture through the concrete study of one of its most revealing manifestation. My original research interest was, indeed, in youth culture in general and it leads led to look at young non-academic disaffected youth (both male and female) and their adaptation to migration and work in the continuous regeneration of poor youths.

This thesis found out that what is really happening in Myanmar is shifting economic-learning, socio-cultural –learning nexus. Since the first democratic election in 2010 and the new government introduced in 2015, there are growing markets, more opportunities for youth employment, followed by urbanization and notable international and internal migration. With the long desired wind of democratization and social changes, youths' choice of remaining in malfunctioning public schools and leaving for new job opportunities was a multi-dimensional choice. The educational choices of poor family and youths are not also simple. Even enough firm and strong decisions are made to remain in education, there are abundant job opportunities, strong monastery education, free and attractive missionary orphanages for non-orphans and lively community and ethnic education in comparison to poor quality formal education.

At the time of democratically elected government's reform accompanied with major education reform, it welcomes that education, as well as dropout issues, started taken seriously for the first time in thirty years. In this context, it is the precious opportunity that education reform embraces the quality education and lifelong learning for *All*. Providing more equitable and flexible education learning in both public schooling and communities only can start from understanding the realistic context of lives and learning of school dropouts. No matter how society calls school dropouts as Failures, Underachievers or Outliers, the thesis offers both academic and real life time narratives from the school dropouts whom have a lot to offer for the upcoming education reform of transitional Myanmar.

It is argued that interplays of the two aspects - *the Outer process of poverty*, structured failures from education systems and lack of quality education *and the Internal process of benevolence* – which is formed ideas of *Dana* and *Sedana*, *Ana* and *Anade* create space of Myanmar's unique space

for liminality. In the micro-subjective perspective, youth's perceptions are explored because of their perceptions of schools and schooling, portray various facet of the sociocultural construction of reality. In the micro-objective perspective, youth's interaction with their peers is observed because their shifting perceptions of schools and schooling are shaped and influenced by social interactions. By applying ethnographic, interpretative approaches, which were explained in details in Chapter 3, the thesis theoretical and conceptual foundations are influenced by critical sociology in issues around educational inequalities in border social context and rooted in theory of *liminality* and *communitas* of the youths' lives and learning from the school of the social anthropology.

In previous chapters, it has been emphasized that a large number of school dropouts is of urgent social concern and an important example of Myanmar's contemporary education. Theoretically and conceptually, at present clear wish to depoliticize the issue that mainly focuses on characteristics of individual students and families. Rather, I would argue that it is critical to pay attention to multi-faced roots of the phenomenon that is politically structured and socio-culturally constructed nature of Myanmar's formal schooling. Over the last few decades, society has pushed the youths to become low level, low paid manual labour and parents have pushed them to earn money for their family income. However, in a very near future, Myanmar society will realize that they needs to establish the system that perpetuates the utilization of educated youth as somehow 'functioning skilled labour' to continue this national development and parents from working class will soon realize that their benevolent sons and daughters may become unproductive sons and daughter because their low wages will not sustain their family wellbeing for so long. Seeking Myanmar's *New Communitas* of learning outside of formal schooling and in connection with the formal schooling are

more likely depend on how Myanmar's adult educators, leaders, facilitators and their colleagues and peers will change themselves with new generation of the country's youths by striking a balance between *Awza* (authority and charisma) and *Anade* (feeling of empathy, mercy for others) in day to day social and educational space of liminality. In the fast growing urban Yangon, its growing number of migrant youth may not be aware that the life in liminality - how exciting and glamorous they look - they are likely to be able to *re-integrated* or *re-incorporated* or *simply fallen into* the further cracks without further education, learning and skill development in transitional Myanmar.

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APPENDIX

A. Myanmar at a Glance

Socio-economic indicators	
Total population (in thousands)	53,437
Annual population growth (%)	0.9
Population 15-24 years (in thousands)	9,480
Population aged 14 years and younger (in thousands)	14,992
Rural population (% of total population)	66
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	2.2
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	40
Life expectancy at birth (years)	66
Prevalence of HIV (% of population aged 15-49 years)	0.7
Poverty headcount ratio at 3.10 PPP\$ a day (% of population)	...
GDP per capita - PPP\$...
Annual GDP growth (%)	7
Total debt service (% of GNI)	0.1
GDP in billions - PPP\$...

Figure. A.1 Socio-economic Indicators of Myanmar

(Source: Human Development Index, UNDP, 2016)

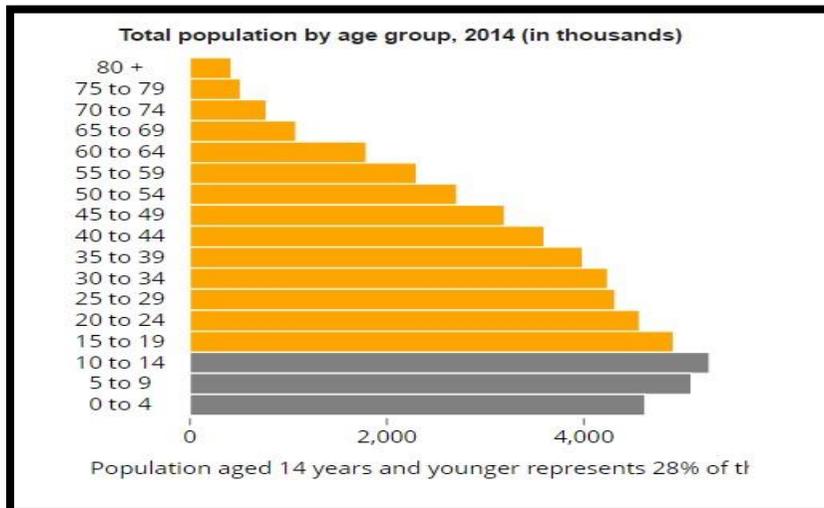


Figure. A.2. Overview of Population – Total Population, Myanmar

(Source: Human Development Index, UNDP, 2016)

B. Myanmar Education at a Glance

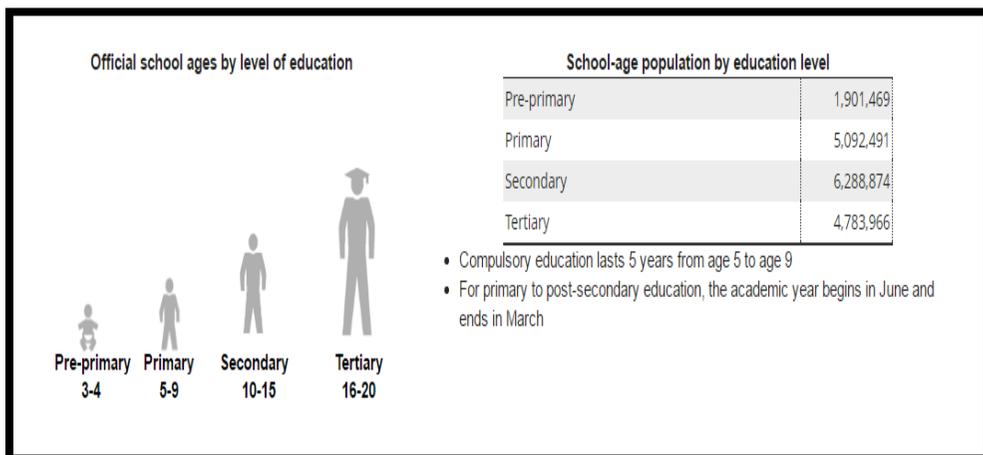


Figure B.1. Official School Age of Myanmar
(Source: UNESCO Institute for Statics, 2016)

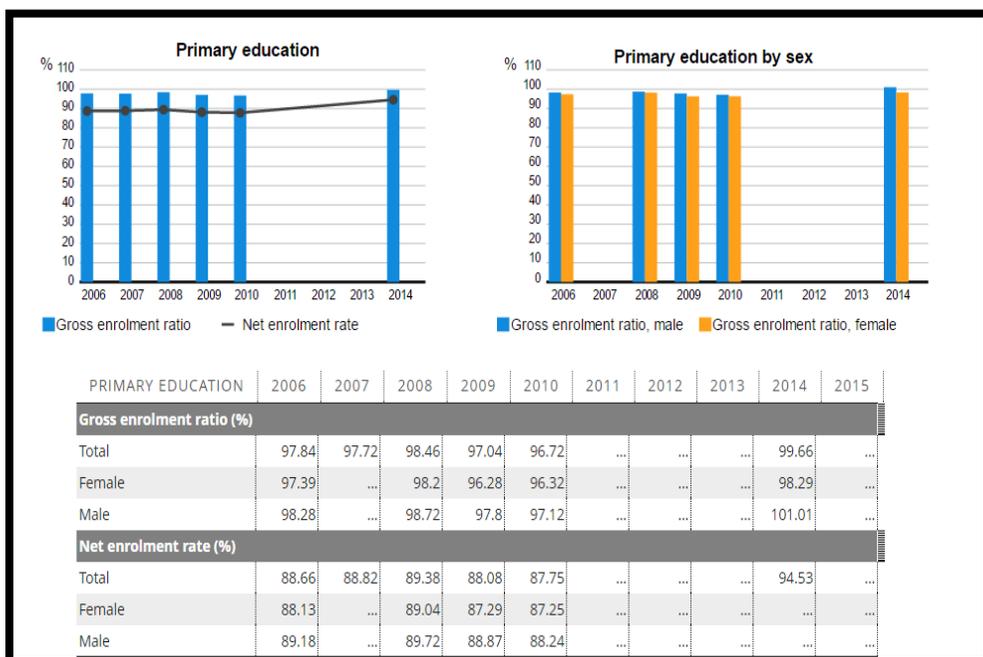


Figure B.2. Overview of Primary Education, Myanmar
(Source: UNESCO Institute for Statics, 2016)

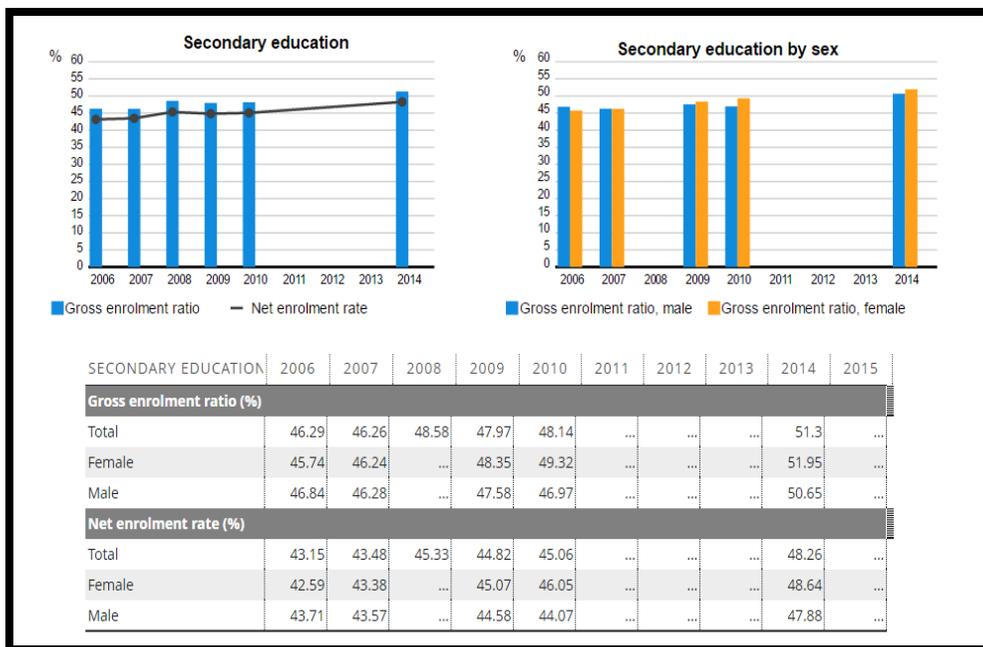


Figure B.3. Overview of Secondary Education, Myanmar

(Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016)

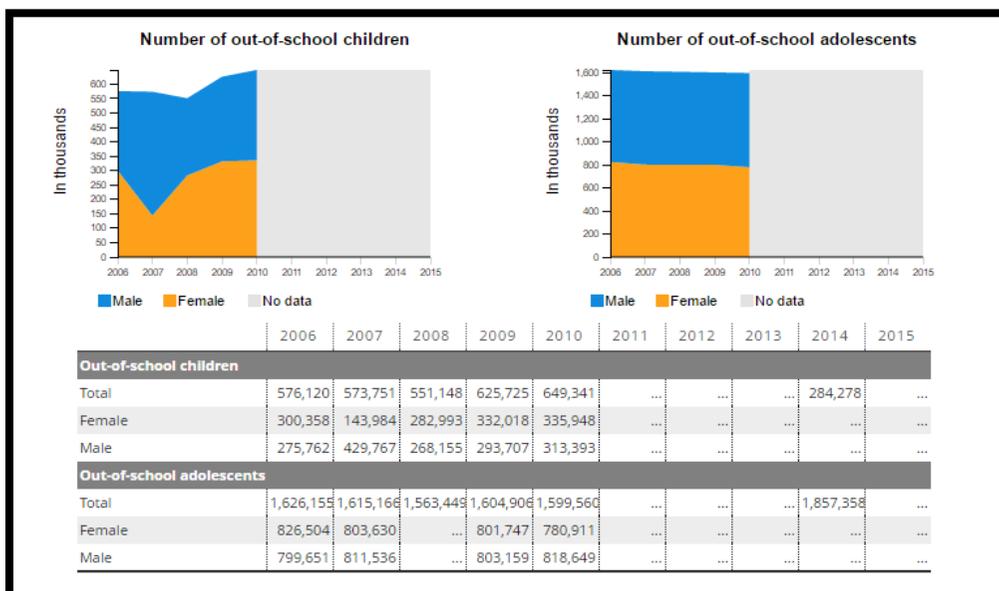


Figure B.4. Overview of Number of OOSC and OOSY in Myanmar

(Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016)

C. Overview of Field Research and Data Collection Process

Months	Details of Data Collection Process
August 2011- December 2015	Add first encounter with Myanmar in August 2011 Grounded professional and personal experiences for current research themes
August 2014 - December 2014	Literature Review Write up the results of literature review
August 2015 - December 2015	Literature Review Several Casual Field Visit Write up the results of literature review
February 2016	Literature Review Field Visit for choosing sites Field Observations – Natural Observation
Early May 2016	Field Observations – Observation for choosing sites Individual Naturalistic Interview Data Translation
Mid May 2016	Field Visit for choosing sites Individual Naturalistic Interview Data Translation Write up the initial observations essay
Early October 2016	Field Observations – Natural Observation Trained of translators In-depth Interviews with Education Experts Cleaning data from individual interviews Cleaning data from In-depth interviews with experts Host the Field Research Advisory Group
Mid October 2016	Overt Participation Individual Naturalistic Interview Translation Conduct the analysis of individual naturalistic interview Conduct the analysis of interview with education experts
End October 2016	Literature Review In-depth Interview with Education Experts Trained of translators Cleaning data from individual interviews Cleaning data from In-depth interviews with experts
Early November 2016	Literature Review In-depth Interview with Education Experts Conduct the analysis of individual naturalistic interview Conduct the analysis of interview with education experts
Mid November 2016	Individual Naturalistic Interview Cleaning data from individual interviews Cleaning data from In-depth interviews with experts
End November 2016	Individual Naturalistic Interview Conduct the analysis of individual naturalistic interview Conduct the analysis of interview with education experts Field Research Advisory Group
December 2016	Focus Group Interviews of Twelve Out-of-school Boys, Attending a Local NGO Confirming Validity of Translation Confirming Validity of from individual interviews Cleaning data from In-depth interviews with experts Field Research Advisory Group

D. List of Interviewees

Table D.1. List of *Participants of the Study- Twelve Out-of-school Youths (Detailed)*

No	Age	Sex	Names	Occupations	Ethnicity	Religion	Language	Hometown	Year left school
1	17	M	Lun Thu	construction workers/ shopkeeper	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Bago	grade 6
2	18	F	Htet Htet Lin	shopkeeper at grocery store	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Ayeyawady	grade5
3	20	F	Yin Yin Nwe	shopkeeper in traditional market	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Bagan	grade 4
4	19	M	Min Thet Mg	shopkeeper at convenience store	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Yangon	grade 10
5	15	M	Aung Maw Khant	waiter at teashop	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Hinthada	grade 4
6	15	M	La Min Ko Ko	waiter at teashop	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Thanlhyun	grade 4
7	20	F	Khin Nwe Nwe	shopkeeper at ice cream shop	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Bago	grade 10
8	16	F	Kaung Sat Naing	shopkeeper at grocery shop	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Shew Bo	grade 10
9	20	F	Kgat Nyunt Luu	worker at tea shop	Burmese/Myanmar	Christian	Burmese /Myanmar	Bagan	grade 5
10	17	M	Zin Min Htet	Cashier at convenient store	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Ayeyawady	grade 10
11	17	M	Myo Mint	cashier at convenience store	Burmese/Myanmar	Buddhism	Burmese /Myanmar	Ayeyawady	grade 10
12	17	F	Mo Mo	maid	Indian	Muslim	Burmese /Myanmar	Dahla	KG

Table D.2.

In-depth Interviews of Two OOSY

no	age	sex	occupations	ethnicity	religion	language	hometown	left school
1	19	M	Shopkeeper	Chin	Buddhism	Chin	Hakahr	G 7
2	20	M	Shopkeeper	Chin	Buddhism	Chin	Hakahr	G 8

Table D.3.

Focus Group Interviews of Ten OOSY

no	age	jobs	ethnicity	religion	language	hometown	left school	joined org
1	20	Cook	Burmese	Muslim	Burmese	Magway	G6	9months
2	16	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G5	6 months
3	16	waiter	Burmese	Buddhism	Burmese	Ayeyawady	G2	9 months
4	18	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G4	2 months
5	16	Cook	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G9	1.5 year
6	18	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G10	4 months
7	17	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G7	4 months
8	21	waiter	Kayin	Christian	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G8	1.5 year
9	17	waiter	Kayin	Buddhism	Kayin	Ayeyawady	G10	1.5 year
10	10	waiter	Burmese	Buddhism	Burmese	Yangon	G5	7 months

Table D.4.

Interviews with Eight Education Specialists and Youth leaders in Education

no	name	organization
1	U Peter Myo Zin	AEPRY (Agency for Education of the Poor Rural Youth)
2	U Myo Win	Smile Education and Development Foundation
3	Daw Tin Myat Htet	Myanmar Youth in Action
4	U Thant Thaw Kang	Daw Khin Kyi Foundation
5	U Tim Aye Hardy	myME
6	Three young Entrepreneurs	Youth Social Force
7	Daw May Pearl Thwe	Smile Education Training Centre
8	U Tin Maung Win	KMSS Caritas Myanmar

E. Field Interview Photos



Photo 1. Streets of Yangon City



Photo 2. Construction Sites



Photo 3. Migrant Youth's Shelters



Photo 4. Burma's Reading Culture



Photo 5. Focus Group Interview



Photo 6. Interview with specialists

전환기 미얀마 이주청소년 노동자의 공교육 중도탈락 경험에 관한 질적연구

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본 논문은 전환기 미얀마 청소년의 삶과 학습이라는 주제를 이주청소년 노동자들의 나레티브를 통해 고찰하고, 미얀마의 학교중도탈락이라는 교육적 현상을 리미널리티(liminality)이라는 사회인류학의 이론과 개념을 통해 이해하고자 한 질적연구이다. 연구의 현장은 최근 급격한 정치, 경제, 사회적 전환기를 겪고 있는 미얀마의 상업도시인 양곤이다. 지난 2010년 이후 도시화 과정을 거치고 있는 양곤에는 ‘숙련되고 저렴한’ 노동력 수요가 폭발적으로 증가하고 있는데, 이는 미얀마 중부지역의 청소년들의 이주와 학교 중도탈락이 증가하는데 강력한 동인으로 작용하고 있다. 이와 같은 미얀마의 사회변화와 이주의 유형을 반영한 듯, 본 연구에 참여한 12명의 청소년도 예라와디, 바고, 슈웨보와 같은 미얀마 중부지방 출신으로 공립학교에서 중도탈락하여 양곤으로 이주한 후, 식당, 찻집, 상점, 편의점 등 서비스분야에서 일하고 있는 청소년 노동자들이다. 모든 연구참여자는 15세부터 20세 사이로, 전체 12명 중 6명은 남성, 6명은 여성청소년이며, 11명은 버마족이고, 10명은 불교도이다.

본 연구의 방법론은 인류학적 연구방법인 에스노그래피(ethnographic foundation)에 그 뿌리를 두고 있다. 2016년 2월부터 2016년 12월까지 다면적인 현장연구가 진행되었는데, 대상지역으로는 미얀마라는 국가 정체성을 대표하는 쉐다곤 파고다와 그 주변 지역, 양곤의 도시화를 상징하는 슬레 파고다와 그 주변인 29번가부터 36번가에서 집중적인 관찰이 진행되었다. 이 두 지역에 일하고 있는 (돌봄 노동을 하고 있는 1인의 청소년을 제외하고) 11명의 일터에서 생활을 참여관찰(participant observations)하고 청소년들과의 1:1 심층면담(in-depth interviews)을 진행하였으며, 그들의 고용자, 동료, 친구들과 면담을 진행하면서 연구 전체과정에서 ‘자연적인’ 방법과 ‘반구조화된’ 연구방법을 균형 있게 적용하였다. 미얀마 청소년들이 위치한 미얀마의 사회문화적 맥락 및 교육의 역사를 심층적으로 이해하고자,

교육 및 청소년 전문가에 대한 심층면담을 진행하였다. 추가적으로 학교 밖 청소년들의 현실적인 학습기회와 제약요건을 확인하고자 청소년 노동자에게 학습기회를 제공하는 미얀마의 한 교육전문 단체에 방문하여 10 명의 남성청소년들과 초점집단토론(Focus Group Interview)을 실시하였다.

한편, 지난 2015 년 선거에 의해 선출된 새로운 정부의 등장으로 미얀마 교육분야의 개혁을 진행 할 교육종합평가단(Comprehensive Education Sector Review, CESR)의 역할의 중요하게 부각되기 시작했다. 최근 발표된 평가단의 가구현황조사분석 보고서에 의하면, 14-16 세의 청소년 중 42.9%, 16-19 세의 청소년 중 최소 64%가 정규교육기관에 등록되어 있지 않는 것을 확인 할 수 있었다. 고등학교 연령대의 학생 10 명 중 4 명이 학교에 다니지 않는 것은 단순한 학생관리의 문제가 아닌 미얀마 교육의 현주소를 반영하는 심각한 수치이며, 향후 미얀마 인재양성에 큰 도전이 될 사회문제로 판단하였다. 평가단은 아동과 청소년들이 학교를 된 주요 원인을 경제적인 이유(Costs not affordable)뿐 아니라 노동(Agricultural Work), 가사 돌봄(Care for family) 그리고 관심 부족(Lack of interest)으로 지목하였다. 응답자의 약 3 분의 1 은 ‘학교와 학습에 대한 관심 부족’ 때문에 학교를 그만두었다고 응답하였는데, 여기서 ‘학교와 학습에 대한 관심 부족’이란 어떠한 사회적·교육적 의미를 가지고 있는지는 선행연구에서 그 해답을 찾지 못하였다. 이와 같은 선행 연구결과와 미얀마의 학교 중도탈락 현상의 심각성에 대한 해답을 찾기 위해 연구자는 연구문제를 아래와 같이 세가지 측면으로 구체화되었다.

첫째, 미얀마의 청소년들은 왜 중도탈락을 하는가? 학교를 떠난 청소년들이 인식하고 있는 학교 중도탈락의 다면적인 원인은 무엇인가?

둘째, 양곤의 이주 청소년 노동자가 학교를 떠나고 노동자가 되는 과정에서 찾을 수 있는 사회문화적, 교육적 특성은 무엇인가? 학교에서 ‘탈락’하는 과정에서 이들은 과거의 학교 경험, 현재의 노동경험을 어떻게 인식하고 있는가?

셋째, 학교와 사회의 경계에 서있는 이주청소년 노동자의 경험의 재구성의 결과는 어떻게 미얀마의 교육 및 학교중도탈락 문제에 대한 사회문화적, 교육학적인 이론 의 재해석에 기여할 수 있는가?

빅터터너는 ‘의례의 과정(1969)’에서 반켄옴의 통과의례의 성격인 분리(separation), 경계(liminality), 재통합(Re-integration)을 분석하여, 다양한 사회문화적 현상에 적용하였다. 이와 같은 통과의례의 전이상태를

가리켜, 리멘(limen, 문지방), ‘리미널리티(liminality)’라는 개념을 사용하고 나아가 사회와 개인의 위치를 연구하는데 있어 사회의 구조(Structure)와 반구조 (anti-structure)사이 존재하는 틈의 공간인 ‘리미널’한 공간에 대한 이론적 해석을 제공하였다. 터너의 이론과 같이, 양곤 이주노동자 청소년들의 ‘학교와 집을 떠나기’와 ‘양곤에 정착하기’ 과정에도 분리와 경계의 경험이 드라마틱하게 전개되었는데 그 특징은 아래와 같았다. 첫째, 양곤의 청소년 노동자들에게 분리(separation)란 빈곤과 구조화된 낙제와 실패로 남은 학교로서부터의 단절을 의미하였다. 가난한 가정형편과 수많은 고용의 기회 앞에서 급하게 이주한 청소년들에게는 과거와의 단절 자체가 중요하였다. 이들에게 과거의 학교는 내가 남보다 더 가난함을 사실을 ‘발견하고 확인한’ 공간이며, 낙제와 실패는 이미 ‘결정된 사실’로 인식되었다. 그들에게 권위적인 교사-학생 관계와 주입식 교수방법은 ‘학교와 학습에 흥미가 없게’ 만드는 원인으로 작용하였다.

둘째, 청소년들은 리미널한 공간인 양곤으로의 이주를 통해 상대적으로 ‘어중간한 존재’인 자신을 발견하였다. 어린이도 아니고 완전한 성인도 아닌, 학생도 아니고 완전한 노동자도 아닌, 다면적인 자아의 위치를 경험했는데, 그 대표적인 사례가 남성청소년들이 겪는 현대적인 성인식이다. 학교 밖 청소년들에게는 학교를 떠나는 졸업식도 없었으며, 독실한 미얀마인이라면 가장 중요한 불교의 성인식인 신뽀(Shinpyu)의 경험도 하지 못했다. 신뽀를 치르지 못하고 이주한 대부분의 청소년들은 직장의 관리자 혹은 선배들과 함께 술, 담배를 하고 비틀넷을 씹으며 ‘밤에 놀러 나가는’ 일탈의 행위를 하게 되고 이와 같은 짧은 일탈의 경험은 이들에게 일종의 성인이 되는 경험을 제공한다. 이 과정에서 남성청소년들은 불교에서 강조된 엄격한 행동양식이나 학교에서의 권위적인 성인들과의 관계로부터 일시적으로 자유로워지는 경험을 하게 된다. 이와 같이 어른이 되어가는 과정 속에서 남성청소년들에게 학교를 그만둔 것은 ‘남자다운 일’이며, ‘돈이 있더라고 학교를 가지 않은 행위’는 책임감 있는 ‘남자의 결정’으로 미화되기 시작되는 것이다.

반면 여성청소년들에게 새로운 양곤에서의 리미널한 공간은 터너가 제시한 ‘상대적인 자유로움’과 ‘익명성을 보장해주는 공간’으로 전개되지 않았다. 여성청소년들은 친척이나 가족과 안면이 있는 친인척을 통해 일자리를 구해, 일련의 강력한 보호장치를 마련한 후, 이주를 결정하였고, 이와 같은 이주과정의

특성으로 인해 여성청소년들은 일터에서도 ‘이모’와 ‘고향언니’에게 비교적 엄격한 훈육을 받는 경우가 많았다. 이와 같은 여성청소년들의 ‘사회관계’는 그들이 교육에 대한 열망이나 미래의 재교육 가능성에 대한 부분에 있어 종교적이고 종종 운명론적인 태도를 보이는 데 영향을 주었다. 이들에게 학교를 떠나 새로운 도시에서 일을 하고 가족의 생계에 도움을 준다는 것은 가족에 대한 ‘세다나(Sedana)’ 혹은 ‘다나(Dana)’, 즉, ‘관대하고 자비로운(Benevolent or generous)’의 태도를 가지는 것이었다. 또한 딸로서 가족의 경제적인 어려움을 알게 될 때 ‘개인적인 학교생활’을 우선적으로 정리하는 것이 ‘아나데(Anade)’ 즉, 타자에게 해나 불편을 끼치고 싶지 않은 미얀마의 전통을 실현하는 것이라고 인식했다.

마지막으로, 연구에 참여한 청소년들은 사회와 공교육제도로의 재통합(Re-integration)에 대한 방향과 경로에 대해서 상당히 회의적인 시각을 가지고 있었다. 이들은 공통적으로 ‘학교로 돌아가는 것은 가능하지 않다’라고 생각하거나 ‘돌아갈 마음이 절대로 없다’며 학교에 대한 깊은 불신을 표현하였다. 한 청년은 연구자 옆을 지나가며, ‘학교는 쓸모 없어요. 절대로 학교로 돌아갈 일이 없을 거예요. 내 스케줄이 바쁘니까요. 선생님들이 이리로 좀 오지요. 와서 우리를 가르치면 좋겠어요. 와! 그것이야말로 큰 변화지!’ 라고 소리쳤다. 그러나 이들도 배움과 새로운 학습의 기회에 대한 열정이 없는 것은 아니다. 다만 권위적인 학교 문화, 유연하지 않은 정규 교육과정은 그들에게 이미 돌아 갈 수 없는 강력한 단절된 과거로서 뿌리깊게 상징화되었을 뿐이다.

청소년의 공교육 중도탈락 과정을 다룬 연구를 통해 본 연구는 양곤의 ‘자비로운’ 아들과 딸들은 단순히 ‘공부를 못해서’ 혹은 ‘문제아’이기 때문에 학교를 떠난 것이 아님을 확인하였다. 청소년들이 결정한 ‘선한 선택’은 가족의 경제적인 상황, 돌봄에 대한 부담, 불평등한 교육체계 내에서의 경험한 구조적 낙제 그리고 질 낮은 교육 서비스에 대한 불만족에 근거한 복합적이고 총체적인 판단에 따른 것이었다. 나아가, 본 연구를 통해 미얀마 학교 밖 청소년의 교육문제는 미얀마에서 진행되고 있는 도시화, 개발, 이주라는 거시적인 외부적인 과정(Outer Process)와 교육의 의미를 해석하는 미얀마 특유의 불교문화라는 내재적인 과정(Internal Process)의 역동적인 리미널리티의 이해에 근거를 두어야 한다는 점을 강조하였다.

청소년들은 공교육 체제에 도전할 수 있는 ‘불확실하지만 유연한 삶’의 한 과정으로서 학교 밖 공간을 중요하게 인식하였고, ‘학교의 권위로부터 벗어난 자유’의 공간에서 새로운 인생을 설계하고자 희망도 가지고 있었다. 그러나 청소년들이 꿈꾸는 ‘학습공동체’에 참여 할 수 있는 기회는 찾아보기 힘들었고, 청소년들의 가족, 친척, 고용주, 동료들 중 그 누구도 ‘젊은 노동자’들의 일과 학습의 병행을 허락하지 않았다. 청소년들은 이주와 노동이라는 경제적 선택을 통해 ‘생산적이고 충실한’ 가족의 일원으로서 인정을 받게 되고, ‘학교 중도탈락’이라는 교육적 선택을 통해 불교의 십바라밀(十波羅蜜)의 덕목을 실천하는 ‘자비로운’ 아들과 딸로서 공동체 속에 위치를 잡게 된다. 상대적으로 자유롭고 평등할 수 있는 리미널리티라는 공간은 구조적인 열등성을 가진 양곤의 이주노동자 청소년들에게는 자유의 확대를 허용하지 않는다. 오히려 구조적으로 취약한 위치에 있는 그들에게 더 많은 자비, 인내, 그리고 생산성을 요구한다. 독재와 개방, 전통과 현대, 농촌과 도시 그리고 학교와 노동의 거대한 경계에서 있는 이주청소년들에게, 미얀마에서 수십 년간 방치된 미얀마 교육의 접근성과 심각한 교육의 질의 문제는 이제 ‘개인적인’ 문제로 진화하기 시작한 것이다.