An insider perspective of lifelong learning in Singapore: beyond the economic perspective

Ng, Siew Kheng

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AN INSIDER PERSPECTIVE OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN SINGAPORE: BEYOND THE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

VOLUME TWO
OF TWO

SIEW KHENG NG
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

DECEMBER 2006

- 4 JUN 2007
Appendix 1: Invitation Letter ................................................................. 263
Appendix 2: Information Sheet .......................................................... 264
Appendix 3: Letter posted to interviewees to encourage reflection .......... 265
Appendix 4: Interview Schedule ....................................................... 266
Appendix 5: Evaluation Criteria ....................................................... 269
Appendix 6: Transcription guidelines ............................................... 270
Appendix 7: Sample of Transcripts .................................................. 271
Appendix 7A: Sample of WW's Transcript ....................................... 271
Appendix 7B: Sample of OK's Transcript ........................................ 292
Appendix 7C: Sample of H's Transcript ........................................... 322
Appendix 8: Sample of Analysis ....................................................... 342
Appendix 9: ITE to take in workers without O or N levels ................. 349
Appendix 10: New skills test opens doors to better jobs ................... 350
Appendix 11: New training system set up to help workers ................. 351
Appendix 1: Invitation Letter

No Siew Kheng

14th February 2003

Subject: Study on Factors Motivating Lifelong Learning in Singapore

Dear ______________ __

I am a postgraduate student of the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. Having completed the two-year coursework, I am currently conducting research on the factors that motivate lifelong learning in Singapore as part of my doctoral thesis.

My interest in lifelong learning started in 1977 when I was doing a unit on lifelong learning at the Institute of Education. Over the years, my experience as a pre-university teacher, and subsequently, as an adjunct lecturer with a polytechnic, has drawn my attention to the factors that motivate lifelong learning in Singapore.

In this particular study, I hope to examine the sociocultural and other influences on motivation for lifelong learning in the Singapore context. I am especially interested to interview those of you who have been nominated by your peers as successful lifelong learners, to get a glimpse of your life stories. I believe that by sharing your life stories and how you manage to overcome obstacles to engage in lifelong learning, you will be an inspiration to others who hope to follow in your footsteps.

I enclose an information sheet outlining what the study is about. Any information provided by you would be on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that you will not be identified in any report or publication that is prepared from this study, except where your prior permission has been obtained.

If you have any queries regarding the above-mentioned study, please feel free to contact me at S.K.Ng@durham.ac.uk or handphone number: I look forward to meeting up with you at a time convenient to you.

Yours faithfully,

(Ms.) Ng Siew Kheng
Appendix 2: Information Sheet

Subject: Study on Factors Motivating Lifelong Learning in Singapore
(Approved by Durham University’s Ethics Advisory Committee)

1. What the study is about
The purpose of my study is to examine the factors that influence motivation for lifelong learning in the Singapore context. I hope to focus on the sociocultural influences that affect motivation for lifelong learning in Singapore. I am especially interested in interviewing those of you who have been nominated by your peers as successful lifelong learners. By sharing your life stories, I hope to cast light on how we can continue to encourage lifelong learners in the Singapore society.

2. What you will have to do
If you agree to participate in the study, you will first be invited to meet me for one interview of about one hour. This interview would take place at a time convenient to you. The interview will be tape-recorded and will normally be conducted in private. The first interview consists of the narration of your life story with special emphasis on the factors that motivate you to engage in lifelong learning, as well as the obstacles that you have to overcome. If you agree to proceed to the next phase, another interview may then be conducted later to focus on some of these factors.

3. Your rights as a participant.
If you take part in this study, you have the right to:
(a) refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.
(b) ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
(c) provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researchers, and that you will not be identified in any reports or publications that are prepared from this study, except with your prior permission.
(d) examine and amend the transcript of the interview, and to indicate any part of the transcript that you do not wish to be used.
(e) determine the disposal of interview tapes, transcripts of interviews and personal documents made available for the study.

4. Consent statement
I, ____________________, consent to participate in the research “Study on Factors Motivating Lifelong Learning in Singapore”. I accept the assurances listed here and I give permission for Ng Siew Kheng to use the information gained in her thesis and any subsequent publications she may write.

Signed ____________________________
Date ____________________________
Appendix 3: Letter posted to interviewees to encourage reflection

12th May 2003

Subject: Interviews of Lifelong Learner Award Winners

Dear

Thanks for giving your consent to Mediacorp Radio to be interviewed for my doctoral thesis on lifelong learning in Singapore. I was not able to contact you earlier because of some prior arrangements that I had to make before starting officially. Now that I have been granted written approval from the university's ethics committee and can proceed with the interviews, I will like to make an appointment to interview you at a time convenient to you.

As mentioned in my previous letter, the method involves eliciting your life story through interviews. You can tell your life story in whichever way suits you most. As a guideline, some of the topics that can be covered in the interview include information about how each of the following factors may or may not influence your motivation for lifelong learning:

- Your family of origin and cultural background (e.g. whether your parents, relatives, neighbours and religious beliefs play a role in causing you to engage in lifelong learning now).
- Social and historical incidents (wars, independence of Singapore, change in educational systems, greater international competition and globalisation, etc. and their impact on your learning).
- Education (e.g. your experiences in school with teachers and fellow students).
- Present family (role of your spouse or children if you are married).
- Work (e.g. whether the nature or your place of work have any influence on your attitude or opportunities for lifelong learning).
- A brief description of your past and present learning activities and how you overcame any obstacles.
- Any advice that you will like to give to those who want to engage in lifelong learning like you.

You can contact me on my handphone (90011009) or by email (either at s.k.ng@durham.ac.uk or skyong@starhub.net.sg). Meanwhile, I will also be contacting you by email (if you have given an email address to Mediacorp Radio) and by telephone to arrange for an interview of about an hour or an hour and a half.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Warmest regards,

Ng Siew Kheng
Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

Introductory statements

Hi, Mr / Ms......, how are you? I am really glad to meet you today. As you have heard from Mediacorp Radio, I am currently doing a study on lifelong learning in Singapore. They have been very kind to make the initial contact on my behalf. As I have mentioned on the phone, I am interested in studying the factors that motivate people like you, who persevere to learn continuously, sometimes even despite adverse circumstances. I hope you can share your life story because I think that what you share will be able to help others who aim to engage in lifelong learning like you. In view of the current economic and social conditions, what you share will be even more relevant. Prior to this, you have received some questions to help you put your life story together. Please feel free to tell your life story in whichever order you want and also emphasise any particular aspect of your life that you find to be of particular importance in your lifelong learning endeavour.

I will like to tape record this interview. However, you will be shown the transcript later on and you can make changes to the transcript if you do not agree with it. You can also indicate any part of the transcript that you wish to be excluded. As mentioned in my letter, you can refuse to answer any question. Do feel free to ask any question that you may have at any time of the study. Confidentiality will be maintained except where prior permission has been given by you. If you don’t mind, could we start with your family and cultural background?

Possible questions include:

Family of origin and cultural background

- What religious and cultural values were passed on to you, and by whom? / Were there any particular beliefs or ideals that were passed on to you, and by whom?
- Which of these beliefs or ideals are especially important in molding your personality or life philosophy?
- Was religion important in your family? If so, does it still have an influence on you now?
- What cultural influences are still important to you today, especially with regards to your attitude towards learning?
- Do you come from a family or culture where education/learning is considered as very important or unimportant? What kind of influence does this have on your motivation for lifelong learning?
- Alternatively, were there any obstacles that prevent you from learning because of your family background? How do you overcome these obstacles?
- What do you think you inherit from your parents? Do these traits help or hinder you in learning?
- (For women) Does the fact that you are a woman prevent you from pursuing learning when you were younger or now? How do you overcome these obstacles? Conversely, does being a woman in your culture give you some advantages? What are these advantages?
- (For men) Does being a man mean that you have some advantages in learning? What are these advantages? Conversely, do you think that as a man you have certain disadvantages in learning? How do you overcome them?
Social / Historical Factors

- Who and what shaped your life the most?
- Do you have any role models in your life? Who are the heroes, heroines or mentors that have influenced your life? Are there any writers / politicians that have influenced you?
- Were there any incidents in your life that caused you to become who you are today?
- Can you recall any historical (e.g. World War II or independence of Singapore) or social incidents (e.g. communist insurgency in Chinese schools, racial riots or labour unrest) that have an impact on your life?
- Did social class have any effect on your life? Does it still have an effect on your life now? If so, how?
- Is a sense of community important to you? What do you think of the role of the individual in the community or conversely, the community’s role in the life of an individual?
- Are there any social pressures that you experienced as a child or as an adult, especially concerning the need to excel in our society?

Education

- What is your first memory of attending school?
- Did you enjoy attending school?
- How did school influence you, especially in your motivation to learn?
- Did you have a favourite teacher in primary, secondary or pre-university or at the tertiary level? How much did they influence you, especially in your attitude towards learning?
- What organisations or activities were you involved with in school? Did they have any effect on you and your attitude towards learning?
- How much formal education did you have?
- What is your view of the role of education (both formal and informal) in a person’s life?
- What is your opinion about the educational system and its role in encouraging / discouraging lifelong learning?
- Are there enough opportunities / avenues for lifelong learning in Singapore? Give specific examples of such opportunities / avenues that you are aware of?
- What can be done to promote lifelong learning in Singapore?

Present Family and Work

- Are you married and do you have any children?
- What values or lessons do you try to impart to your children?
- What role does your spouse (if you are married) and children (if you have children) play in your life, especially with regards to lifelong learning?
- What work are you involved in?
- How did you end up in the type of work you do or did?
- Does the nature or your place of work have any influence in your attitude or engagement in lifelong learning?

Past achievements and Present Life
Could you recollect the different kinds of learning activities that you have engaged in so far?
What obstacles did you face in your learning endeavours?
How did you overcome them?
Since you won the lifelong learning award, are there any previous or new learning activities that you are still engaged in?
How do you organise your life, especially your time, so that you can engage in so many activities at one time?
What do you think are the factors that motivate you to persevere in learning?
Do you think that you possess any particular personality traits that may have helped you?
How do you feel about life now? Are there any other things that you think you will like to achieve but have not done so?
What are some obstacles that you face in learning right now?
How do you intend to overcome these obstacles?
What has been the greatest challenge in your life so far?
In what ways have lifelong learning affected you and those around you?
Do you have any advice for those who aim to engage in lifelong learning like you?

Closure Questions
Is there anything that we have left out in your life story?
What are your feelings about this interview and all that we have covered?

Some verbal prompts that I hope to use in the interviews include:
"Can you give me another example of that?"
"Is this the case all the time?"
"Really?"
"Please tell me more."
"Could you elaborate on this?"
"When did this happen?"
"How did this happen?"
Appendix 5: Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

General Guidelines

1. Nominees must be individuals aged 18 years and above.
2. Nominees must either be Singaporeans or Permanent Residents of Singapore.
3. All nominations must come attached with the official entry forms taken from:
   - TODAY newspapers
   - Lifelong Learner Awards website (http://www.mediacorpradio.com/lifelong/learner)

Evaluation of Shortlisted Nominees

1. Their learning experiences can occur in both non-traditional and structured formalised classroom learning.
2. Their learning journeys need not have resulted in certification or accreditation.
3. They must demonstrate their passion for learning and how learning has improved or enriched their lives or benefited other people.
4. Their learning experiences could also reflect their perseverance and determination in the face of hardship or obstacles, such that their stories have a 'heart appeal'.
5. Their stories must not be seen to specifically promote or market certain products and services of any one educational or training provider.
6. They must be able validate their stories, where MediaCorp Radio and Ministry of Manpower would contact them or their nominators to verify their stories. This would be conducted through telephone interviews, emails and other possible correspondences.
7. They must disclose how they would spend the prize monies to further their learning experiences. MediaCorp Radio would re-confirm the truth of this the subsequent year.

Other Considerations

1. The final list of award winners should reflect diversity in terms of types of learning experiences as well as demographic distribution.
2. Award winners should not be selected merely on the basis of traditional progression of education. The process of transformation is fundamental.
Appendix 6: Transcription guidelines

It is important for qualitative research that transcripts be verbatim accounts of what transpired in the interview; that is, they should not be edited or otherwise “tidied up” to make them “sound better.”

Pauses
Denote short pauses during talking by a series of dots ( . . . ), the length of which depends on the amount of time elapsed (e.g., two dots for less than half a second, three dots for one second, four dots for one and a half seconds). Denote longer pauses with the word pause in parentheses. Use “(pause)” for two- to three-second breaks and “(long pause)” to indicate pauses of four or more seconds.

Laughing, coughing, etc.
Indicate in parentheses; for example, “(coughs),” “(sigh),” “(sneeze).” Use “(laughing)” to denote one person, “(laughter)” to denote several laughing.

Interruptions
Indicate when someone’s speech is broken off midsentence by including a hyphen (-) at the point where the interruption occurs (e.g., “What do you-”).

Overlapping speech
Use a hyphen to indicate when one speaker interjects into the speech of another, include the speech of the other with “(overlap­ping),” then return to where the original speaker was interrupted (if he or she continues). For example:

R: He said that was impos-
I: (overlapping) Who, Bob?
R: No, Larry.

Garbled speech
Flag words that are not clear with square brackets and question mark, if guessing what was said (e.g., “At that, Harry just [doubled? glossed?] over”).

R: Then you know what he came out with? He said (mimicking
voice) “I’ll be damned if I’m going to let YOU push ME around.” And I thought to myself: “I’ll show you!” But then a little voice inside said “Better watch out for Linda.” Sure enough, in she came with that “I’m in control now” air of hers.

Emphasis
Use caps to denote strong emphasis; for example, “He did WHAT?” (Do not use boldface or underlining because such formatting is often lost when text files are imported into qualitative analysis software programs.)

Held sounds
Repeat the sounds that are held, separated by hyphens. If they are emphasized, capitalize them as well. For example, “No-o-o-o, not exactly” or “I was VER-r-r-y-y-y happy.”

Paraphrasing others
When an interviewee assumes a voice that indicates he or she is parodying what someone else said or is expressing an inner voice in the interviewee’s head, use quotation marks and/or indicate with “(mimicking voice).” For example:

R: He said that was impos-
I: (overlapping) Who, Bob?
R: No, Larry.

Appendix 7: Sample of Transcripts
Appendix 7A: Sample of WW's Transcript

S.K. | Mr. Wong, you know this study is about motivation for lifelong learning and we are trying to explain the factors that motivate you to want to engage in lifelong learning. So maybe you could just tell us a little bit about... We could start off with your family if you don't mind... what kind of family you came from? And do you think your family has in any way affected you? Ya...

W.W. | I was born in 1956 in Hong Kong and my childhood era... is basically era... full of hardship and our family was very poor at that time. My father and mother were refugees from China and so we settled in Hong Kong in the early sixties, so... from... my parents I understand we were sort of; the first place we stay is the squatter area in Hong Kong in Holy [Clause?] village we call. And very poor, very deprived and... I... was the only son in the family and had the fortune to go to school full-time and the... very... poor quality kind of education in those days in 1960s. And my two sisters didn't have any chance to receive any formal education even the primary school, those kind of welfare night class. You know... very... bad environment. So I managed to study till... my secondary school equivalent to the local 'N' level. I finished the secondary so-called secondary form 5 or... education level some time in 1974. Er... during my secondary school days, our family financial background is relatively... was relatively better because my sisters didn't pursue any study after their night time primary...
school. They went out to work, so... and... I... have two sisters and parents working. Two sisters working managed to sustain my secondary study in a private secondary school in Hong Kong. But again the standard was quite bad lah. Ya. And the place we stayed in Hong Kong is very cramped, very small and... essentially... arm... looking back and to put it simply, quite a deprived and neglected childhood in that sense lah.

S.K. So, your parents had to work very hard when you were —

W.W. Well, my mother yes, but my father not quite. Because he got a job in the British military establishment doing some as a labourer or something. Not... not really tough, just tending a small cafeteria for the officers and all that preparing tea. You know and all that.

S.K. Your mother had to work very hard?

W.W. In a factory, in the meantime, look after the family. My father was the typical traditional Chinese father lah.

S.K. (Overlapping) Yes, yes.

W.W. Never... helping out a bit... essentially... quite... er what you call er... the typical conventional Chinese father, very fierce, you know; very domineering, domineering you know and all that.

S.K. So did your father err... spend any time with the children?

W.W. No-

S.K. Hardly anytime-

W.W. In fact, he was very fierce-
S.K. (overlapping) So that was the typical Chinese father...
W.W. And in fact, to be very honest with you, my relation with him was no good because he would resort to or abuse... physical violence whenever he, he saw something us not right
S.K. I see.
W.W. So in terms of motivation not quite... keep on sort of eroding my confidence by saying "Hey, why you so stupid?" You know like a pig, or something. So at... that time... I... ya-
S.K. He used words which were quite hurting
W.W. Ya, I didn't have much confidence in my study and all that-
S.K. How about your mother?
W.W. My mother again is a typical traditional Chinese woman, working in the day time. Night time go back to do the housework and all that. She is very kind but illiterate, essentially illiterate... and couldn't... didn't have the time to nurture or coach me in that sense.
S.K. Your brothers and sisters?
W.W. I have two sisters.
S.K. Two sisters, you said something about your sisters in helping out-
W.W. Ya, they... they don't have any chance to receive any formal education and they only got primary education, even for part-time education, they did it in a night school and welfare organization and all that.
S.K. But you had the formal education.

W.W. Ya, because I was the only son.

S.K. So this will be quite typical of Chinese family. The son usually is given privilege of getting the formal education.

W.W. Ya, ya, correct, correct, correct.

S.K. And later on they also helped to support you?

W.W. No, as I said earlier on, I finished my secondary 5 education when I was 18. Not very good results... in Hong Kong we call it the School Certificate or Hong Kong Certificate of Education, roughly equivalent to 'N' level. Quite fair results and in the early seventies there is the economic recession, the oil crisis in the 1973 and not many opportunities. So without much choice I join the Hong Kong police force lab. Basically as a police constable. You get my background?

S.K. Yes, I have your background. You joined and you became a police inspector arr... and then arr... decided to return to study after that-

W.W. (Overlapping) right, right.

S.K. So when did you decide to return to study?

W.W. (Overlapping) was-was-

S.K. How many years after you joined the police force...?

W.W. I joined the force in 1974 and in 1986, I sort of went back to study, not full-time, only part-time. I took 'A' level in 1986.

S.K. So you did your 'A' level in 1986.
S.K. And then after that you went on to do some other studies. You went even to study a law degree.

W.W. Yes, again it's a part-time basis - the external degree run by the University of London.

S.K. (overlapping) Yes, yes, yes.

W.W. in 1987

S.K. so how long is the course--

W.W. 3 years.

S.K. It's a 3-year course. So you actually had to work in the day and study at night--

W.W. Correct. At that time I was as lucky in the sense I was posted to the Police Academy. So not much shift work, so relatively better.

S.K. So in that sense you think ... that the place of work in a way can actually--

W.W. Facilitate, ya facilitate. If I was in an operational division, I... I don't think I can complete it.

S.K. When you say that, there's not much shift work, you mean that--

W.W. (Overlapping) no need to shift, office hours.

S.K. Ya, so you-

W.W. Conduct training to the trainees and all that. So relatively, it's not that tough in that sense.

S.K. So actually arm... you did up to secondary 5-
And then after that you went on to do some other studies. You went even to study a law degree.

Yes, again it's a part-time basis — the external degree run by the University of London.

(overlapping) Yes, yes, yes.

in 1987

so how long is the course—

3 years.

It's a 3-year course. So you actually had to work in the day and study at night—

Correct. At that time I was so lucky in the sense I was posted to the Police Academy. So not much shift work, so relatively better.

So in that sense you think ... that the place of work in a way can actually—

Facilitate, ya facilitate. If I was in an operational division, I ... I don't think I can complete it.

When you say that, there's not much shift work, you mean that—

(Overlapping) no need to shift, office hours.

Ya, so you—

Conduct training to the trainees and all that. So relatively, it's not that tough in that sense.

So actually erm... you did up to secondary 5—
| W.W. | Formal education, yes.          |
| S.K. | And your 'A' level?            |
| W.W. | Part-time, on my own.          |
| S.K. | How long did you take to do that? |
| W.W. | 1 year.                        |
| S.K. | 1 year! That's fantastic.      |
| W.W. | It's not a full 'A' level, you know? |
| S.K. | I see, what do you call that then? |
| W.W. | Because initially I intended to join the external programme directly but they say that “You don't even have an 'A' level you know, cannotlah” so... they have some sort of concession because of my background, my police background, police training and all that, so... they have some sort of concession, not a full 'A' level but one 'A' level subject. So I opt for 'A' level in law. |
| S.K. | So they took your experience in- |
| W.W. | into account.                  |
| S.K. | In the police force into account- |
| W.W. | Some sort of exception         |
| S.K. | So it was to your advantage.   |
| W.W. | (Overlapping) yup, yup.        |
| S.K. | So you took a particular subject in 'A' level. What subject did you- |
| W.W. | Law.                           |
So that was relevant.

W.W. Yup

S.K. To the degree course that you were doing. So in that sense, the fact that they gave you that opportunity also helps a lot. They did not require that you do the whole 'A' level. Then, maybe we can discuss a little bit about this thing about male and female. You were saying that your sisters did not have the advantage of formal education. Were they able to continue their education after that?

W.W. (shook his head)

S.K. They were not able to. But-

W.W. After they got married, my older sister became a full-time housewife. My... the second... one... initially working for a while and then eventually became a housewife and then at a very late stage in life going back to the work force again.

S.K. I see. You mentioned something about, or rather, the Mediacorp website mentioned the 1997 handover. Hong Kong handover was a turning point in your life. How was it a turning point in your life?

W.W. It is a sort of a catalyst so to speak. Because at that time, in fact one of my motivations in the mid-80s, ’86 when I went back to study my 'A' levels, basically I have some sort of self-reflection and I said to myself: "Oh my goodness, China is going to take over Hong Kong and the police area was the only career I can, you know... continue without which I want outside, I won't have the
knowledge and skill to do anything." So I decided to do something about it then. To improve my educational background so as to basically equip myself to have more option lab.

S.K. So that actually caused you to think more carefully about the course. That was in 1977.

W.W. No, no.

S.K. Sorry; sorry before that.

W.W. Because in the early 80s, the British and China-

S.K. (overlapping) Yes

W.W. Already entered into an agreement to hand over Hong Kong back to China in 1997. Although the actual change over took place in '97, but way before that everybody is already expecting that to happen-

S.K. Yes.

W.W. This triggered off my learning... (laughter)

S.K. Yeah

W.W. You know, motivation lab.

S.K. Yes, very good. Did anyone of your friends experience this?

W.W. Yes, many of our fellow police officers studied part-time.

S.K. They took part-time.

W.W. For obvious reasons lab. We were in the law enforcement, to pick up as law, legal study, relatively easy. At least for criminal law some basic legal concepts are there already.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.K.</th>
<th>Did anyone of them also do it because of this reason - because of the 1997 handover?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>It's a combination of many factors lah. One is the sort of er... self-improvement er... don't want to be police officer for the rest of their life. It's quite attractive lah, to become a lawyer and although at the end of the day, eventually we find it is not the case. Right? If then, fantastic lah. (laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>(laughter) I guess with every career, that's the case. Ya, so actually talking about your family again. Did you think that your family encouraged you in terms of like teaching you certain things about the importance of education -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>My parents and sisters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Ya, ya. Was it considered important to finish -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>I don't think it's a big contributing factor. Although er... they pay lip service. They say it's important to be educated and all that but essentially the environment with the er... so-called... in terms of behaviour, in terms of motivation, it's not there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>So what actually motivate you, motivated you to pursue -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| W.W. | The tri- triggering mechanism, I suspect would be as I said earlier on, is the anticipation of... of change, of sovereignty which may lead to a change of career. That's how I see it. Second is er... kind of arm... self-reflection... and there is a sense of loss when I er... took up the position as an inspector, being a supervisor in...
case. Mostly, most of the inspectors are graduate level or
expatriates from UK, so in day-to-day operations, I find myself, in
terms of analytical power, cognitive, you know, level... analysis...
not quite up to the standard. So... that... that kind of a sense of loss
which prompt me to think "How come so bad?" when I compared
myself with other fellow inspectors and officers. So prompt me to
improve myself. Ya.
S.K. When did you come to Singapore?
W.W. In 1994.
S.K. 1994, before the handover.
W.W. Ya.
S.K. Ok, when you came to Singapore, you actually started working
with Lucent Technology.
W.W. No, in fact the sequence of event is so... I joined the force in 1974,
became an inspector in 1980 and then... en... embarked on my part-
went back to full-time to the University in Hong Kong to study the
post-graduate course. It's a post graduate, post certificate... post
graduate certificate course in law in 1991.
S.K. (Overlapping) Ok
W.W. In 1992, I switched... changed my career to be a trainee solicitor.
S.K. (overlapping) Oh!
W.W. From '92 to '94 but by the time I am fully qualified in '94.
and all that so working in AT&T, a multinational corporation, a lot of new things pop up again. Again the sense of inadequacy you know... wanting to... you know... equip myself, basically to make myself more knowledge... along those lines.

S.K.  And this management course you took was for how long?

W.W.  It's two and a half years. In fact, I didn't complete it in full. It's a diploma course. First year certificate. If you complete the full then it will be a diploma. That time or... when I need to do a sort of dissertation. I was already in sort of absorbed by the Ministry of Community Development to take up the post of superintendent at the Singapore Boys' Home. And I was busy that I didn't have the time to complete the diploma course. So, I just aborted it basically lah. Ya... I attended all the exam but essentially the dissertation was not completed so they did not give me the diploma.

S.K.  So you got a certificate... That was really difficult isn't it, to work as the superintendent in the Boys' Home?

W.W.  Quite tough lah.

S.K.  Full-time job, isn't it? Ya very tough. You had to spend long hours there, I presume. So how long were you there?

W.W.  From 1998 to year 2000. In fact when I was in Boys' Home in 1999, I took up the graduate diploma.

S.K.  Wow!

W.W.  In social work in NUS. Again half way through, I aborted it.
Because my transfer to this posting I hope it won't be repeated for this Master's course.

S.K. Hahaha (laughter). Can I get that again? You said that you took up the post-grad diploma—

W.W. in social work in NUS when I was in Singapore Boys' Home

S.K. And you had to give it up because of the nature of the work.

W.W. Yup, because of the transfer to this—

S.K. Oh, because of the transfer to the prison post and now you are doing another one. (laughter)

W.W. Ya, Master in KM in NTU.

S.K. Master's in?

W.W. Knowledge Management.

S.K. Knowledge Management, ok. So how long, how you have been doing this?

W.W. 1 year already, 2 semesters.

S.K. How long is this course supposed to be?

W.W. 2 years.

S.K. 2 semesters?*

W.W. I have completed 2 semesters. There are 4 semesters altogether—

S.K. So you have to do—

W.W. Half way through.

S.K. So you have to do a dissertation besides the course work?

W.W. Correct.
S.K. Yes, yes.

W.W. Energy level would shrink –

S.K. Yes, it would affect but so far you are quite happy. (laughter)

W.W. Hopefully, it won’t strike me.

S.K. Ok, so you actually mentioned a bit of family, a bit of social factor and historical factor that is the handover of 1997, of Hong Kong in 1997. How before that –

W.W. The two main contributing factors, one is so call the change of sovereignty which may lead to ar so-called insecurity of my police career that triggers the sense of urgency, crisis. The other one is the so call ar the feeling of the lack of... the feeling of inadequacy where you are at a certain position and find yourself not to the par, knowledgeable. And the people around are so good, then you have the tendency to try to make it up. So I think these are the 2 contributing factors. Third one perhaps is, I don’t know; possibly because of the ar... lack of opportunities when I was young, so some kind of making amends making it up lah. In the younger days, don’t have the opportunities to study; now grown up, have the time and resources and would like to make amends.

S.K. Actually talking about resources, you ar... most of this courses, you actually ar pay it out from your own pocket except for the-

W.W. You see, the law in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong ones are all self sponsored. All the Singapore ones are company sponsored.
S.K. Oh well, so you are fortunate.

W.W. Singapore is very good.

S.K. Haha (laughter)

W.W. But the KM course, I need to pay 25% but I am very grateful.
Because of my age they still support me 75%. Very, very good...

S.K. That’s very good eh?

W.W. And for the grad diploma, I pay a penalty for a break of bond, for
failing to complete the whole course. So essentially it’s... ah...
self-sponsored lah. And then the management course paid by the
company.

S.K. So do you think you have enough opportunities for upgrading
yourself if assuming you want to in Singapore?

W.W. I... am... quite fortunate.

S.K. You are quite fortunate.

W.W. I am not sure.

S.K. As far as you are concerned,

W.W. (overlapping) I am not sure. But for Singapore public service, I
think it is quite supportive. For the private company, for the private
company, during the booming times, I think they were quite
generous also. But these days... a bit difficult.

S.K. Did you apply for these courses yourself or did... did you apply
for the sponsorship yourself or-

W.W. I need to apply simultaneously for the course in NTU and the
S.K. I see.

W.W. In fact, initially I was not that optimistic because of my age. In fact, when I went to NTU, I need to have some sort of so-called aptitude test and all that, that kind of logical deduction, you know. Wah, I was really shocked you know.

S.K. Haha (laughter)

W.W. My goodness! You know. Full of people, young people! You know. So a bit jiat liat (dialect). Eh... surely will lose out.

Fortunately, I went through.

S.K. Was your class mainly made up of young people?

W.W. Err...

S.K. Or most of the classes were made up of mostly young people?

W.W. Yes and no. I think roughly it was quite a wide range, from early 20s to late 30s, but I am the oldest lah... I am the oldest. I am even older than the tutor.

S.K. Did you feel awkward at all? Or you got used to it? You got used to it. Initially, you say there were a lot of young people.

W.W. Oh, that one was for the assessment test.

S.K. I see, that was the assessment test. Then when you joined the course, it was ok. There were quite a number of older people. You were the oldest. (laughter)

W.W. Yup, yup.
management, which is actually quite different, is it?

W.W. In fact there is some commonality.

S.K. Is that so?

W.W. If you talk about competitive intelligence... in knowledge management, one of the areas is competitive intelligence i.e. the look for intelligence, how your competitor is doing, and the reposition of your case and your product or services. That one need a lot of intelligence gathering, analysis which is very much related to domesticating ability, competency. And in another area say talking about intellectual X, intellectual property rights, something to do with law, that not that maybe-

S.K. So you could see the link.

(silent for about 5 seconds)

S.K. The other thing that the... I would like to explore is... if you remember the letter I send to you concerning your school days, did you have any favourite teacher... when you were in school?

W.W. Yes.

S.K. You did.

W.W. When I was in sec 1. I still remember his name Yip, Chinese name is Yip Wang Hong.

S.K. So you have a favourite teacher, Mr. Yip Wang Hong.

W.W. Yip Wang Hong.

S.K. How did he - I mean what- when did you like this particular
teacher?

W.W. He gives me the confidence. He motivated me.

S.K. He motivated you?

W.W. Ya, exactly.

S.K. He gave you the confidence?

W.W. Ya.

S.K. Because you say that your father sort of ran you down and you sort of did not have much confidence when you were –

W.W. (Overlapping) and he gave me the confidence.

S.K. When you were in primary school?

W.W. That kind of physiologically, they call it the self-fulfilling prophecy. That kind of trust, "I know you can do it" you know. "I know you can reach the standard". Whenever I do something very difficult, he already move on move in to compliment. You know, a pat on the shoulder. It motivates a lot.

S.K. That was in secondary what?

W.W. Sec 1.

S.K. Sec 17.

W.W. 19...196...9 or 1970.

S.K. So...

W.W. He is my Chinese ar... teacher.

S.K. Chinese teacher.

W.W. Ya.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.K.</th>
<th>So you had a very good relationship with this particular Chinese teacher who was always-</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>I had the very good impression of him, not to the extent of a very good relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>I see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>That time blur lah, don't know what's happening.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>But he was -</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>I feel quite motivated, I can still see, remember you know and I think, in terms of arm, management, in terms of teaching youngsters, I think my learning point is... be very, very careful of not to say and... as far as possible to be more positive, have some trust in the so-called, the youngster, whoever as so-called recipient of your remarks and all that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>So he was always like -</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>Very encouraging, very encouraging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Very positive lah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>Later on when I join the toastmasters' movement, have you heard of the toastmaster -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>Ya learn a lot of techniques lah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>(overlapping) I had one student who won first prize -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.</td>
<td>Because other than making presentation, public speaking, we all go on a rotation basis to evaluate other presenters' performance.</td>
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</table>
(Silent for 4 seconds)
So actually, there were not many extra curricular activities that you sort of engage in formally or engage informally in school, because like here some students join the police force. I mean and call it the cadet corp. or the national police cadet corp. and they were like, they learn discipline there. But in your case you did not join any of these. Was it compulsory to join those curricular extra curricular activities in your school in Hong Kong? It was not compulsory.

W.W. (Overlapping) that time was 1979, 1969 to 1974. Very shih shih (dialect). Tell you Hong Kong education up until now very messy.

S.K. Hahaha (laugher)

W.W. Basically, you just go back hahaha (long laughter). You know, go to the ar... the one ar... retro at where and go to the football field and then skip the class.

S.K. Oh is it?

(long silence ~ seconds)

S.K. so actually, do you enjoy school when—

W.W. Those days no but now yes.

S.K. I mean, when when you were in school, primary and secondary school.

W.W. I hate to go to school.

S.K. Ok, you hated going to school. What was the reason for your hatred?
W.W. The only thing that time is the sec t time, when teacher give me a
lot of encouragement because... essentially is the lack of
confidence and not up to the par... being look down you know.

S.K. Yes.

W.W. Then you cannot do, you know. That kind of stuff.

S.K. Was the teacher —

W.W. That was, was one reason why I joined Singapore Boys' Home. I
know all of them you know. All these youngsters essentially, I saw
myself you know. Haha. Looking all the boys... haha!

Delinquency.

S.K. Yes, yes, yes.

W.W. I was lucky not-

S.K. Not to go bad?

W.W. Not to go that way, a matter of luck.

S.K. Yes, so your experience is you're-you're-your unhappiness in
school in a way has helped you to be able to, to identify with boys
in the Boys' Home.

W.W. In fact looking back, I am not sure I should move to this post. That
one although is tough and very rewarding, very encouraging.

S.K. A lot of satisfaction from helping people I presume.

W.W. Interacting with the boys and a lot of ar... easily at home you
know. My heart making me think of those days when I was young,
I was like them or neglect, poor condition. Not very desirable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.K.</th>
<th>Start from anywhere you want, and just tell us, about your life.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ok. I came from a poor family in the sense. My... ok my father came from China. He was not skilled. He was not a skilled person. He didn't have any education I think. He was like a labourer kind of person. Came to Singapore, no job, so he took up the labour to carry heavy things and lift some-</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Coolie?</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Coolie yes. Then my mother, her background was quite different because her own father was a teacher in China. And my mother's mother was also educated in the sense, she could read and write Chinese in China, which in those days, the girls were rather-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>(overlapping) Very rare, isn't it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ya. So my mother received some education. It seems the teacher came to the house in China. And so the girls together, they had some form of education. And she had one or two years only, then stopped. But, the one of two years, she was able to read newspaper. Amazing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Yes (laughter)</td>
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OK Page 1
OK. In Singapore's society, read newspapers and some articles. And she was every now and then trying to figure out the words, the difficult words. So... I admire her in that sense. So I was wondering, one or two years and she could read. Here one or two years' education we can't read the papers. But because we throw in a lot of other subjects. Like er, PE, that kind, but that is purely read and write. So my mother could read and write but my father was a labourer kind of thing. Er... Er... Then... So we, we, we were sort of renting rooms, yah, we were renting rooms. And er, I'm the third in the family, of 3. Er, so there must be a stage where we were quite poor. Er, my father had to go sailing, that means work onboard the ship, as that kind of, managing boats, you know, throwing ropes and he must learn to pull and tie ropes. And, my mother then had to find job. In the... you know the naval base? Where they had these ship servants from Britain, they come here for 3 years, so they needed these domestic servants. My mother was working as that, and they had quarters and I was living there.
together with my sister and brother.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.K.</th>
<th>(overlapping) you were staying at the, which</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ya, naval base</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Naval base, ok.</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ok, I was the youngest, so my mother was working</td>
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<td></td>
<td>as like-like the servant, so the servant's quarters.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>And my sister and my brother, we were studying</td>
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<td></td>
<td>than, but the after school we went back to the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>quarters in naval base. So, arm, those days were ok,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tough in the sense that. My mother had a one-day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>off someday, but before she she went off, we</td>
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<td></td>
<td>would have to well, go on our knees to polish the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>floor, this huge, you know colonial bungalows,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>huge you know, so we all helped her, after that then</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we cleared up, than on Sunday that we had Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>off. Sunday off that means we then we rented one</td>
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<td></td>
<td>room, about few kilometres away when we reach,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and that's where we spend the Sunday in the little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>room lah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Oh, so in other days you stayed in the quarters?</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Yes, that’s right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>So during this, I still remember when we rented that</td>
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<td></td>
<td>room in this village, Chongpaang village, there was</td>
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OK Page 3
no electricity, and no o taps in the house. And I still 
remember... the image is still very clear in my mind 
that, the flooring was not cemented.

S.K. (overlapping) You can feel...

O.K. Yeah, I still remember because here I was trying to 
sweep the floor, and then you see mud floor you 
know, mud floor. Ah, but of course later on when 
the owner of the house had more money, then 
she renovated then we had cement floor. And then 
the stem pipe that we draw water from, everybody 
got water from the stem pipe, common stem pipe by 
the road side. We carried water back, to our kitchen, 
bathroom, that kind of thing, and electricity, no 
electricity then, so we had these kerosene lamps. 
Quite scary lah, because when you go to the toilet 
sh, you have to use the kerosene lamp, and then in 
the middle of the night, and walk out of the house, 
because it structured.

S.K. (overlapping) toilet out of the house, yeah

O.K. So and I called woke up my sister to accompany 
me, it was quite scary, all the shadows 

S.K. You were quite young then 

O.K. I was the youngest yah, I was an offspring... in
primary school. So erm, those were the days. Now, my mother, I must say that erm, she always drove home the point that our educations were important. Ah, education is a must and we must try very hard, but she did not sort of, er, expect very, very tremendously good results from us lah. As long as no red marks. She was happy you know! So erm, but she was herself like showing that reading was really good. She said, “If you don’t want to read, you’ll be a blind person.” And she also from time to time, she said, “If I had a chance, I want to learn how to, you know to join the erm CCs to learn how to cook and all that... (Softly) if I have the opportunity.” So I think that indirectly influenced me lah.

S.K. Did she manage to join any of these courses at the CCs?

O.K. No, she did not, because later on she like er helping out with my sister’s family, my brother’s family, then later on me, my children. No, she didn’t. Then much later on then she, you know health lah, she fell then not so good. But she all the time pride herself as keeping abreast in her thinking, so I
thought maybe the influence is from there. Ah, my father himself, of course there was a distance between my father and myself because he was most of the time out sailing, and I was closer to my mother than to him. Later on when he retired, again, I was then a teenager, so there was this barrier between him and myself.

S.K. Was he a typical Chinese father who doesn't communicate very much with the children?

OK. Nah, not really, he was, he was Hok Chew lah. Hok Chew I heard lah that he was very clean person. He was cropped everything, even though he was renting a place, he was always cleaning here and there, that kind of thing. And he was very good with his hands, carpentry work he was very good. Erm, ok, so he was like- like illiterate, so I was wondering, how come he got married to my mother. (laughing) It was match made. It seems his first wife, he was married once, and the young wife, somehow, he was an old-fashioned man, I heard these stories, that- that the young wife did not live up to his expectations. He was not able to cope, and somehow I think he was like, he bashed her you
Did your mother know that he bash up his first wife?

That one I don't know, but anyway they married. And erm, my mother came over because her elder sister was looking for a rich family. So when my mother came over, was helping out to look after this child, the rich family, then got married to my father.

Another thing I admire in my mother is she was able to pick up language. She is Cantonese. She was Cantonese and my father Hok Chew. Hok Chew is not easy to learn. She you know after a couple of years, being married to him, she was able to speak Hok Chew like a Hok Chew.

OK Page 7

Amazing! So because my father's friends were Hok Chew came and my mother spoke Hok Chew to them, I mean like a Hok Chew. So my mother was able to pick up language, in that sense. And of course, then maid in the era... servicemen, British.
S.K. English, she picked up English too.
O.K. So she could speak English.
S.K. She could speak yes, some English.
S.K. Again, that is quite a feat, for somebody who had very little education.
O.K. Erm, so that was that and, primary school, I was in Sembawang school. I think I did fairly. I mean I was a prefect, and then later on they even nominated me to be head prefect. Erm, in secondary school, they sent me to Paya Lebar MGS, but I wasn't quite used to the mission school system so I requested out, then Monk's Hill, then once I completed that education, I was in Science stream... Because my parents kept saying, my mother kept saying that, you know, we were so... not well off, money is hard to come by, so... so I was very anxious to work. My fa... my brother at that time was erm... he was a male nurse, but he did ask, I remember distinctly that he did ask me, "How do you- after 'O' level, you want to continue?" And I told him, "No, I don't want to continue after 'O' level. My sister, she had only Primary 6 education. She stopped then, she and my mother teamed up to
work for this European family and get a bit more money, so my sister stopped education after P6, then my brother continue with secondary school. So he became a male nurse. So I remember that part.

Erm, of course on hindsight, if my brother had pushed me, I would have gone on then you see. But given the choice, I don't know why I said. Maybe because all my friends said they didn't want to continue. So I didn't want to continue.

S.K. So your friends didn't continue.

O.K. Some of them did. But my closer friends did not. They went into nursing and all that... In fact, if I had been sort of pressured or what-

S.K. Or encouraged

O.K. Encouraged, I would have gone on. Then...

S.K. So they sort of give you a choice.

O.K. My brother. My mother of course left it to me. So by choice, and then at that time, there was this teaching job that was in demand, so-

S.K. When were you born by the way?

O.K. 45

S.K. 1945. So that means you started working in the 60s.

O.K. '60 ya. '60, I qualify TTC in '65. So I started TTC
S.K. Oh, how old were you then?

O.K. I was in my 40s.

S.K. Oh, ok, I see.

O.K. So that means between my 25 and 50 is about—

S.K. (overlapping) Quite a big gap

O.K. 25 years.

S.K. (overlapping) Because you said your 25th child was taking the 'O' level exam.

O.K. Eldest child taking 'O' level

S.K. Oh, eldest child taking the 'O' level exam when you were doing the Maths 'O' level. Ok, and then your 35th child was born after...

O.K. All that years

S.K. After all those studies. So were you able to continue after your 35th child was born? Continue your studies? Continue with all these courses.

O.K. Wait ah. I remember my 35th child came, I became pregnant when I was doing this Diploma for English Studies. So then, because I was going to give birth, I had to defer, stop. Then the following year I had to join another group. I joined another group, yes I remember that. Joined another group, then I completed it. So then when I took this HOD
course, my child, the youngest one was then a toddler lah. So after that, I suppose the studying kind of mood came in.

S.K. I see.

OK. And then we saw the advertisement about the Open U. The Open U, you can study at night. Then I say, "Why not?" And then so a group of us, those who attended the DDM, the HOD course, "Eh... why not we apply?" So ok, come. So ok, so I applied and I got a place. At that time, it was the 1st batch of Open U students in Singapore. I was the 1st batch. So there were not many choices for us. Because English, Bachelor of Arts, English with Lit, that was all recognized by MOE. So I was a HOD and I was pursuing this course at night. 4 years. We were encouraged to finish it between 5 and 6 lah. But we chose 4. The shortest, it was heavy going. But again, I had encouragement from my family. My husband was very supportive. Because my child was then still a baby. And we had a maid. But it was not easy, because assignments came. (laughter) you have to hand in your assignments.
S.K. Yes.

OK. So I will have to say, "I'm sorry, close the door, don't let her come in. Don't let the baby come in, I want to be left alone and I have to do my assignment," that way. That was guilt feeling lah. couldn't spend as much time as I wanted with my little baby. But we plodded on lah, for 4 years. Finally we completed, I completed, and my friends.

S.K. Did they all finish the course?

OK. Yes, they all finish the course.

S.K. How many of you took the course at the same time?

OK. About 3 or 4. Then one continued to do her Master's. But the rest of us, we didn't, because of various reasons. Ya, so it was really a wonderful feeling lah. I completed this course. Then I took up driving. I say, "Now I got this baby, I want to take up driving again." So I plodded on. Because she was still a toddler, about 2-3 years old when I taking my license, and I managed to pass it at the 3rd attempt. So after my degree then I got my driving license. I think getting a driving license is more difficult than getting a degree! (laughing)

S.K. Yes, I know of people who take more than 10
times.

O.K. Yaf! So 3 times, twice I failed, so I tell myself, NO, if I have to take 10 times, I will take 10 times. I must get it. I was determined.

S.K. You were already in the 50s is it?

O.K. My baby was...

S.K. (overlapping) because

O.K. Late 40s.

S.K. Late 40s ah? When did you get your degree?

O.K. When I was a HOD? (pause) I think... I got my degree ah... about, let's say about 7 years ago, 7-8 years ago, I got my degree. Before I came. Because I am already here for about 7 years. I or 8 years lah.

S.K. You have been here for 7 or 8 years?

O.K. 7 years lah, put it. So when I finally got my driving licence, the licence, I was so happy. If I man, I'll pass the cigars around but I'll be the subject of everybody. At last I got the license, it was so great.

S.K. Yes, yes.

O.K. So that was... me lah.

S.K. A real achievement. (laughter)

O.K. Like a pair of wings you know; I can go anywhere I like. Ok... So what else? My, that's my learning
You also attended a Diploma course on Guidance and Counseling?

Ah, yes.

At the NIE?

Correct, correct. That is after the arm, after the basic degree that I have got. Then after 1 or 2 years, again I felt restless. I say, "Umm, I must do something else." So I look around, and I saw another opportunity that says, "Saturday class only. You attend Saturday classes for this. 4-5 hours each Saturday. And your school can excuse you, you don't have to perform duties on Saturdays." So ok, why not? So this is about 2 years, module. Module kind of...

(overlapping) every Saturday for 2 years?

Every Saturday for 2 years. So I say why not? So I took the modules and finally I completed the modules.

There are quite a few modules if I am not mistaken?

For this particular diploma course.

To get your Advanced Dip, you must clear at least how many...
how many modules lah. It's stated. Then some, 1 or
2 lah, you get accreditation for your Master's if you
continue. That one is for Psychology. Master's in
Psychology, a branch of it.

S.K. So you took the Diploma course?

O.K. I took the Advanced Dip.

S.K. Advanced Diploma.

O.K. Advanced Dip with some, I can't remember how
many accreditations. So I said umm, if I want to
pursue my masters, I could go into this-

S.K. This psychology, in a local university?

O.K. Yes

S.K. Ok.

O.K. Which one of two of my classmates in Advanced
Dip, they are doing now. For me, after this
Advanced Dip, I thought I'd give myself a rest. Not
exactly, but for the sake of my girl. Now my
daughter is a teenage-

S.K. The younger-

O.K. The youngest one. She is like Sec 2, 3, 4? So I
told myself, if I value myself in studies and ignore
her, neglect her, I may regret.

S.K. I see.

OK Page 22
O.K. Because teenagers they need the mother actually.

Growing up... So I say between the two, myself my
development and my daughter, I choose my
daughter. To me I think it is not worth it if I have all
the diplomas to hang on the wall, and eventually the
girl feels neglected. If I give up whatever I can and
she doesn’t turn up the way, it’s different. At least I
have done my part. So that was how I have decided
to stop for at least 2 years. This year, because last
year I finished my course right? Last year Dip, my
Advanced Dip I finish. So for 2 years mean this
whole year and next year I will stop. Yes, so I’m
spending a lot of time with my daughter. Try
because teenagers are very xxxxxxx, so I try to spend
time with her, do things together, you know;
whatever is interesting to her, I try to take to the
library, do some cooking together, things like that.
Just to be close to her. But, I’m also feeling very
restless, again. (laughter) So I had... I saw an email
ah ok, they trying to organize, beginners, people
who want to try to form a Chinese Orchestra. So I
say, ah, I want that. I enrol myself, so I responded.
So I’m going to start in probably June or July.
Chinese Orchestra, this, so far about 12 of us
responded. Erm consists of-

S.K. (overlapping) who are they?

O.K. Ps and VPs.

S.K. Ah, oh ok.

O.K. P and VP they come together, and and-

S.K. (overlapping) Principals and Vice Principals.

O.K. Yes, learn together and-

S.K. (overlapping) it's conducted by-

O.K. (overlapping) you have to pay your own lessons.

But it is going to be - actually somebody organized
it, but we all will converge in one school to learn.

Learn from this paid tutor lab. To teach us-

S.K. (overlapping) it's a private arrangement. It's not
err-

O.K. No

S.K. Something arranged by the Ministry of Education.

O.K. No, it's private. So I said this is also an opportunity
for me to get to know new friends and mix around. I
thought it's good, healthy for me. So, that's a new
skill that I'm going to pick up. All the while, I
actually I love music. I love music a lot. Had I been
given an opportunity, I would love to play the
I have an opportunity. Those days, I did promise myself, when I retire, I’m going to take up the piano, things like that. So now, why not? Everybody’s a beginner. And I don’t mind paying for it. And I got one guzheng at home.

S.K. Ohh, you have a guzheng at home.

O.K. Yes, because my daughter was last time in this Chinese Orchestra.

S.K. So are you going to play the guzheng?

O.K. I think I shall opt for it. Because then I can practise at home you see. I don’t have to spend extra money buying the instrument.

S.K. Actually it is a very beautiful instrument.

O.K. It is. But it is a very big and cumbersome thing to bring around lah. But it’s also, actually I like the er-hu. But er-hu I think I have to buy and then I don’t have one at home. So never mind, so I think guzheng will be fine. So that’s the music part.

Cooking? I’m now trying to learn to cook curry, the Indian style. So I’ve been looking at recipe books. Going to library and read and read and read. Going to buy the spices and experiment and umm ok.
Yesterday my daughter was saying, “Wow, this curry is so good. Exactly like what they sell in the restaurant.” (laughter) So ok, that is a compliment.

S.K. Yes.

O.K. So that is my latest thing that I am picking up.

S.K. Also benefits your family (laughing).

O.K. Ya, ok, she likes curry now. But I did tell my superintendent and the P, if I would feel very, very sad if people perceive me as old. And sort of mentally put me in the museum. I won’t like that. I like to, I like to be kept in abreast with whatever is happening. Like now, right now, I also want to go into the webpage. I want to learn how to do the webpage and… that is a good way to communicate with my students.

S.K. Do you have your own webpage or you are going to do one?

O.K. I am going to do one. I don’t have. But I already found out that it is not that difficult. My technical assistant in the school can teach me. Even my daughter was willing to teach me. She say it don’t take long. You can learn up to simple one. So sure, I want to learn.
S.K.  Do your daughters help you when it comes to this kind of technical support?

O.K.  Oh yeah. Yes yes.

S.K.  When you are doing the courses for example, you may need some technical support with computer skills?

O.K.  Umm, not so much because computer skills these days are simple typing word processing that’s it. That’s ok already.

S.K.  Like powerpoint and so on?

O.K.  Umm, occasionally.

S.K.  Presentations?

O.K.  Occasional, not that much. Powerpoints are more for my colleagues.

S.K.  : sss.

O.K.  (pause) Ok lah. Some things I learn from my youngest daughter. For example, the chat room. I saw how she chatted you know?

S.K.  So you are into that as well?

OK Page 27
basic back... let's say a good singing voice. That one you don't have means you don't have.

(laughter) Otherwise, other things we can learn.

You just focus and practise hard enough, determined enough, you can, everything you can.

Prioritize what attracts you, what you want. So I feel anything if I am really determined enough, I can do.

S.K. What causes you to have that attitude that everything can be learned? Is there, is it something that was in you already when you were young? Or it's-

O.K. Not really. When I was younger that time ya, I was like an average person lah. I wasn't that bright, although I won a few prizes here and there. I wasn't a brilliant, brilliant student. I think I'm just average. The best I, all along... Driving was one that showed me that if you are determined enough you can get it. I said it's through... through experience lah. When I look around, there is something at the beginning that seems quite hard, I know I can do it. So more and more I convinced myself: something you want so much, you can learn. So this is what I think.
Exposure.

S.K. Exposure, ya.

O.K. Be it the language, just try hard enough. I mean in Mathematics 'O' levels, I tried and tried and practised and practised, ok what. I got my OAs. And things like that. So ya, ya, if you try hard enough focus, you should be able to do it. Ok, so am, ya my husband has been Principal too. If he had not been supportive, I don't think I would be able to... because here is the young baby needing my attention. And if he was not supportive, it would be so difficult for me. So difficult I'll be torn between the two. Here I was able to concentrate. Because, obviously the maid did a lot of other things, but occasionally he has to help out. And I was left alone to do my studies. If that was not that, I don't know. So that means you must have people to support you also.

S.K. Yes.

O.K. Ya (laughing), it's an uphill task.

S.K. Correct.

O.K. Ok, and of course now my children are very supportive lah. "Can, can, can," now they are there
gatherings and all that. Er, I remember when I was in primary school, the... I was in primary school and er, I still remember primary 1 or primary 2. That time, when we were supposed to opt, whether we want to remain as British subjects or as Singaporeans.

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<th>S.K.</th>
<th>Yes.</th>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Oh, is that so?</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ya some, I think the Indians, some of them.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Ok, ok. So those are some of the things that happened when you were younger, were related to historical incidents.</td>
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<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Yes, yes.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>How about being a woman? Do you find that you were in any way discriminated against, as far as learning is concerned?</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ah, ok. That I think my mother influenced me a lot. Because when she was in China, she could see the</td>
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unfairness. The unfair treatment that the girls got. Erm, her mother was, every body in China in those
days lah, was very biased. They were for the boys.
The best things were kept for the boys.

S.K. Yes.

O.K. In her family, very few boys you see. So she was one of the many, many daughters. Finally the son came, the younger brother. So anything good and best, they all kept for the younger brother. Kept for the younger brother. So she got very mad. So, and she used to grumble to us. That eventually you see, when the girls grew up, it's the girls that supported the parents, not the boy. And yet, the best was given to the boy. So she kept talking about this story. I think that must have influenced me in a way. So she said, so she in turn, more or less treated us, because my sister and myself, the 2 girls, and my brother, so she more or less treated us the same, equal. I didn't really see that, oh my brother was favoured. Not really lah. We were more of less given the same things. So when in turn, I treated my children all the same, whether they are girls or boys. So you can see that, maybe I was influenced by my mother.
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<tr>
<th>S.K.</th>
<th>So other words, in your own family, you were not discriminated against, as far as learning opportunities were concerned. Your mother gave you the same amount of opportunities as your brother.</th>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Yes, yes.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Unlike some other fam- Chinese families.</td>
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<td>O.K.</td>
<td>That's right. Ya. I suppose it impacted also much when she was a young girl. That she was so determined that she was not going to witness it to-to her own children. And in turn, I learnt from her, and it was passed on to me.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>I see.</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>And I think I am passing on to my children too lah. The fairness, whether girls or boys, should be equal. Contribution also should be equal.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>And also equal also in terms of wanting to learn? Not just opportunities. Some may think that women actually don't need to learn so much. But in your case, you feel that women actually able to learn as well as men? In-</td>
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Yes. Yes. In fact when I was in secondary school, I still remember, I was a girl guide. Then we say, ok, anything the boys can do, we can do also. So we also wanted to start football team. So my friend and myself, we told the teacher we wanted to start football team.

At that time?

Yes, at that time! So you see, my nature was such...

erm, we felt that.

That was quite revolutionary.

(laughter) Y-e-a-h, yes. But it did not take off. We felt as a girl guide, I had plenty of opportunity. And my mother was very supportive. She trusted me. And mixed around with the other boys and all that. Of course that time was girl guides and scouts we went out. We were really very... innocent. And my mother gave that trust. Which was good. Emu, the guiding experience in secondary school, it was quite a good experience. Where this equality, I did not feel that because I am a girl, I'm less able. I don't think I had that... maybe I was lucky.

So your mother was supportive, you also had the guiding experience that helped you to form those.
values. What about other experiences in school?
Were there any teachers in particular that you liked
that actually influenced you? (long pause) Can you
recall any teacher that has, impacted your life?
(pause)

O.K. Ok. Maybe in primary school, I had this very
wonderful Maths teacher. He was very skillful. I
was not doing too well in primary 3 and 4. But
when he took over in primary 5 or 6, there was a
change. My Mathematics became very good. One of
my stronger subjects. So I felt that I was very, very
lucky to have him. Otherwise I don't think I would
have got as far as I'm now. Because that was a
turning point.

S.K. Ok.

O.K. So I think the turning point, certain teachers were
very good. He was very systematic, very fierce, but
very clear in his explanations. So I was able to
grow. I think a very good teacher is pretty important
in primary level. Secondary school level too. I also
very good Maths teacher and that helped me.
Actually I'm not so inclined towards Maths. But
because my language exposure was not there and
terrible. He'll never forget. And I was so proud and so happy that I was able to break the case that he was the innocent one. That made me very happy.

S.K. The fact that your students have learnt something about-

O.K. (overlapping) Yes! Justice and honesty. It's a very powerful lesson. So that was what the mother told me made me very happy. That means all the time spent, going right to the bottom of it was not lost, was worthwhile.

S.K. Yeah. And you did this guidance and counseling class as part of your diploma, isn't it?

O.K. Ah, yes. This Advanced Dip.

S.K. Ya, so it's also- you are also applying what you have learnt.

O.K. Ah, in a way, in a way. Of course, there is-

S.K. (overlapping) no set method


S.K. It did help you eh? Maybe one last question. About your work. You know, you are so busy as a Vice Principal, does it in a way become an obstacle sometimes when you want to learn? Or you find
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<th>O.K.</th>
<th>Oh.</th>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>How does your work influence your life long learning?</td>
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<td>O.K.</td>
<td>(pause) Ok. Being a Vice Principal, erm, my responsibilities and duties ah, the demands are much, much more as compared to the HODs, right? I feel that I wouldn't have made it, doing the Open U, taking the VP job at the same time. Too demanding. I wouldn't have completed it. But when I was doing my Open U, I was a HOD. That's what I'm saying, but a VP job is very demanding.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>You did it as a part-time student ah? Open U? That means you were working and doing the course.</td>
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<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Yes, yes. At night, I went for lectures. So a VP job is very demanding. Long hours, something like 12 hours a day kind of thing. HOD ah, shorter. Because HOD you can [give up?] your assignments, as a VP, you can't. So here, sometimes I stay 10 hours, 12 hours in the school.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>So when you came to this school, you became the VP?</td>
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OK Page 81
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O.K.</th>
<th>Yes.</th>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>And you were a HOD at another school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Yes, when I came to this school, I already completed my Advanced Diploma.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>I think we have to stop here, because I can see that they are closing. (laughing) Thanks a lot</td>
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<td>O.K.</td>
<td>Ok.</td>
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Appendix 7C: Sample of H’s Transcript

S.K. Yeah, it’s recording. So, Mr. H, as you know, this interview is about lifelong learning in Singapore. And because you have won this award, I feel that it will be very interesting for other people to hear about your life story, and they can learn, and be motivated to also engage in lifelong learning like you. And as I said you can actually start in any way; you can start off from your family of origin, or we can start off from your family right now.

H Er, for my family I think er, one area which I really felt uneasy was my father. My brother was a graduate and I was not. So my father, I think er, showed a lot of biasness, a lot of biasness. Whenever relatives come to the house, he introduces my elder brother, and then tells them that he is a civil engineer, that kinda thing. And of course, relatives tend to ask, “Where’s your second son?” He used to use the word “he’s roaming around”.

S.K. (laughing) Oh no.

H But that was of those, but at that stage I think er, it was also partly my fault. I had a very different ambition. I wanted to become a professional footballer. And I was actually putting in more effort
in the field than in the classroom. So after that I
didn't do very well. I only got six 'O' level. And
from there I moved on. As my ambition was to
become a footballer, made me so much into the field
than into the books... until my nasty injury on my
knee, which made me become er... there's no more
football for me. Er, when I realized that that was
painful, but life is like that I think. Sometimes you're
only wanted for what you are, er, when you don't
have that then that happens. From there on, I looked
at a different perspective. I wanted to become a car-
racer. I went for interview with BMW and
everything, and that also all was done up, and that
also had a stumbling block was my father. Er, I was
under 21, he refused to sign the er declaration form,
because I think as the guarantor he has got to sign
that he is willing to let me go, he refused to sign that.
So that also went bust. So that I think angered me a
lot and I found that my father was actually a
hindrance for me. Er then I started going out on my
own way, where I started work in the construction. I
was in the shipbuilding and I also, I was a deep-sea
diver. Er, after doing all this, I found that er, my...
grandmother wanted me to come back. She wanted me to come back. And so I came back, from the deep-sea diving. I found a job as a driver. That was the best I could find. Because with 1 'O' level, I was not able to find any jobs, wherever I went, you need 4 'O' levels, 5 'O' levels but I only had 1, finally I ended up as a driver. Er, I think that was the sparkling point in my life. Because when I became a driver, I found that I was ostracised by society. My relatives, friends and everything. That angered me a lot. Then I wanted to see for myself what would be best for me to do. That's where I embarked on education again. That education has brought me to what I am today.

S.K. So you felt that you were ostracised by your own relatives?

H Yes, to a large extent, to a large extent.

S.K. And also other people?

H Friends, who are better off than you. Er, some of them were at that time already executives. So the moment they see is like never see you, pretend to not to see you. And you can be standing in front of them they'll just not even nod their head at you. So that
angered me a lot. Er, I wanted to show that it’s not actually that I’m stupid, but I had not put in enough effort. But time has come again, so I told myself that this is the time where I’ll reverse. Er, well I want into a lot of reverse engineering, and er re-engineer myself to to what I am today.

S.K. So in other words will you call that a turning point?

H It was a turning point, it was a turning point. That was I think er, the most critical part, er of my life. You know it is whether I want to do what I thought I want to do. Or do I want to stop and er, brood over things, you see, so that was the decision, but at the end of the day I- I believed in myself. And I felt that there were a lot of things which I can do, which I know myself, and I said, “Ok, let me give it a shot.”

S.K. Now, you mentioned about your father being a hindrance. Was he a hindrance right from the very beginning or after you did not do well? When you were young?

H From young I would say, because you see, er Indians follow the astrology a lot, they believe in astrology a lot. And I was born into a month which is not very acceptable in the Hindu custom. Which is of not my
fault, you see, and at end of the day I was actually er, subjected to criticism. You see, and I didn't have much love from my father, I didn't have much love from my father, and I think the other thing was that as I grew up, er I think I resembled my grandfather very much when my father and my grandfather can’t be seen with each other. And the way I talk, the way I behave, er my stubborn character and everything, fitted to my grandfather. I think that worsen it, that worsen it. But the end of the day, we had no enmity, it was just that er, we couldn’t see certain things eye to eye. To me- my father and my elder brother, relatives were primary. They were- it was- it concerns them very much. But to me, I don’t give a hoot about relatives. I believe in myself and I think my life is my battle, I got to win it. You see, and for them it’s the relatives. You got to please relatives so that- that’ll make them happy, which I can’t do.

S.K. Is it very much in the Indian tradition.

H (overlapping) I think so. I think so.

S.K. That relatives are very important? Their opinions are important?

H Yeah! Yeah! You see like for instance, like for me I’ve
S.K. | Again, is this quite common in traditional Indian families for in-laws to be involved?
---|---
H | Oh yes, er they always want to have a say, they always want to have a say. And I think that is not very good. That’s not very- I think they’ve got to leave them as they are, they’re grown up they’re adults, they know what they are doing if they should be married. If they have got a problem then you interfere and you tell them ok this is what you should do, then I think it’s ok. But uncalled for they should not put their heads into, I think that is not professional I would consider.
---|---
S.K. | Still talking about your family of origin, you mentioned your father, how about your mother?
---|---
H | My mother died at a very early age. My mother died when I was 9 years old, so I was totally under the arms of my grandmother. She was a very regimental woman, er staunch Hindu, er believed in God more than anybody else, but that I think shaped me up to what I am today. You see, that shaped me up to what I am today. And I- I thank her for what she has done for me today. And I’m still following what she has taught me, er that has helped me a LOT in life, to-be.
what I am.

S.K. Maybe you can elaborate a little bit on how that shaped you in-

H (overlapping) Er during my, even my earlier days in school, we had to wake up morning 4 a.m. to do prayers, whether it is school holidays or whether school is on. Er she believed that a person who sleeps a lot is a useless person. A person who gets, er rises out of bed as early as possible is a person who can be very healthy and who can... who will be very flexible, and who actually can be move- movable, that's her belief. And er those days of course I was er not very happy, being young you wanted to sleep a lot. Er but looking back at my life today where I got to work day and night and sleeping less helps me to do so much of things, where others can't do. See and ah of course, the other thing she taught me was er nothing is greater than the God. We may be born with certain intellectual powers but end of the day we still need the power of the God, to move us to what we need to be, see and er that I think I- I'm still following. I'm a person who goes to temple 7 days a week, and I believe that there's one power above me...
And er that makes me er do things which others are not doing. Er I don't want to be selfish. I came through a school of hard knock, but I've achieved success. But this success is what I want to push down to the ground for people who are above 30 years old who don't have that solid foundation in life, to make them see a better quality of life, see. So her teachings, to a large extent, have moulded me today.

S.K. So even though you er did not have a mother, I mean your mother passed away when you were quite young. In a way your grandmother's teachings has affected you.

H Yes.

S.K. And for how long did you stay with your grandmother?

H Oh many years, many years.

S.K. Was your grandmother staying with you or?

H Yes, staying with me, she only passed away in nin- e-ty five.

S.K. I see.

H '97 she passed away, 1997.

S.K. All these years when you were young what your grandmother's teachings influenced you and-

H Pg 14
And er that makes me er do things which others are not doing. Er I don't want to be selfish. I came through a school of hard knock, but I've achieved success. But this success is what I want to push down to the ground for people who are above 30 years old who don't have that solid foundation in life, to make them see a better quality of life, see. So her teachings, to a large extent, have moulded me today.

S.K. So even though you er did not have a mother, I mean your mother passed away when you were quite young. In a way your grandmother's teachings has affected you.

H Yes.

S.K. And for how long did you stay with your grandmother?

H Oh many years, many years.

S.K. Was your grandmother staying with you or?

H Yes, staying with me, she only passed away in ninetys-even.

S.K. I see.

H '97 she passed away, 1997.

S.K. All these years when you were young what your grandmother's teachings influenced you and-
| H | Very sad, but that’s life, reality that’s life. But that should change, that should change. We should not look at the person’s position or status. We should look at him as a human being. I think that is very important, HOPE we can change that, hope we can change that. I think that will er have a big factor, know to see some happy people coming about. I think we got to be real in life, but there’s so much of mask being put on today in Singapore. Er that is one of the saddest parts of Singapore. You see, and er we don’t know, whether the future is going to be worse, or is it going to be better. You see, the status has become so much of a problem and if you look at it in Singapore, I would say that ego has built into people. |
| S.K. | So in a way, who do you think affected your life the most? Shaped your life? |
| H | My wife, my wife, er I knew her when she was 18 years old. And er she is from a very conservative orthodox family. Er she’s a Punjabi, I’m South Indian, she’s a North Indian. Er that was a big barrier, that was a big barrier. And er, at that age when she came to me, I told her that she was too young, I gave her 3 years to think about it very |
seriously and after 3 years, she said, "I'm ready."

And that I looked back and I said if she's going to come to me there should not at any time a word which she says, "I regret marrying you." I asked myself what are the things I needed to do. And the only thing that came to me was if I were to raise my educational level, things will change. And that even urged me to do things much better. See, there was a kind of a fire which went under, you see, it was just er growing bigger, bigger, bigger. Nobody could douse that flame away. And that I think made me excel to what I am today. And of course during my years of part-time learning, she has been er wonderful, very supportive, never troubled me, let me be what I am. Er whole family things were being taken care. She was a Home Affairs Minister, Finance Minister, Foreign - Foreign Minister, mother, wife, e-v-erthing, she took. Now I think that was the most beautiful gift for me I think in my life.

S.K. So that you could concentrate on your learning.

H Yes, fully, fully. I was just moving into my career growth, more into my career growth, without any hindrance, without any disturbances. See, that- that I
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<th>S.K.</th>
<th>think was my greatest gift lah, if I would say my strength, she's my strength, she's my strength.</th>
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<td>H</td>
<td>How many years have you been (laughing) married?</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>I've been married for 15 years</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>15 years. But we've been together er... we've known each other for more than 22 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Mm... so you knew her-</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>(overlapping) very well</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>From the neighbourhood or...</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>No, no, no, er through some er... sports activities.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>I see.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Sports activities I came to know her. I'm also an athlete, she's also athlete, so it's through that sports activities we came to know each other. Er... from there it just turned out. Sometimes they say marriages are made in heaven.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>And I think ours was made in the field. So it- it- it striked er, I think we had a lot of things which were common. I mean she only wanted a husband who doesn't smoke, who doesn't drink, doesn't womanise, this and that, er it was not an easy task for</td>
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her, because her parents er wanted her to marry somebody who was very rich, but she thought richness is not the end, you see. And er she had to leave the family, she had to leave the family.

**S.K.** So she had to leave the family to marry you?

**H** Yes, she had to leave the family to marry me. And we went through a lot.

**S.K.** (overlapping) big sacrifice.

**H** Big sacrifice and er... a lot of pain, a lot of pain. It was not an easy thing, it was not an easy thing but she's... she's a woman with a... an iron heart.

**S.K.** (overlapping) Strong.

**H** She knows what she wants er... she's very stubborn about what she wants and she knows how to go about it and that has been the greatest success today. You know sometimes we fell down, er... I think you need to come back again, you need that strength, I think to me, she's my strength.

**S.K.** What was the reasons for the objection?

**H** (Cough)

**S.K.** Because of the fact that she was a Punjabi and you are Southern Indian? That was the main reason?

**H** And the other thing was of course she was er fair like
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<th>S.K.</th>
<th>You encourage people to dare to dream and to dare to have a vision. Do you think there are enough opportunities in Singapore for people who want to improve themselves educationally now?</th>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>I think Singapore government has done a lot. Opportunities are just lying, but it is people who are not seeing it. Ah either people sometimes feel that they are blind, deaf and dumb. Nobody is going out from where they are to see what are the opportunities available. Today if you look at the opportunities given by people like NTUC, Ministry of Manpower, and with all those educational industries, which has been boomed, and there are so many players in the market today. You are free to choose what you want to do. There are no more limitations like those days before. 20 years ago we have limitations, you want to do this we don’t have this, you can’t. Today, we are I think plentiful. It is whether you want to choose the right one and make yourself a better person. Er to blame the government I think is unfair, I think you got to blame yourself, got to blame yourself.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>So you do see that there has been a lot of improvement in this area?</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>Very much, very much, very much. I think the government has been er very proactive, know and even- even if you look at this juncture, you can see the amount of er er foreign universities coming into Singapore and playing the big game in the industry, you know and that is giving us opportunities where we don't have to spend so much of money going out. We can do it locally. So it is not an issue of whether er you can't do it. It's whether do you want to do it.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>So you see that there are some people who are not really taking up these opportunities. What do you think prevent people from taking these?</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>Well, they're giving multiple reasons. One, they say is no time, which I think is er not the truth, er everyone of us are gifted with 8760 hours per year, er it is how you manage your time. Er some people are saying that they are not er er cut for education. You are not tested you wouldn't know who you are, so end of the day I think a lot of reasons are just lame excuses. But nobody really wants to go and of course in Singapore I think you've got face, and they dare</td>
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not go into a classroom and then dropout, which I think is not a big problem, we learn. You see, a failing exam doesn’t mean that you are failing in life. That could be a learning stage and ask yourself how do I answer the questions next time better so I don’t think there’s any big problem in that. It is people themselves, they are just er cutting themselves off from the er people who are successful. Which I think will become a big problem for them, not for the government. Er if you are not qualified, I think the government can’t help you. See, you got to keep yourself competitive, er you got to go and do what you need to do in order to excel in your own life.

You see, the government can lay a path, but you must choose to walk which a lot of people are not doing.

S.K. I see, in other words you feel that the individual is to be responsible for taking up opportunities.

H Definitely! Er nobody can force you. You got to think for yourself and you got to ask yourself, what will make you different. That could be academic, that could be technical, EITHER one. You got to pick up something somewhere and you got to excel in life.

Nobody can force you.
S.K. | So that is with regards to the role of the government. How about society? You know, you mentioned something about face, this thing about concept of face. I know is quite common among Chinese, but what about Indians?

H | It's coming, it's coming, it's coming.

S.K. | You mean you feel that there's also this concept?

H | Yah, Yes, you see like for instance he has got 2 sons. Wherever he goes people want to know what the 2 sons are DOING. So if you were going to say, mimicking "Oh, he's a driver," people look down on him. So is also, it is flowed over, it is flowed over today. You see it is flowed over and I think a lot of people are already, that that is the reason why you can see the parents are pressurising the children to excel. You see and that has become a big stress for parents, as well as children.

S.K. | I see.

H | You see, so it has actually turned the whole tide again now.

S.K. | But was it the case in the past?

H | (overlapping) NO.

S.K. | That parents also had.
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<td>H</td>
<td>No, I don't think so.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>No ah.</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>Mine was er... I wanted to change my own pattern of life. Er... I wanted to prove to a lot of people that I am not what I am. They are only seeing one window. They have got to see the main door. You see? That's where I think I may have wanted to. And of course my wife has been very inspirational. See, I wanted her to have the best part of life. I don't want her to use the word regret. I don't want HER parents to come and tell her, &quot;You should have listened to us&quot;. So, THAT was my fight. That was my fight. I think that was the biggest fire which woke me up.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>How about historical incidents? Were there any historical incidents that have actually changed your life or affected you? Historical or social incidents? For example, like change in educational system in Singapore... or maybe change in the political system. Do you recall any?</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>Errm... change in educational system I would say that Singapore was looking more for people who are critical and analytical.</td>
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<td>S.K.</td>
<td>Okay.</td>
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In order to be critical and analytical, you need to have the pace with the knowledge. So only when you go through some educational system, then you become very critical, you become very analytical. Which today I am, I think. Er... that's why I'm able to teach, and I'm able to sustain the class into developing certain things. You know a lot of issues are brought up in classrooms. And people feel that I am a very analytical person. I think this education has changed me. It has made me think very analytically. And I think it has got an impact. The change in educational system has got an impact. You have got a free flow of thought coming in. You are able to sit down for yourself and see whether what is right and what is wrong. And what is the dominance like, you know? All those things.

S.K. So did you have any social pressures, you know? Besides pressure from your father, did you have pressures from anybody else?

H Oh, when I was doing my diploma, I had pressures from my colleagues. Er... my working colleagues. These were the people that were mocking me. Say, "He can't even do an 'O'-level, he's thinking of..."
doing a diploma." But end of the day, I think I did
very well. I did very well. To me, I think, each time a
person tells me I can't do, I think I prove. That is
really my style. And until now I think I am still
excelling because I have that "I never say die"
attitude. You see, which is very strong in me. I think
that is in-built. That is in-built in me. And I think that
is one biggest advantage I am having in my life. That
I will feel is my biggest advantage. A lot of people
become negative--

S.K. Yes, yes.

H Very fast. You know like, my- my first day, we
introduced ourselves, and when I introduced myself
as a driver, there was somebody who ask me, "How
many cars do you want to wash?" You see. But that
is ok when you go into a class size of this where
managers all come in. But year 2000, January 3,
millennium surprise, he's my diploma student.

S.K. Your diploma student? You mean after-

H At that time, he asked me how many cars we were
going to wash. We were doing diploma together.

S.K. Ah huh.

H And today, I finished my Master's, and I'm HIS
Appendix 8: Sample of Analysis
Appendix 8

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Appendix 9

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Appendix 10

[The text content is not clearly visible or legible in the image provided.]
The eJctemal de gree back from inadequacy people boss or advancement.

So have majorily (m... were... to... work in NUS. "... continue without which I went... to... prompt... what... 6... 1... (pg 44)...

To improve my..." I was... 3) lawyer... now... option: lah.."

It's quite attractive lat... lawyer... doctorate,... to... go... going to... I did a... Chinese..."

Everyday, sub-consciously 13)... discimination and relatives... I tend to... only thing that came to me... I look at it, if I got the... I'm good... I... I'm now... I'm... 22)...

They have got to... and... the moment they... things pop up again...

Regardless of competitiveness or the field of profession, there is always... I really... I... I really... being a technician... learning environment..."

... I'm... it, or... 18)... they want to... go... going to... for... Mine was... then I did my English and I think I got... to... get a distinction..."

They expect you... for... "Everyday, sub-consciously..."

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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>P. 7</th>
<th>P. 8</th>
<th>P. 9</th>
<th>P. 10</th>
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Appendix 8

...now, like a fellow police officer studied part time...
So we were refugees from Hong Kong. My father was the typical traditional Chinese father. He was the only one working, very little education, helping to sustain the family in Hong Kong. My father was actually a hindrance stumbling block for me. After 8 years of marriage, separated, I went and apply for separation because there's nobody to take care of me, I feel like it's not mean, first my mum beat the wife, this is what happening. She said, 'If you treat me like this, I don't want him all the support.'

They were teenagers. And you just don't feel comfortable to help me a lot. In fact, I feel the ideas... what guys are... not the same. When they study, they really do it. Not of the same standing. Educationally, they have every right. Equality. Men and women, they have every right. (pg 72, 73)

But my son, certain goes to the wife, my wife telling her to marry. Anythin' they get married, my elder sister became a full-time housewife. My father had 5 children. After six, separated, I went and apply for separation because there's nobody to take care of me, I feel like it's not mean, first my mum beat the wife, this is what happening.