

### 8.1 The Main Findings

At macro level, the social mobility of the Sabahan Chinese is examined in three aspects. These aspects are educational attainment, occupation and income. It is found that their educational level, non-manual occupation and monthly income has improved from 1970 to 1980. This is evidenced by an increase of 14.2% for secondary and above level from 23.8% in 1970 to 38.0 in 1980 (see Table 2.3) (Chander, 1972, p.149-152; Khoo, 1984, p.256-259); an increase of 7.8% in non-manual occupations from 43.3% in 1970 to 51.1% in 1980 (see Table 3.1) (Chander, 1976, p.303-311; Khoo, 1983, p.354-358);

p.354-358); and an increase of RM 1,051.00 in average monthly household income from RM 1,191.00 in 1976 to RM 2,242.00 in 1990 (see Table 4.1) (Malaysia government, 1991, p.45). With these indications, it is obvious that the social mobility of Sabahan Chinese has experienced upward mobility.

It is also discovered that the Bumiputras have also experienced upward mobility. The comparison of the social mobility of Chinese with them has demonstrated the fact. It is found that their growth rate in education level, non-manual occupation and average monthly income is higher than Chinese. This is mainly because of the effort of the government in eradicating ethnic imbalances by means of the National Economic Policy (1970-1990).

At micro level, the relationship of social mobility and educational attainment is examined. It is found that their relationships are positively related. In other words, educational attainment is essential for present day's social mobility, especially in the occupational aspects.

Closer observation of the relationship of educational attainment and social mobility have also revealed three things.

First, the short distance of the mobility range among the respondents from first jobs to final jobs. In fact, most respondents only move up or down one social class next to them, that is, 74.6% among short range upward mobility and 100% among short range downward mobility (see Table 6.13).

Second, the existence of other mobility channels. Apart from education background, it is also found that marriage and business participation also affect individuals' social mobility. In this case study, 38.1% of the mobility factor is contributed by business participation and 11.1% is marriage (see Table 6.9).

Third, educational attainment is found to be more influential in first job status achievement than final job status achievement. The gamma's scale for education and first job achievement is 0.68 while the gamma's scale for education and final job achievement is 0.56. This is because in the first job, formal education is the determinant of the entry-point position; whereas, in the subsequent job promotion, education background is given way to effectiveness, hard work, interpersonal relationships, personality, parental delayed effect and et cetera.

## 8.2 Suggestions For Future Research

Three suggestions are proposed for future research. The first suggestion is to study the social mobility movement of Sabahan Chinese from 1970 to 1990. By doing so, a thorough analysis can be made on the implications of New Economic Policy on the Chinese in Sabah. Due to the delay in publishing the 1990 Population Census by the Statistics Department, this study could only provide statistics from 1970 to 1980.

The second suggestion is to look into the area of educational attainment and social mobility of different Chinese social groups such as different gender and generation groups. The time and financial constraints faced by this case study did not permit such analysis. The results of the above suggested research would shed more light on the relationship of education and social mobility in Chinese society.

The third suggestion is to use more variables in the analysis of status attainment. By that, the role of educational attainment could be determined in the status attainment process. Variables such as father's education, sibling's influence and personality factors can also be included in the analysis. This study could not cover such a wide area of examination since a large portion of the study has been devoted to the social mobility of Sabahan Chinese society from 1970 to 1980.

### 8.3 Conclusion

Educational attainment, undoubtedly, plays a major role in the social mobility of Sabahan Chinese. For higher social class Chinese, higher educational attainment enabled the transmission of their status to their children; for middle and lower class Chinese, it

promoted their children' mobility. Meanwhile, it is discovered that social origins also play an important role in mobility. Its influence on mobility is indirect, mostly through its effect on educational attainment.

The generally higher education level of Sabahan Chinese can be explained by few reasons. First, they value formal education highly. Second, the emergence of private institute and the liberalization of Malaysian educational policy. It is expected more Chinese will be obtaining higher education in future.

It should be noted that in the last decade of the 20th Century, educational attainment is not only the guarantee to acquire jobs. It is also a channel to acquire knowledge which in turn will gain knowledge and power in the society. As predicted by Alvin Toffler

and power in the society. As predicted by Alvin Toffler (1991), in his book, *Powershift: knowledge, wealth, and violence at the edge of the 21st century*, that knowledge itself will become the essence of power. He writes that "... knowledge itself, therefore, turns out to be not only the source of the highest quality power, but also the most important ingredient of force and wealth. Put differently, knowledge has gone from being an adjunct of money power and muscle power, to being their very essence. It is, in fact, the ultimate amplifier" (p.17).