LEADING LEARNING AMONG ORANG ASLI STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore and understand how learning is led among Orang Asli students that contributed to their successful schooling progress despite the deficit theorising of past research. Using Glaser's Classic Grounded Theory method, the researcher explored the learning process of Orang Asli students systemically, drawing upon their individual's views of realities of the process. Data are gathered from fieldwork, in-depth interviews with 16 participants, group interview, the relevant substantive literatures and documents. The findings highlight an emerging theory of leading learning among Orang Asli students encompassing five main strands of contributing leading learning roles involving parents, learners, kindergartens, schools, and significant others. In conclusion, each strand reflects the concerns and resolutions that lead to sustainable learning process of Orang Asli students. Implications from the study includes for Orang Asli parents to understand that to lead learning, it is not about what they do not have; rather it must be about what they can do despite the lack. Learners can take aspirational lift from the success of others who have gone through similar or more difficult path. The underpinning strengths of the successful Orang Asli students leading their own learning are indicated by their hope, motivation, self-concept, self-efficacy, agency and continuous improvement. A key concept arising from this study is related to accepting and accommodating students' cultural strengths, implying teachers' roles in reflecting upon any deficit theorising that underpins their practice, and to establish effective educational relations that is culturally responsive. Community self-concept is linked to a community's social, economic and cultural capitals. In this context, the Government through its relevant agencies has the opportunity to elevate the community's self-concept to be at par with the mainstream population.

MENERAJU PEMBELAJARAN DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR ORANG ASLI

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka dan memahami bagaimana pembelajaran diteraju dalam kalangan pelajar Orang Asli yang menyumbang kepada kejayaan pelajar di sebalik teori defisit kajian lepas. Kaedah Teori Asas Klasik Glaser telah digunakan untuk mengkaji proses pembelajaran yang dilalui pelajar Orang Asli secara sistemik. Data dikumpulkan dari kerja lapangan, temuduga mendalam dengan 16 peserta kajian, temuduga berkumpulan, literatur substantif dan dokumen yang berkaitan. Penemuan menonjolkan teori meneraju pembelajaran dalam kalangan pelajar Orang Asli yang merangkumi lima uraian peranan utama: ibu bapa, pelajar, tadika, sekolah dan lain-lain yang berkepentingan. Kesimpulannya, setiap urai mencerminkan kepedulian setiap peranan dan resolusinya yang menghasilkan pembelajaran berterusan. Implikasi daripada kajian ini termasuk untuk ibu bapa Orang Asli memahami bahawa untuk meneraju pembelajaran, ia bukanlah tentang apa yang mereka tidak ada dan tidak boleh lakukan, malahan ia mestilah mengenai apa yang mereka boleh lakukan walaupun dalam keadaan kekurangan atau defisit. Pelajar dapat mengambil lonjakan aspirasi daripada kejayaan orang lain yang telah menelusuri laluan yang sama atau lebih sukar. Kekuatan dasar bagi pelajar Orang Asli yang berjaya meneraju pembelajaran mereka sendiri dapat dilihat dalam harapan dan motivasi mereka, konsep kendiri, efikasi kendiri, agensi dan penambahbaikan yang berterusan. Konsep utama yang timbul daripada kajian ini adalah berkaitan dengan menerima dan menampung kekuatan budaya pelajar. Ini menunjukkan keperluan guru dalam membuat refleksi amalan dan sebarang pemikiran teori defisit yang mendasari amalan mereka, dan seterusnya mewujudkan hubungan pendidikan yang berkesan dan responsif budaya. Konsep kendiri komuniti berkait rapat dengan modal sosial, ekonomi dan kebudayaan komuniti. Dalam konteks ini, kerajaan melalui agensi yang berkaitan mempunyai peluang untuk meningkatkan konsep kendiri masyarakat Orang Asli setanding dengan penduduk arus perdana.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCMOE	British Columbia Ministry of Education
BM	Bahasa Melayu
CALLA	Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach
CDP	Continuous Professional Development
CGT	Classic Grounded Theory
CLA	Canada Library Associations
CoEP	Cluster of Excellence Policy
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister Malaysia
EFA	Education for All
ELLs	English Language Learners
EPRD	The Education Planning and Research Department, Ministry of Education Malaysia
FB	Facebook
FN	Fieldnote
GT	Grounded Theory
IAB	Institut Aminuddin Baki
IPG	Institut Pendidikan Guru (Institute of Teacher Education)
IPTA	Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam
ITE	Institute of Teacher Education
JAKOA	Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (The Department of Orang Asli Development
JKKOA	Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Orang Asli
JHEOA	Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli

JPNIN	Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional
KEMAS	Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat
KFC	Kentucky Fried Chicken
KLCC	Kuala Lumpur City Centre
KPM	Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia). See also MOE
LHF	Legacy of Hope Foundation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education Malaysia
NIPCE	National Indigenous Pedagogy Centre of Excellence
NPQEL	National Professional Qualification for Education Leaders
NST	New Straits Times
NSW	New South Wales
OA	Orang Asli
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PI	Parental Involvement
PKPPK	Pusat Kecemerlangan Pedagogi Peribumi Kebangsaan (The National Centre of Pedagogical Excellence for the Indigenous)
PPD	Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah (District Education Office)
PPRT	Projek Perumahan Rakyat Termiskin
RMT	Rancangan Makanan Tambahan (Supplemental Food Plan Programme)
RPS	Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula
SK	Sekolah Kebangsaan
SMS	Short Messages Service
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia

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SUHAKAM	Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia, Malaysia (The Human Rights Commision of Malaysia
TABIKA	Taman Bimbingan Kanak-Kanak
TASKA	Taman Asuhan Kanak-Kanak
TC (TCs)	Theoretical Coding (Theoretical Codes)
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TV	Television
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPSR	Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah
VVIP	Very Very Important Person
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The body of research on Orang Asli education in Malaysia arises from a concern about the achievement gap between Orang Asli students and those of the mainstream. Generally, findings highlight the difficulties and challenges of Orang Asli students in surviving the educational process through poverty and marginalisation (Mohamad Johdi Salleh & Abdul Razak Ahmad, 2009; Nazariah, 2014). Notably, some research explains that the achievement gap is due to poor attitude, culture, and lack of parents' involvement. The present study questions such deficit theorising by exploring how some Orang Asli students have survived and successfully beat the deficit game.

This chapter introduces the background of the study and presents statement of the problem. An overview of the theoretical framework is included to indicate the perspectives that have influenced the researcher in her endeavour to understand who

are involved and how their involvement impact on Orang Asli students' schooling success. The study was completed using Glaser's Classic Grounded Theory (CGT) method. Pre-reading and initial literature review guided the selection of research method and provided the starting point for a novice CGT researcher as well as increasing her theoretical sensitivity in the substantive area.

This chapter continues with a detailed description of the purpose and objectives of the study, and the corresponding research questions that set the initial direction of the research. The chapter ends with an explanation of the significance of the study, limitations of the research and initial operational definitions.

1.2 Background of the Study

The background takes into account perspectives for educating children that forms the general rationale of the study and issues surrounding the education of indigenous community of Orang Asli children in Malaysia that provides the study's contextual rationale.

1.2.1 Perspectives for Education

In general, education worldwide is oriented either towards the need of society positioned as a nation (the human capital approach) or the need of an individual and its

rights (the human rights approach) (Al-Attas, 1993; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 2005; Oliva, 2005; SUHAKAM, 2006; Winch & Gingell, 2008; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Whilst acknowledging the two dominant approaches to education Tikly and Barrett (2011) also offer an alternative. Tikly and Barrett argue for an approach for understanding the quality of education in low income countries from a social justice perspective. This perspective provides a quality education framework that incorporates dimensions of inclusion, relevance and democratic participation of public dialogue at the local, national and global level to foster development of key capabilities valued by the individual, communities and the society. It differs from the two earlier perspectives by making explicit the aspect of education quality in context as well as in relation to development.

In the eastern Islamic tradition, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (Al-Attas 1993) and Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud (2005) explain that the purpose of education is to elevate the self within the context of the individual as a created being. Al-Attas states:

> The aim of education in Islam is therefore to produce a good man. What is meant by 'good' in our concept of 'good man'? The fundamental element inherent in the Islamic concept of education is the inculcation of *adab*, for it is *adab* in all-inclusive sense here meant as encompassing the spiritual and material life of man that instills the quality of goodness that is sought after. (Al-Attas, 1993, p.150)

Thus, education in the Islamic context enables an individual to understand his or her roles and responsibilities in relation to the Creator, society and the environment. Education is thus tailored to fulfil these roles and responsibilities. This Islamic education framework essentially covers the aspects of knowledge of what and how in core knowledge of *fardu ain* (knowledge of prerequisites) and *fardu kifayah*

(knowledge of sciences) that promote the well being of an individual as self and in context with societal obligations and needs.

In the Malaysian context, SUHAKAM (2006) concurs with the two dominant perspectives for education, to develop the nation's human capital and to uphold the human rights to education. From a development perspective, education is a means to enhance earning capacity, to reduce poverty, and to produce human capital for the country. From this perspective, educational achievement is an important indicator of the country's progress. OECD (2004) argues that, "the prosperity of countries now derives to a large extent from their human capital, and to succeed in a rapidly changing world, individuals need to advance their knowledge and skills throughout their lives" (p.3). This implies the need for a nation to seriously ensure that its population has facilitated equal access to quality education in order for them to be part of the human capital of the challenging world scene.

Whilst from the human rights perspective, education is above and beyond that for economics and social uplifting. In this context, education is about obtaining knowledge as a goal to uplift the individual rather than just a tool for employment (SUHAKAM, 2006). This means education is the right of all children irrespective of position and location, and that the provisions and opportunity for education are expected to be equal among them. From this perspective, the Malaysian Government is committed to "Education for All (EFA)" enshrined in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (KPM, 2008; (Sharifah, Samsilah, Aminuddin, Kamaruddin, Mohamad Azhar & Jaimah, 2011). Thus, in contrast to the human

development capital perspective, EFA as the human rights' approach, insists that education is the right of every child born (UNICEF, 2011; SUHAKAM, 2011).

The United Nations (2011) highlights Malaysia's achievement in children's basic education as assessed against its millennium development goals (MDGs). In primary education, Malaysia's goal is to achieve universal primary education and complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. As at 2010, the MDGs report indicates that at the nation's level, 99% pupils starting grade 1 reached last grade of primary schooling (United Nations, 2011). Although the indicator provides evidence of national achievement in universal primary education; the report also highlights the need for the country to take into account the pockets of underachievers among the smaller communities, including that of Orang Asli children. SUHAKAM (2014) also reports concern with respect to Orang Asli education and achievement gap. In this context SUHAKAM through its Chairman reaffirms and highlights the human rights value of education for these communities as indicated in the following excerpt:

> Education creates awareness and understanding of the universal principles and norms of human rights, as well as builds zero tolerance of abuse of any kind. (Tan Sri Hasmy Agam, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, SUHAKAM, 2014, p.28)

In regard to the nation, the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia adopts an approach that considers education as a process for holistic development of an individual with the intent to produce a productive good citizen. This approach is reflected in MOE's statement of the National Education Philosophy (NEP) cited below:

> Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce

> individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large. (MOE NEP, 2017)

In contrast to the varied perspectives discussed above, Nicholas (2006) maintains that for Orang Asli, learning is a process to be a good Orang Asli. The traditional Orang Asli education is a life learning process of internalising knowledge and acquiring skills transmitted and gained from the elders who teach children to be polite, considerate and amicable, as well as environmentally resourceful while caring for its sustainability.

In conclusion, the above discussion offers a brief examination of the purpose of education. Two dominant arguments for education are derived from the human capital approach and human rights approach. Tikly and Barrett (2011) extended an alternative approach that considers education from a social justice perpective. In context with the Muslim majority environment of the present research, the Islamic perspective is also highlighted. However, the value of education to Orang Asli is simply to become good Orang Asli in the context of their environment.

1.2.2 Orang Asli Community

Orang Asli is the official name of the Peninsular Malaysia Indigenous Aboriginal community. This official identity is defined by the Malaysian Aboriginal Act 1954 (Act 134) (JAKOA, 2017b) described in further details in Appendix K. The name ‘Orang

Asli' is a collective term introduced by anthropologists and administrators of 18 ethnic sub-groups, shown in Figure 1.1, for official purposes. The term is in Bahasa Melayu which transliterates as 'original peoples' or 'first peoples' (Benjamin & Chou, 2002; Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013). Although some authors noted instances of the use of 'Orang Asal' in lieu of Orang Asli, Nicholas (2002) records the preferred term Orang Asli by the community as evident from the establishment of the Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association (POASM). According to Nicholas (2002), POASM was mooted mainly in response to deal with the Government's attempt at renaming them. He adds that the term 'Orang Asli' was still preferred as it correctly reflected their historical niche and identity.

JAKOA (2017b) records an Orang Asli population of 178,197 as at Year 2012, shown in Table 1.1. This represents about 0.6% of the total population of 32.0 million (DOSM, 2017). An earlier Malaysia's National Census 2006 indicates that about 62.4% of the communities live mainly in the more accessible fringe or the rural outskirts (JAKOA, 2011b). About 36.9% live in the hinterland, whilst an estimated 0.75% resides among the urban population. Data from JAKOA (2010) shows Orang Asli sub-groups distribution in Malaysia as at Year 2010 (Table 1.2). The table shows three Orang Asli major groups, the Negrito, the Senoi and the Aboriginal Malay. Each major group has six sub-groups as shown in the table. The state of Pahang has the largest Orang Asli population (Table 1.1) whilst the Semai forms the largest Orang Asli sub-group (30%).

Although referred to collectively as Orang Asli, as diverse groups of 18 indigenous ethnic tribes, they are distinguished by their respective ethnic languages and social-cultural identities (Lye, 2011; Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013; JAKOA, 2017b). Mohd Asri (2012) reports that their social and economic position situates them among the disadvantaged minorities; the majority living beneath the poverty line, whilst Johari and Nazri (2007) and Tarmiji, Fujimaki and Norhasimah (2013) identify the Orang Asli community as marginalised.

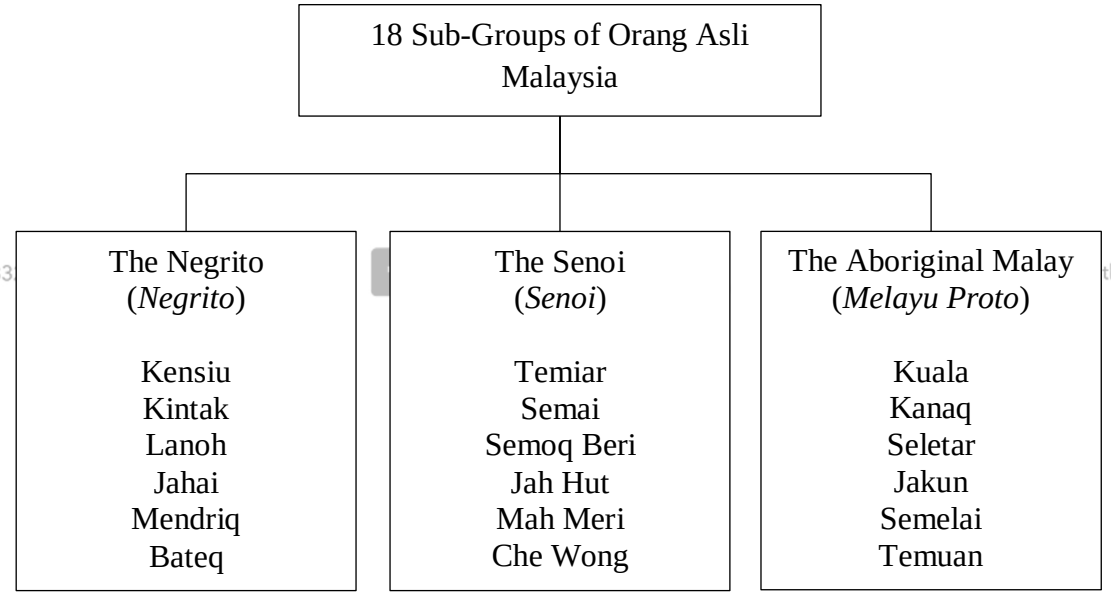

Figure 1.1. 18 Sub-Groups of Orang Asli Malaysia (JAKOA, 2017b)

Table 1.1

Orang Asli Population by State as at Year 2012 (JAKOA, 2017b)

State	Orang Asli Ethnic Groups			
	Senoi	Aboriginal (Proto) Malay	Negrito	Total
Pahang	29,439	37,142	925	67,506
Perak	50,281	605	2,413	53,299
Selangor	5,073	12,511	3	17,587
Kelantan	12,047	29	1,381	13,457
Johor	55	13,083	1	13,139
N. Sembilan	96	10,435	-	10,531
Melaka	28	1,486	1	1,515
Terengganu	818	41	34	893
Kedah	19	-	251	270
Total	97,856	75,332	5,009	178,197

Table 1.2

Orang Asli Sub-Groups Distribution in Malaysia as at Year 2010 (JAKOA, 2010)

Subgroup	Location	Population	%
The Negrito			
Kensiu	Kedah, Malacca, Perak	237	0.13
Kintak	Kedah, Kelantan, Perak	194	0.11
Lanoh	Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perak	382	0.21
Jahai	Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perak	2387	1.34
Mendriq	Kelantan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	362	0.20
Bateq	Kelantan, Pahang, Perak, Terengganu	1447	0.81
	Sub Total	5009	2.80

(*Continue*)

Table 1.2 (*Continued*)

Subgroup	Location	Population	%
The Senoi			
Temiar	Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	31,038	17.42
Semai	Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, Terengganu	51,437	28.87
Semoq Beri	Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, Terengganu	5313	2.98
Che Wong	Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, Terengganu	651	0.37
Jah Hut	Johor, Kelantan, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	5618	3.15
Mah Meri	Johor, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	3799	2.13
	Sub Total	97856	54.92
The Aboriginal Malay			
Temuan	Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, Terengganu	27590	15.48
Semelai	Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	7727	4.34
Jakun	Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, Terengganu	34722	19.49
Orang Kanaq	Johor, Kelantan, Pahang, Perak	148	0.08
Orang Kuala	Johor, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	3525	1.98
Orang Seletar	Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, N. Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor	1620	0.91
	Sub Total	75332	42.28
	Total	178197	100

Historically, Orang Asli education has gone through varied stages of experience. The Orang Asli education was formalised in 1952 (Edo, 2012). Since then, educating the community has been one of the Government's priorities (MOE, 2013). The education

of the community was initially under the purview of *Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli* (JHEOA) now renamed as The Orang Asli Development Department of Malaysia or *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli* (JAKOA), Malaysia. Following concerns of dropouts and achievement gap, the Ministry of Education (MOE) took over the function in 1995, and streamlined the national education agenda (Mohd Asri, 2012).

Meanwhile JAKOA remains as the Government's vehicle that implements housing, infrastructure and socio-enonomics development initiatives. The main aims of these initiatives are to ensure the well-being and security of Orang Asli, and the integration of this community into the mainstream population (JAKOA, 2011b). In addition, JAKOA is entrusted with special provision for Orang Asli educational support that includes education allowance and scholarships, school uniforms, food in school and school transport.

1.2.3 Learning Disengagement among Orang Asli Children

Orang Asli education has had considerable progress since its formal establishment in 1952 (Edo, 2012). However, studies have also found that Orang Asli educational achievement has not been at par with the national progress (Sharifah et al., 2011; MOE, 2017). Despite close support from JAKOA, and MOE, there are concerns that Orang Asli students are prone to dropping out and are underperforming in primary school (Nicholas, 2006; Kamaruddin & Jusoh, 2008; Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob, 2008; Adnan & Saad, 2010; Renganathan, Chong & Valenzuela, 2011; Sharifah et al., 2011;

SUHAKAM, 2011, 2014; DPM, 2012; Mohd Asri, 2012). Among the reasons that have been highlighted are school accessibility and Orang Asli students' difficulties in adjusting to the formal process of schooling. Although reducing, non-attendance is the main concern at primary. MOE (2017, p.3-15) indicates non-attendance of 76.7% (2013), 78.8% (2014), 79.1% (2015) and 86.3% (2016). Whilst dropping out remains high at transition from primary to secondary (MOE, 2017). This means significant percentage of students who have completed the Year 6 of primary school did not continue on to Form 1. Statistics from MOE (2017, p.3-15) compare Orang Asli students dropouts through eight years (2008-2016). Dropouts was 36% (2008) and reducing annually to 17% (2016). In terms of enrolment in Form 1, these represent 64% (2008) enrolment of 4266 students who completed Year 6, and 83% (2016) enrolment of 4372 students who completed the earlier Year 6.

Following the above historical concerns, the Government established special Orang Asli schools in selected locations throughout the country (MOE, 2017). As at 2016, MOE (2017) reported a total of 98 Orang Asli primary schools established throughout Peninsular Malaysia with enrolment of 40,257 students in Year 2016. These schools enable students to adjust better and experience the schooling process in context with their community. Sited within Orang Asli villages, the schools increase ease of access as well as enable better community involvement.

Upon completion of the primary years, the students continue their schooling in mainstream secondary schools since there is no secondary school (Form 1 to Form 5) specifically established to cater for the specific requirements of Orang Asli students

(Sharifah et al., 2011). However, the Government expanded the role of a few Orang Asli primary schools in response to an ongoing concern of Orang Asli students dropping out after Year 6 (MOE, 2017). These schools are comprehensive special model school referred to as K9 schools that provide schooling for Orang Asli students from the kindergarten right up to Form Three (aged 15 years) all under one roof with hostels provided. The first of such Orang Asli K9 school was launched in 2007 (The Star, 2007). Since then MOE (2017) reported a total of seven K9 schools in operation in 2016 with a total of 3295 students and 269 teachers (MOE, 2017). The same report however, indicates a decline in academic achievement of Orang Asli and K9 schools in Year 2016 compared with that of Year 2015. Although no statistics are presented, MOE (2017) states that, dropouts among Orang Asli students although reducing, are still high compared with the national average. Learning disengagement is still a major concern, especially with respect to non-attendance.

At this juncture, an understanding of the term ‘learning disengagement’ may be derived from Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) definition of ‘engagement’ from their statement as cited below:

> The multifaceted nature of engagement is also reflected in the research literature, which defines engagement in three ways. *Behavioural engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out. *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work. Finally, *cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (Emphasis original) (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004, p.3)

The above definition indicates the extent of learning engagement. It is a multi-dimensional concept within the context of behaviour, emotion and cognition. However, Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) also emphasise that the three domains overlap in that the impact of one flow into the other. They further argue that, "Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure" (p.3).

Following the above elaboration, the concept 'learning disengagement' can be understood as the opposite end of the engagement spectrum. Learning disengagement includes the idea of non-participation, non-involvement and non-commitment in aspects that promote learning whether in the physical, emotional, cognition or all of them. Non-participation, non-involvement in the physical sense includes absenteeism or truancy, and dropping-out. Similar perspective was forwarded by Murray, Mitchell, Gale, Edwards and Zyngier (2004), who state that, "At primary school level, indicators of disengagement include: not paying attention, not completing school work, disruptive behaviour, withdrawal, underachievement, truancy and school refusal" (p.7).

In the case of Orang Asli students, research has attributed their underachievement to the problem of learning disengagement with a focus on absenteeism and dropouts. Sharifah et al. (2011) highlight issues of disengagement and disenchantment among the children, and the Government's initiatives to alleviate them. Despite these initiatives, Sharifah et al. (2011) reported dropout rates of 47.23% for year 2000 cohort at primary level. This means 47.23% of children registered for

Primary 1 but did not complete Primary 6 (in 2005). While according to Mohd Asri (2012), dropout rate was 39.1% in 2008, reducing to 29% in 2010 and 26% in 2011. Although improving, the primary education completion rate is still below that of the above cited national performance of 99% (United Nations, 2011).

In another illustration of learning disengagement, Mohd Asri (2012) reports a case study on the implementation of Cluster of Excellence Policy (CoEP) in an Orang Asli school in Johor. The author highlights issues of absenteeism and pupils' dissatisfaction despite the extensive effort allocated to the pioneering initiative. In this study, he narrated an interesting 'pass-it-on' blame game, played out in the following excerpt:

> Pupil absenteeism is another obstacle to the implementation of the initiative. Throughout the site visit period, it was observed that about 5 to 6 pupils were absent during the morning roll call. Every day, the on-duty teacher would have to seek these pupils at their homes. Sometimes, the teacher would have to wake the pupils and wait for them to get ready to go to school. Teachers believe lack of interest among parents and pupils means it is impossible to maintain high standards at the school. The same lack of commitment was observed during English night classes and cultural performance training sessions. Some parents blame their children's attitude saying that they have tried everything to make them go to school. While others, especially the parents of female pupils believe that education will not take them anywhere. Pupils, on the other hand, cite too much homework, strict teachers, uninteresting activities and tiredness as some of the reasons for staying away from school. (Mohd Asri, 2012, p.8)

The above observation shows teachers attributing the cause of the problem to parents and pupils; while parents passed it on to their children (the pupils); followed by an interesting finale of pupils throwing the ball back to their teachers. The scene of this vicious circle was sited at an Orang Asli school that was part of the CoEP initiatives. The case highlights the complex nature of the situation that warrants a more deliberate

examination of how education as the nation envisioned it can be accepted and adopted as part of the community's daily routine.

At the global level, while noting that no specific mention is made with respect to Orang Asli, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlights underachievement and high school dropout rate among indigenous children. In its online news release on 28 April 2011, UNICEF states that Malaysia's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2010 report underlines inequalities despite national progress. It states:

> School attendance in Primary Education has increased rapidly for both boys and girls and is now above 95%. However, certain indigenous groups and children living in remote areas are still lagging behind and a percentage figure on attendance does not say anything about the quality of education which can differ vastly between schools and geographical areas. (UNICEF, 2011, On-line Press Release)

To conclude, the above discussion indicates that learning disengagement is a prevalent issue among Orang Asli students. Learning disengagement can be non-attendance as well as dropping out. Reasons for this disengagement are discussed below.

1.2.4 Reasons for Disengagement

Several reasons have been forwarded by past studies on learning disengagement among Orang Asli students. Mahmud, Amat and Yaacob (2008) argue that Orang Asli educational issues are influenced by family mindset, location and teacher preparation. They conclude that, for learning to happen among the Orang Asli children, the extent

and quality of learning support and provision must be greatly improved, particularly in situation where the supportive learning environment beyond that of school hours is very limited.

In a study on the issues and problems in the implementation of educational policy and opportunities for Orang Asli, Kamaruddin and Jusoh (2008), conclude that there was a dismal failure in implementing the educational programmes for Orang Asli, as indicated by the extremely high dropout rate. They added that education progress of these children at all levels still lags far behind and emphasized the need to recognize that the single most reason for the dropout is poverty. As Professor Juli Edo also explained in a symposium on Orang Asli educational need and issues, for most Orang Asli families, sending children to school competed with other pressing modern economic needs (FN: 28.03.2017).

Mohamad Johdi Salleh and Abdul Razak Ahmad (2009) believe that awareness about the importance of education exists among the Orang Asli children, but cultural influence constricts their mindset to explore change in lifestyle for better standards of living. The authors also found that Orang Asli parents understood the value of education. Nevertheless, their own lack of education limits their ability to be directly involved with their children's learning.

A study of Orang Asli literacy was conducted by Renganathan, Chong and Valenzuela (2011). As part of the research they started a literacy program for Orang Asli children living close to their university. The surprising note in the study is the

unawareness of many in the university community, of the presence of this Orang Asli population living practically next to them. This indicates that the Orang Asli minority community is far removed from the mainstream awareness.

Sharifah et al. (2011) provide an extensive overview and evaluation of the Government's initiatives to help overcome dropout problems of Orang Asli children. They argue that the high dropout rates are attributed to many factors, among them: fear of public examinations because of low academic achievement, lack of interest in schooling, poverty and logistic issues. Sharifah et al. (2011) conclude:

> The educational problems of the OA children come in a package. Teachers and their pedagogical skills, the curriculum, the quality of leadership of school administrators, the climate of the school, the school facilities, infrastructures, parental involvement and the socio-cultural milieu of the OA society are all in this package. (Sharifah et al., 2011, p.52)

Following their findings Sharifah et al. (2011) recommend that the problems be alleviated by improving the delivery system that must start with school leadership, accessibility and partnerships with parents. Additionally, there must be emphasis on the teachers' and school's role in increasing students' attachment to school and engagement towards learning. Among the latest research, Nazariah and Abd Rahman (2013), Nazariah (2014), Mohamad Anwaruddin, Norhamizah, Nurfarhana, Siti Aina, Siti Nur and Mohammad Nasir (2014) concluded in their respective studies that Orang Asli in Malaysia were still lacking in the level of attitude towards education.

Thus, what is known from past studies indicates that there is a real problem of Orang Asli students being prone to learning disengagement, leading to underachieving

(Nicholas, 2006; Johari & Nazri, 2007, SUHAKAM 2006, Kamaruddin & Jusoh, 2008; Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob, 2008, Sharifah, et al. 2011; Nurasyikin, Mustaffa, Sharina & Nor Haidanadia, 2017). Table 1.3 summarises key factors leading to learning disengagement that have been identified by previous research.

Table 1.3

Factors Leading to Learning Disengagement among Orang Asli Students

Factors attributed to disengagement	Source
Lack of interest in schooling; attitude	Nicholas (2006); Kamaruddin & Jusoh (2008); Sharifah et al. (2011); Nazariah (2014)
Poverty	Kamaruddin & Jusoh (2008); Sharifah et al. (2011)
Fear of public examinations because of low achievement	Sharifah et al. (2011)
Curriculum	Nicholas (2006); Sharifah et al. (2011)
Implementation failure	Kamaruddin & Jusoh (2008); Sharifah, et al. (2011)
Logistic issues – location; accessibility	Nicholas (2006); Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob (2008); Kamaruddin & Jusoh (2008); Sharifah et al. (2011); SUHAKAM (2014)
Home and community support; family values and mindset; parental involvement	Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob (2008); Kamaruddin & Jusoh (2008); Sharifah et al. (2011); Mohamad Anwaruddin et al. (2014); Mohamad Azmi (2016); Nurasyikin, Mustaffa, Sharina & Nor Haidanadia (2017).

Continue

Table 1.3 (*Continued*)

Factors attributed to disengagement	Source
Lack of teachers; Teacher's role and preparation; pedagogical skills	Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob (2008); Sharifah et al. (2011), SUHAKAM (2014).
School's role; the quality of leadership of school administrators; school physical and non-physical factors; the school climate	Sharifah et al. (2011); Norwaliza, Ramlee & Abdul Razaq (2016).
Social cultural environment of the Orang Asli society	Abdul Razaq & Zalizan (2009); Md Nasir, Ramlah, Suppiah, Abd Aziz & Roslinda (2010); Sharifah et al. (2011); UNESCO (2015c)

The above table shows findings from past studies (among others, Nicholas, 2006; Kamaruddin & Jusoh, 2008; Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob, 2008; Sharifah et al., 2011; Mohd Asri, 2012; SUHAKAM 2014; Mohamad Azmi, 2016) that contributing factors linked to the school (accessibility, curriculum, teachers' role and pedagogical skills, leadership, and school climate), the learner (attributes and attitudes); the family (poverty, support and involvement) and the community (social cultural milieu) are the reasons for Orang Asli learning disengagement. These findings are from the earlier as well current studies, spanning over a decade (2006-2017) of investigation. Notably, key issues related to Orang Asli learning disengagement appear to remain the same.

Undoubtedly, findings from past research concerning Orang Asli's educational issues have contributed towards better provision for the Orang Asli students. In connection with this, the Government through MOE and, in collaboration with the Institutes of Teacher Education (ITE) realized that there was a need to safe keep and

make available valuable knowledge and understanding gained from the implementation of Orang Asli programs and initiatives (Sharifah et al. 2011). This realization has resulted in the establishment of a National Indigenous Pedagogy Centre of Excellence (NIPCE) in an ITE in the state of Pahang. Its main purpose is to document, showcase, and share the research findings and knowledge of Orang Asli and indigenous education, upon which continuous improvement may be subsequently considered, strategized and implemented. The availability of past knowledge is the key to sustainable improvement.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The review and discussion in Sections 1.2.1 to 1.2.4 above form the backdrop to the following concluding statement of the problem for the present study. As stated earlier, although Orang Asli community has achieved considerable progress in education (KPM, 2008), research indicates that the educational attainment of the Orang Asli children has been problematic (Wan Afizi, Shaharuddin & Noraziah, 2014; SUHAKAM, 2015; Norwaliza, Ramlee & Abdul Razaq, 2016). Prevalent issues include learning disengagement and low achievement. Despite the myriad improvement initiatives implemented by the Government, it is evident that the academic achievements of Orang Asli students have not been at par with the national progress (Nicholas, 2006; Sharifah et al., 2011; United Nations, 2011); DPM, 2012; Mohamad Azmi, 2016; Hamidah, Norasibah, Khoo, Mahaliza & Maryam, 2017). For instance, whilst Sharifah et al. (2011) indicate a dropout rate of 47.23% in 2005 for Year 2000 cohort at primary level, Mohd Asri (2012) cites a dropout rate of 39.1% in 2008,

reducing to 29% in 2010 and 26% in 2011. However, the dropout problem appears to disappear in JAKOA (2015b) that reports a dropout rate of -21.05% in 2014 due to extensive campaign for primary enrolment by the relevant Government agencies. The negative percent indicates a surplus resulting from flexible enrolment at various ages and year levels for a particular cohort. Dropouts after Year 6, though, remain high (22.09% in 2014). This dropout rate refers to students who were enrolled in Year 6 in 2010 but did not continue to Form 1 at the secondary level (JAKOA, 2015b).

In contrast, the country report on EFA review for Malaysia submitted to UNESCO (2015c) indicates that nationwide the percentage of children who reach Year 6 has improved from 99.2 percent in 2000 to 99.2 percent in 2013, whilst the transition rate from primary education to lower secondary education has risen from 90 percent to 97 percent between 2000 and 2013. The report emphasises that the outcomes of programmes for the Orang Asli children depend on the degree to which teachers have the flexibility of adjusting the curriculum content to suit the children's needs, whislt simultaneously pointing out that:

> The challenges facing the Orang Asli are multidimensional which require attention to both the curriculum, pedagogical skills of teachers, the social cultural environment, and how to reduce the risk factors associated with them dropping out, particularly how to increase the Orang Asli's attitude towards schools and their exposure to the outside world. (UNESCO, 2015c, p.53)

To conclude, learning disengagement and underachievement of the Orang Asli children is a complex and multivariate issue. Orang Asli students' disengagement and disenchantment at primary level, indicated by dropouts, absentees and low academic achievement have triggered many initiatives to help alleviate the problems. Education

is the right of every child born (UNESCO, 2015b), but despite support from the Government and other agencies, why there are still Orang Asli children who are underachieving and remain disengaged from school.

From the preceeding discussion, it can be concluded that past studies have focussed on identifying factors leading to the problem. As at the start of this study, in year 2012, there is less known research that has delved into how others among the same community have progressed successfully through the same challenges. The experience of the successful students is worth investigating, with the aim that the findings will contribute to the body of knowledge about how successful Orang Asli students overcome the multi-dimensional deficits that surround them.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework and conceptual model are based upon the minor literature review described in Chapter 2. The initial theoretical framework guides in the determination of research method and provides a starting point for a novice GT researcher. The framework draws upon theoretical considerations and good practice in learning from varied disciplines, namely: quality management, learning organization, language learning, indigenous education, and learning in managing change. The multi-substantives approach gleans shared meanings of the ‘learning’ concept, approaches and practices across the various disciplines. The result is a high level conceptual model of leading learning illustrated in Figure 1.2. The conceptual model incorporates elements of learning embedded in continuous improvement process, systemic learning,

good practices in indigenous education, language learning and managing change process. In the final Chapter 5, the researcher discusses in details reflections on her preconceptions, the minor literature review, pre-conceived and emerging definitions. At this juncture, the researcher highlights the simple model initially drawn from an understanding of Deming (1986), Senge (1990), Jawaid (1998) and (Burnes, 2000), that broadly defines how the individual can lead their own learning and that of others through the competencies of:

- Initialising learning: how the individual starts the process and seeks help to start the learning process;
- Facilitating learning: how the individual creates the means to ease continuity of learning;
- Accommodating learning: how the individual adapts, adjusts and reconciles differences of the old and the new, learning for survival or survival learning, applying learning; and
- Generating learning: how the individual expands the ability to produce the results, he or she truly wants; learning for generating the new and the novel; the generative learning.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the conceptual leading learning model. It is a general depiction of how the individuals (students, teachers, head of schools and parents) lead their own learning and that of others and the extent to which they can initialise, facilitate, accommodate and generate learning. As stated earlier, this model is a guiding framework containing initial concepts that enable the researcher to generate the much

needed thoughts for the next stage of the research process, which is the identification of the research methodology.

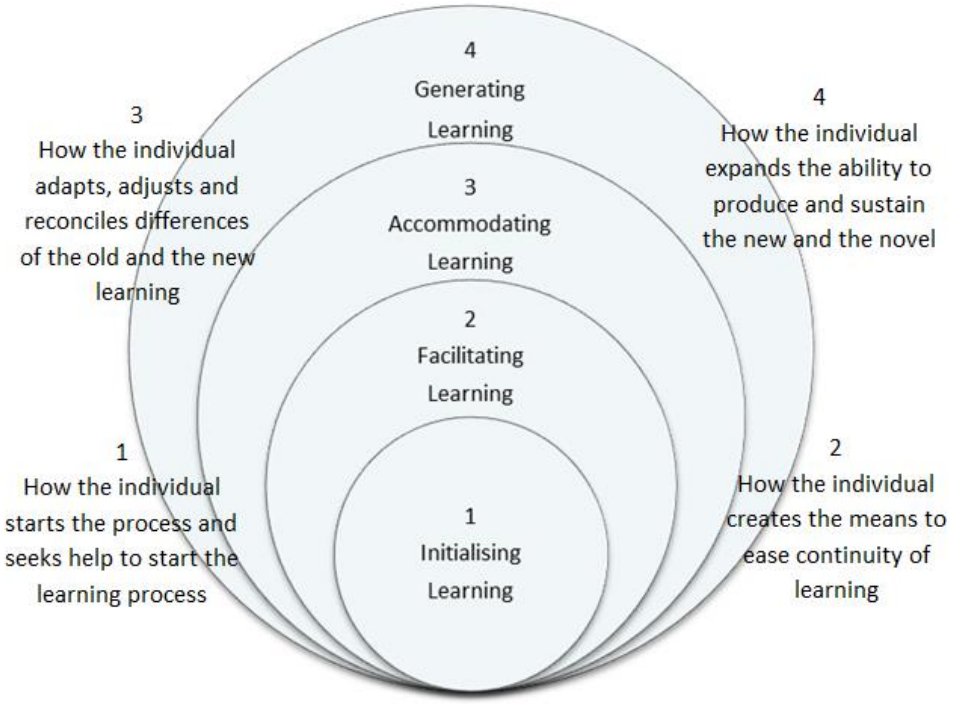

Figure 1.2. Conceptual Leading Learning Model

To initiate the research process, the researcher has adopted a simple conceptual definition of leading learning as gleaned from the Webster's dictionary (Neufeldt & Guralnik, 1994). Webster defines leading as the action of one that leads, whilst learning as the acquiring of knowledge or skill. Hence, for a start, leading learning in this study is defined as the action of one that leads the acquiring of knowledge or skill and other relevant learning competencies for self or for others. In other words, leading learning refers to the role involved, what it is about and how learning is led within a particular context. Leading learning as the final emerging concept is defined in Chapter 5.

1.5 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explore, understand and generate propositions that can explain how the learning process is led among successful Orang Asli students. To this end, the broad objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore and understand the process of Orang Asli students leading their own learning.
2. To explore and understand the process of Orang Asli parents leading their children in learning.
3. To explore and understand the process of teachers leading the learning of Orang Asli students.
4. To explore and understand the process of school heads leading the learning of Orang Asli students.

In pursuing the above objectives, the study is expected to reveal how the different roles collectively contribute to the leading learning process.

1.6 Research Questions

Based upon the above purpose and objectives, the research is driven by the following research questions:

1. How Orang Asli students lead themselves in learning?
2. How Orang Asli parents lead their children in learning?
3. How teachers lead learning of Orang Asli children?
4. How school heads lead learning of Orang Asli children?

Among the questions to be posed within the specific research question are: What were their challenges and concerns? How they overcome those challenges and concerns? Who were involved in the process of overcoming those challenges and concerns?

1.7 Significance of the Study

Sections 1.2.3, 1.2.4 and 1.3 have surfaced out issues related to Orang Asli students' learning disengagement. Several contributing deficit factors have been identified. Past initiatives to address the deficits have also been implemented by the Government. This study follows through the continuous improvement tradition, discussed in Section 1.4, and investigates other aspects of the issues that have not been explored in depth as yet; stated in Sections 1.5 and 1.6. It focusses on those who have achieved, and documents lessons learned from their achievement. Thus, its primary value is intended for the Orang Asli community, both parents and children and others within the community who are involved in the education of the children. Understanding how others have successfully progressed through the schooling system will enable them to ponder and harness lessons learned for their own strategies at overcoming learning issues and challenges. Practical value to the policy makers includes drawing on the findings to

develop strategies for the continuous improvement of the Orang Asli education. Finally, the study is significant in the innovative methodology used with respect to indigenous research in Malaysia, and the emerging grounded theory adds to the current body of knowledge arising from Orang Asli study. A detailed discussion of the aforementioned significance is presented in Chapter 5, Sections 5.4 (Contributions to the Body of Knowledge) and 5.5 (Implications for Practice).

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to exploring the leading learning process of Orang Asli students who have agreed to participate in the research. Through their narratives, and subsequent constant comparative analysis of the data gathered, this study provides one plausible explanation about how the various roles involved in the participants' education resolved the issues and challenges of prevalent learning disengagement among Orang Asli students. From a grounded theory research perspective, the limit is not about the particulars that cannot be generalised. Rather, the limit is in how one draws lessons from such documentation. Such is the case of the one whose biography benefits unknown numbers of readers directly or indirectly. Further discussion on the limitation of the study is presented upon completion of the study in the final Chapter 5.

1.9 Operational Definitions

Grounded theory: The substantive theory generated through constant comparative analysis of data in the substantive area. Substantive theory can be elevated to formal theory when it is relevant and fit in other substantive areas.

Grounded theory method: A research method that is based upon the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967). The main aim of the method is to generate theory that is grounded in data.

Learning disengagement: Learning disengagement includes the idea of non-participation, non-involvement, non-commitment in the aspect that promotes learning whether in the physical, emotional, or cognitive perspective. The concept learning disengagement can be understood as the opposite end of the engagement spectrum as defined by Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004):

> The multifaceted nature of engagement is also reflected in the research literature, which defines engagement in three ways. *Behavioural engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out. *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work. Finally, *cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (Emphasis original) (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004, p.3)

The following are pre-conceived definitions of the initial theoretical concepts that guide this research. For comparison the final emerging definitions are presented in Chapter 5.

Leading learning: Leading learning in this study is defined as the action of one that leads the acquiring of knowledge or skill and other relevant learning competencies for self or for others. In other words, key aspects pertaining to leading the learning process, of own or of the students depending on the context. The ability to lead learning contributes towards sustained learning engagement. The final definition is in Chapter 5.

Initialising learning: Initialising learning is about how the individual starts the process and seeks help to start the learning process.

Facilitating learning: Facilitating learning is about how the individual creates the means, to ease continuity of learning.

Accommodating learning: Accommodating learning is about how the individual adapts, adjusts and reconciles differences of the old and the new, learning for survival or survival learning, applying learning. This process is based upon an analogy of the concept 'accommodate' as defined in the Webster's New World Dictionary (Neufeldt & Guralnik, 1994), "to become adjusted, as the lens of the eyes, in focusing on objects at various distances" (p.8).

Generating learning: Generating learning is about how the individual expands the ability to produce the results, he or she truly wants; learning for generating the new and the novel; the generative learning.

Other conceptual definitions are elaborated in Appendix A.

1.10 Conclusion

There appears to be an unabated issue of learning disengagement among the Orang Asli community's children despite the Government initiatives for improvement. The focus to date has been improving learning provisions with respect to infrastructure development including access and better learning facility, human resource provisions, and financial assistance. This study takes the position that there is a need to understand how Orang Asli students can progress through the schooling process despite the often cited barriers and challenges, by listening to the voices of successful learners. In the following Chapter 2, the researcher presents the results from an initial literature review that underpins the subsequent research approach.