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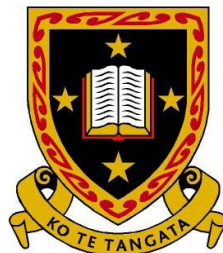
**Experiences of Solomon Islands students in
transition from primary school to boarding
secondary school**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree

of

Master of Education



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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by

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ABSTRACT

This study is about students' experiences when in transition from primary schools they attended daily to boarding secondary schools located far from their homes and villages in the Solomon Islands. In particular it explores the positive and negative feelings of students who have left their parents to live in boarding schools. For their first five months these students had no opportunity to contact their parents. The study also explores the strategies they used to overcome their difficulties and problems. It also explores the strategies that boarding schools used to help their students. While much research to date has been carried out in developed and developing countries, no such study as this has been carried out in the Solomon Islands or in the Melanesian region. Therefore, little is known about the students' experiences living in boarding schools for five months before seeing their parents again and the strategies they used to overcome their difficulties and problems.

Research data were gathered using the qualitative method. Interviews were conducted with 16 students (9 first year students and 7 second year students), 3 principals and 1 deputy principal from four boarding secondary schools. Data gathered were analysed using the thematic approach. The collecting of data was conducted in the Solomon Islands in April and May 2009.

The key findings revealed both positive and negative experiences of the students when they had just arrived at school and the strategies they used to overcome their negative experiences. The positive feelings were feeling happy and all right. The negative feelings were feeling homesick, lonely, shy and afraid. The strategies that students used to overcome these problems were creating friendship with other students and attending social activities.

The students also came across difficulties and problems like change of status from being senior students at primary schools to being the most junior students at secondary schools, tight school programmes, unfamiliar cultures and languages, and shortage of pocket money to help them to buy some of their needs that schools cannot provide. They also came across positive experiences like happiness, feeling relief and immediate help when they just arrived. Furthermore, they also faced both positive and negative aspects on their academic work, extra-curricular activities, food and accommodation.

The other key findings are the strategies that boarding schools used to help their new students. These include: good dormitories and classrooms, orientations, class assemblies to talk about academic matters, dorm masters and mistresses helping out the new students in the dormitories, old students helping the new students, and cultural and religious groups.

The strategies provided by boarding secondary schools were not adequate enough from looking at the many difficulties and problems the students encountered, and some of the strategies were their own personal strategies and not the boarding school ones. Therefore, this study is in a position to inform the transition programmes for boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

My research is on the experiences of the first and second year students of the Solomon Islands when in transition from primary schools they attended daily to boarding secondary schools. Most of the boarding secondary schools are located far from the students' homes and villages, and students have to spend five months in schools before visiting their parents for a month's holiday in the first year. Boarding secondary schools, too, have formal transition programmes for their students which they normally use when their new students arrive in their schools to help them settle into school life. Finding out about the experiences of the students in transition and the strategies they used to overcome their difficulties and problems as well as the strategies used by other countries to help their own students will inform the transition programmes of boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands. In view of this, the study is underpinned by these two main questions:

What do Solomon Islands students experience when in transition from primary schools that they attend daily to boarding secondary schools located far from their homes and villages, and what formal and informal strategies are available for them? How can the experiences of the

students and the transition literature inform the transition programmes of boarding secondary schools?

1.2 Statement of the theoretical framework

My theoretical framework is the interpretive paradigm and I used qualitative methodology to gather my data. The method was interviewing, where I used one face-to-face interview for each participants. In interpretive research, meanings and experiences are constructed by individuals to create meaning out of their lived experiences and actions shown in their natural social contexts (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, I interviewed the students and the principals/deputy principal in their boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands and then transcribing what they told me and put the information into data.

1.3 Background and statement of the issue

The Solomon Islands is made up of six main big islands and many small scattered islands. The people are scattered in these many islands, comprising many ethnic groups that have different cultures and languages that are diverse. Narokobi (1989) stated that the Solomon Islands is similar to Papua New Guinea in that they have diverse ethnic groups all within one racial classification of Melanesia with a few Polynesian communities. Moreover, Knauff (1999) stated that "beyond its national and neo-colonial lineaments, Melanesia is justifiably renowned

for being the most culturally and linguistically diverse region on earth”
(p.1).

Most of the National and Provincial Secondary Schools in the Solomon Islands are boarding schools except for the Community High Schools, where the majority are day schools. The majority of the boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands are located far from students' homes and villages. Therefore, students will not have the chance to visit their parents in the weekends or even contact them regularly due to unavailability of telephone and email facilities except postal services and two-way radios. Postal service is also not reliable. Students will only have the chance to visit their parents after five months at boarding school, when they have a month's holiday in June.

There are students who come from different islands and they have to travel for a couple of hours or even a full day to reach their homes. For those who come from the remote parts of the country it will take up to three or four days travel by boat to reach their homes. However, for some of the students from the remote parts of the country, they will not have the chance to visit their parents for a couple of years because of transport difficulties and they have to spend most of their school holidays at school. It is important to hear their stories and how they manage to cope in such a situation.

Furthermore, most of the students living in boarding secondary schools, especially National and Provincial Secondary Schools, come from different ethnic groups and languages. Therefore, it is important to know how they manage to live together in one school.

In addition, while much research to date has been carried out in developed and developing countries, nothing has come out from the Melanesian countries, especially the experiences of the Solomon Islands students when in transition from primary schools they attend daily to boarding secondary schools. Therefore, there is a need to do a study on this area of transition to find out the experiences of the Solomon Islands students in boarding secondary schools, about transition strategies and transition programmes, and how scholarly literature may inform the situation.

1.4. The development of my interest in educational transition

My interest in educational transition between primary and boarding secondary school developed when I moved from a rural village primary school to a boarding secondary school on another island in 1987. That secondary school is a national boarding secondary school. It enrolls the best students throughout the country. It is situated just a few kilometres outside of Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. I had to travel by

ship for a day to reach Honiara and had to catch the school truck to reach the school. I felt sad when I arrived at the boarding secondary school because I left my parents on another island to come and live in a boarding secondary school for five months. I was 13 years old then and I was too young to look after myself. To make it worse, I was the only one from my village and I did not know how to speak English and Pidgin English (the *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands) well, so I could hardly communicate with other students.

My interest in undertaking this study was further enhanced when I studied educational transition at the University of Waikato, studying different educational transitions that children face in their lives from early childhood to adulthood. When I reflect on my education journey from primary school until now, I can recall that one of the most difficult transitions I have encountered in life was between primary school and boarding secondary school. At that time I was quite young, and having to live and share classes and dormitories with four hundred students of different ethnic groups with diverse cultures and languages was a difficult situation for me to adjust to. Furthermore, for the past nine years that I have been teaching in three different boarding schools in the Solomon Islands, I found that some young first year students looked sad and some even cried when they arrived at school.

It is from this context that I wish to undertake my study and give the year one and year two students a voice on their experiences of transition between primary school and boarding secondary school.

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings from this study should help inform the transition programmes for boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands. The findings should help the schools to put in place more effective transition programmes that will provide a smooth transition for their students from primary to boarding secondary schools. The schools may have transition programmes already in place to help the settling in of their new students. However, learning of the students' experiences of transition from their own culture to that of a multi-culture in a boarding secondary school should help the school administrators to draw more effective transition programmes for their schools. The findings may also provide useful information for primary schools to help their final year students with transition and the Ministry of Education in terms of educational and curriculum policies. In addition, the knowledge that eventuates from this study should help contribute to the body of knowledge on educational transition in boarding secondary schools in developing countries in Melanesia.

1.6 The context of the study

1.6.1 Geographical and physical features of the Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands is a small island state country in the South Pacific with a longitude of 155 30' and 170 east and a latitude of 5 10' and 12 45' south of the equator. It is approximately 1,900 kilometres northeast of Australia. It is made up of six main islands with many small islands, totalling 990 islands. The total land area is 28,369 square kilometres. It has a population of 409,042, mainly Melanesians with a few Polynesians, Micronesians, Chinese, and others and has 85 different languages. The majority of the population (84%) live in the rural areas and only a minority (16%) live in the urban areas (Solomon Islands Government, 2000).

The Solomon Islands is a developing country with a hot climate year round. The main islands are mountainous with deep narrow valleys that come from volcanic origins with tropical rain forests. The smaller islands are mainly atolls (Malasa, 2007; Ruqebatu, 2008). The people of the Solomon Islands are scattered among different islands and villages. Therefore, the government and the churches build boarding secondary schools to cater for the problem of scattering.

1.6.2 Socio-cultural context

The Solomon Islands comprises diverse races, cultures, languages and customs. The total population of the country is half a million people predominantly of Melanesian race, about 93.3%, Polynesians about 4%, and Micronesians about 1.5% (Malasa, 2007). There are about 85 spoken languages in the Solomon Islands (Sikua, 2002). English is the official language of the country used in businesses, government offices and schools, whereas Pidgin English (the *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands) is the common language used to communicate between different races and island groups. Christianity is the common faith in the Solomon Islands and mainly consists of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, South Sea Evangelical Church, United Church and Seventh Day Adventist Church with other smaller denominations. However, other religions are slowly coming into the country.

1.6.3 Education System

The Solomon Islands education system includes early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Non-formal education is also part of the education system. However, its role is to cater for early school dropouts at the end of primary school and in years 3 and 5 at secondary school. It offers 3 years vocational training to prepare those students to find employment mainly in industries, self-employment or to help them to survive in the rural areas. The Solomon Islands education system follows the British style of education and English is the medium of instruction. In

this section, I examine only the primary school and the three types of secondary schools in the Solomon Islands.

a) Primary school

Primary school starts at pre-school at the age of five to six to standard six. There were 556 primary schools in the Solomon Islands in 2002, registered under 20 education authorities (Sikua, 2002). The majority of the primary schools are in the villages in the rural areas where the vast majority (84%) of the Solomon Islands population live. The primary schools are predominantly day schools and the majority of Solomon Islands youths grow up and are nurtured in their own villages, customs, and cultures except for primary schools in urban areas. The standard six students sit the Solomon Islands secondary school entrance examination (SISE) towards the end of each year. Their marks will determine the type of secondary school they will attend the following year.

b) Secondary school

There are three types of secondary schools in the Solomon Islands namely: National Secondary School, Provincial Secondary School and Community High School.

The top secondary schools are called the National Secondary Schools (NSS). There are 9 National Secondary Schools in the Solomon Islands

that enrol the top students from all over the country with the highest marks obtained at the Solomon Islands secondary school entrance examination (SISE) at the end of primary school. They are all boarding secondary schools except for King George VI School that allows 20% of its intake as day students because of its location in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands (Malasa, 2007; Sikua, 2002).

The second best secondary schools are called the Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS). There are 16 Provincial Secondary Schools in the Solomon Islands owned by the nine Provinces of the country including one for Honiara City (capital of the Solomon Islands). They enrol the second best students mainly from their Province after the selection of the best students to the National Secondary Schools (Malasa, 2007; Sikua, 2002). Each Province has either one, two or three Provincial Secondary Schools depending on the size and the population of the Province. All the Provincial Secondary Schools are boarding except for Honiara High School (owned by Honiara City Council) with a 100% intake as day students.

The third level secondary schools are called the Community High Schools (CHS). There are 93 Community High Schools in the Solomon Islands. Community High Schools started in 1995 and are mostly owned and managed by local communities (Sikua, 2002). However, they come

under certain Provincial or Church Education Authorities, who provide teachers and grants to these schools. The majority of the Community High Schools are part of existing primary schools and mostly they offer three years of secondary education while a few have been expanded to offer classes up to form five. They are mainly day schools although some have limited boarding facilities (Sikua, 2002). However, in my Province, Isabel, all four Community High Schools are boarding schools because the villages are located far from each other and there are no roads that connect the villages. These villages can be accessed through small bush tracks or by sea.

1.7 Overview of thesis

There are six chapters in this thesis. In this chapter one, I have introduced the topic, the main research questions and why I am interested in studying the experiences of the Solomon Islands students when in transition from primary school to boarding secondary school. Chapter two contains the literature review, which examines the literature on education transition between primary and secondary school. The third chapter presents the research methodology used in this project. The fourth chapter presents the results that illustrate the themes and ideas that emerged from this study and the discussion of my results in relation to the literature in this area. Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes my conclusions and provides suggestions for further research and my recommendations.

In the next chapter, I will examine the literature on the transition between primary and secondary school.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Most school children across the world are required to change from one school to another at least once during their period of compulsory education. The most significant transition usually occurs between the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence, that is, from primary to secondary school at the age of 11 and 12 years (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006). In most countries pupils leave primary school for secondary school at the age of 11 and 12, where they are just entering the adolescence period in their lives. Some examples of these countries are United Kingdom (Tobell, 2003), United States of America (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2005), France (Bourcet, 1998) and Italy (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2005). Researchers have described this transition as one of the most difficult that children have to encounter in their lives because they have to change school as well as experiencing the beginning of their adolescence period (Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Eccles & Wigfield, 1991, 1993; Slater & McKeown, 2004). It is “one of the key periods in a child’s school career that is likely to impact on their experiences, motivation and achievement in all subjects including PE” (Warburton & Spray, 2008, p. 159).

From the search of the literature it appears that the majority of the literature on this subject, the transition between primary and secondary

school, has been written about transition in developed countries. There is limited literature on developing countries on this topic. There is little known about the transition between day primary schools and boarding secondary schools in developing countries in Melanesia, in particular the Solomon Islands where students have to attend boarding secondary schools for five months in their first year before visiting their parents for a month's holiday.

In this literature review, I will examine the literature on the educational transition between primary and secondary schools especially the students' experiences prior to and after the transfer. I will then discuss students' anxieties and personal feelings, and the adolescence period. Then I will comment on the psychological effect of transition on academic work because it is the main purpose of students going to school and how it affects students' performance at school. I will discuss the change of school environment and organisation, and pupils' social adjustment at secondary school.

I will comment on friendships at school because it is one of the main catalysts for students to quickly adjust to secondary school life. I then will focus on cultural factors, socio-economic factors and gender differences. Finally I will discuss how to address the problems of transition.

This literature review will contextualise my research and illustrate the experiences of students' transition from primary to secondary schools. I have found little or no research specifically on the experiences of students in transition from primary to boarding secondary schools in developing countries in Melanesia, especially the Solomon Islands.

2.1 Transfer and transition

The words 'transfer' and 'transition' are used in the literature to mean the process of moving from one school to another. However, they are slightly different in meaning. 'Transfer' relates to the physical process by which pupils move from one school to another, while 'transition' describes the more general development process that goes with transfer like adjusting emotionally, intellectually and socially to teaching styles, organisational style, curriculum changes and physical development (Chedzoy & Burden, 2005; Hargreaves & Galton, 2002; Kvalsund, 2000).

Some theories suggest that transition has three phases or stages. Cotterel (1982) identifies three phases. The first phase is the anticipatory coping phase, in which pupils generate some expectations about the secondary school they are about to enter. The second phase is the initial reaction of the pupils to their new school where they slowly adjust to their new environment. The third phase is the consolidation phase, when pupils settle down to their new school and identify themselves as members of the student body, rather than as newcomers.

On the other hand, Chedzoy and Burden (2005) identify the three phases or stages as:

Separation from the safety of the known world of the primary school with associated anxieties; **transition**, where everything is up in the air, personal and role changes are required, and there is a fear of ritual and confrontation of mythological acts of initiation and induction; leading finally to **adjustment** (rebirth), with confirmation of new status with personal, social, physical and educational implications. (p. 24)

Cotterel's (1982) statement is similar to Chedzoy and Burden (2005) statement. However, Cotterel's first stage is about the anticipating coping phase of the students before they enter secondary school. It means that the students are still in primary schools and are ready to enter secondary school, whereas Chedzoy and Burden's first stage is about the separation of the students from primary school with anxieties. It means that the students are now moving out of primary school to secondary school. In stage two, Cotterel (1982) and Chedzoy and Burden (2005) all wrote about the initial experiences of the students at secondary school and in stage three, they all wrote about students already settled down who saw themselves as members of the secondary school community.

2.2 Students' experiences prior to the transfer

Some researchers have carried out research on primary schools' final year students and found many similar hopes and fears about life at secondary school (Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Galton & Wilcocks, 1983; Measor & Woods, 1984). They found that students have many similar reactions to

transfer as have been experienced in most previous studies at different times and locations. The wide range of worries that primary school students usually have include getting lost in a larger unfamiliar school, having to do harder work, being picked on and teased by older students, being the smallest in the school, having strict teachers and getting detentions and adjusting to multiple teachers. The most anticipated aspects are having more choices, making new and more friends, sports, and learning new subjects (Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Mizelle, 2003, 2005; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994; Ward, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003).

2.3 Students' experiences just after the transfer

There seems to be variability between different countries on the experiences of students when they initially entered secondary schools from primary schools. Research in Australia found that the majority of pupils felt that they were part of the secondary school after a few weeks. For some pupils the change was more traumatic and had a lasting effect on them (Cotterel, 1982). Research in Norway found that the transition takes time and that pupils started to settle down in the middle of the second term (Kvalsund, 2000). Research in UK found that only a few students continued to express worries about strict teachers, changing rooms, difficult school work and homework. Almost half of the students expressed positive feelings toward school work, friends and clubs (Brown & Armstrong, 1986). They explained that the positive and negative expectations of the students tended to change over time while they were

at school. Therefore, it seems that the students' experiences really depend on the situation and the context of each country.

2.4 Students' anxieties and personal feelings

2.4.1 Anxieties

Researchers have shown that most children making the transition between primary and secondary school have considerable anxieties about the change but also have positive anticipations about new opportunities at secondary school (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittger, 2000; Graham & Hill, 2003; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Stradling & MacNeil, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003). Making the transition to a new school may cause anxiety in students and can challenge the coping skills of many adolescents, especially those at risk (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006).

The students' anxieties could be divided into three categories: school organisations, school and social factors (Ward, 2000). Brown and Armstrong (1986), in their study of UK secondary school students, found that worries about the school organisation were most likely to disappear quickly whereas worries about academic work and the inability to relate to some teachers and students could persist longer. Furthermore, a more recent study carried out in UK by Chedzoy and Burden (2005) also supports previous findings of Brown and Armstrong (1986) that worries about the school organisation were most likely to disappear as only a few

new students continued to show anxiety about the size of the secondary school by the end of their first term at school.

2.4.2 Positive feelings

Transition is not universally negative. For some students, they looked forward to having more choices and making more and new friends (Mizelle, 1999), making new friends, learning new subjects and doing practical subjects at secondary schools (Graham & Hill, 2003). However, for some students, the transition presents new opportunities to be away from bullying peers or to get a fresh academic start if they have been previously struggling at primary school (Pietarinen, 2000). Furthermore, in boarding schools, not all students were hampered by the experience of separation from parents and their loved ones (Smith, 2006). For the students who come from broken homes, Schaverien (2004) found that it is like going away from those intolerable home situations to a safer home in boarding schools.

2.4.3 Negative feelings

The literature shows that the main worries of students in transition are more or less the same between different countries and times. In UK, the main worries are bullying and getting lost (Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Graham & Hill, 2003; Schumacher, 1998; Sellman, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003), school routines and the new environment (Brown & Armstrong,

1986; Schumacher, 1998; Sellman, 2000), increased work load (Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Schumacher, 1998), peer relations (Graham & Hill, 2003; Sellman, 2000), being the smallest (Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Graham & Hill, 2003), and strict teachers at secondary schools (Brown & Armstrong, 1986). In the USA, the findings were similar to UK findings. The main worries were bullying, getting lost, increased workload and unfamiliar environment (Mizelle, 1999, 2005; Odegaard & Heath, 1992; Phelan et al., 1994). Therefore, the main worries that students experience in all countries according to research studies, are more or less the same even though there might be some slight differences.

Anderson et al. (2000) point out that those students who were not adequately prepared prior to the transition to secondary school will have difficulty in settling down. Furthermore, Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) suggest that “students with prior problem behaviours have difficulty successfully negotiating transitions because typically they do not have the social skills to adjust successfully to the new environment and continue getting in trouble” (p. 15).

The secondary school is a new environment for the new students. A sense of belongingness or feeling of school membership may be lower than when they are at primary school (Isakon & Jarvis, 1999). Marks (2004) carried out an extensive study of children in Nottingham, UK, and

found that there was a distinct drop in children's happiness and wellbeing when they moved from primary to secondary school. He argued that the scale and the abruptness of the change between primary and secondary school were extremely striking. Therefore, he suggested that students' well-being never recovers quickly, leading to a drop in happiness at secondary school. Furthermore, researchers suggest that "for some children, one negative experience can lead to a downward spiral in their motivation to attend school and can have an impact on their self-esteem" (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008, p. 222).

2.5 Adolescence period

The transition between primary school and secondary school has been associated with the onset of adolescence that the new students experience when they enter secondary school. Adolescence is characterized by rapid body changes in pupils, with hormonal changes that relate to the onset of sexual maturity resulting in pupils' increased interest in the opposite sex (Connolly, Goldberg, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). It is a key development period in pupils' lives (Mizelle, 1999; Potter, 2001; Warburton & Spray, 2008). Therefore, it can be a difficult time both academically and socially for the students who are in transition (Warburton & Spray, 2008).

Some researchers suggest that this transition period is a time of great stress for most children that can hinder their learning and achievements

because of their body's changes. Also their interests change from doing more academic activities to more non-academic activities (Slater & McKeown, 2004). Furthermore, this transition is further complicated not only by puberty but also social and emotional development, the growing importance of peer relationships, and the development of higher cognitive skills in students (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006).

2.6 Psychological effect on academic work

It is widely reported that student academic achievement is negatively affected by transition (Galton, Gray, & Rudduck, 1999). There is often a decline in students' academic performance following the transition from primary to secondary school (Alspaugh, 1998; Barone, Aguire-Deandeis, & Trickett, 1991; Carvel, 2000; Collins & Harrison, 1998; Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Galton et al., 1999; Mizelle, 2003, 2005; National Centre for Education Statistics, 1995; Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002; Wassell et al., 2007). Also, some students have demonstrated a decline in attitude towards particular subjects as they progress through the school system (McGee, Ward, Gibbons, & Harlow, 2004).

Anderman, Maehr, and Midgley (1999) suggest that transition to secondary school occurs at different ages in different countries but the result is always the same, a decline in academic performance during the first year at secondary school. Some studies have been carried out on

students aged 10 and 11 (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Galton & Wilcocks, 1983; Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002; Taylor, 1994), while others on students aged 13 and 14 (Fouracre, 1993; Murdock, Anderman, & Hodge, 2000). However, they have a similar finding, a drop in academic achievement.

Furthermore, the students who have two transitions such as the case of New Zealand secondary schools where students have to go through immediate school before going to secondary school have twice experienced a drop in academic achievements (Alspaugh, 1998; Felner, Primavera, & Cauce, 1981). Therefore, there appears to be a correlation between transition and decrease in academic achievements regardless of students' ages (Suffolk Education Department, 1997).

Zeedyk et al. (2003) suggest that the period of transition between primary and secondary school is regarded as one of the most difficult in pupils' educational careers, and success in navigating it can affect their academic performance, general well-being and mental health. This finding is further supported by Beverton (2003), that the social upheavals caused by moving from primary to secondary school are so great that unless schools intervene in a positive way, students find learning difficult during the first year or longer in secondary education. Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) argue that "students who experienced the stresses of numerous changes

often have lower grades and decreased academic motivation, and they eventually drop out of school” (p. 15). Bottoms (2002) suggests that the communication between primary and secondary school should be focussed more on raising the expectations of the students’ academic preparation and an additional help for low performing students to meet the standards of their schools.

2.6.1 Interschool networks

In some countries, teachers in secondary schools and their feeder primary schools shared information and plans about the curriculum and content to be taught at the final year of primary school and at the beginning of the secondary school to help the transition of the students in terms of curriculum (Wassell et al., 2007). However, there were some teachers who were suspicious of each other when it came to curriculum and pedagogy. Some primary school principals went as far as to state that they were not interested in facilitating their primary school curriculum and pedagogy links with secondary schools (Inch & Heweton, 2001). Yet such programmes are thought to be essential (Nicholls & Gardner, 1999).

The problems experienced by the new students entering secondary school included secondary teachers repeating topics already taught at primary school, ignoring information from feeder primary schools, and failure to build on the final year work of primary school (Suffolk Education Department, 1997; Ward, 2001). However, if teachers in both primary and

secondary schools developed a shared understanding of how pupils learn and they both have an effective teaching strategy that helps students both in primary and secondary school, the possibility of a decline in pupils' achievement at early secondary school would be reduced (Wassell et al., 2007).

When secondary schools and their feeder primary schools work together, there are more effective interschool networks that will really help the flow of information and improve understanding of the work of primary and secondary schools (Billingham, 1998). This will help incoming students to know more about secondary school life and to be familiarized with its programmes and facilities before they enter it.

2.6.2 Reasons for decline in academic performance

Firstly, a lower expectation of the receiving secondary school as opposed to higher expectation of the contributing primary schools is often seen as a reason for decline in academic achievement (Eccles & Wigfield, 1993; Galton & Wilcocks, 1983; Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002). For example, Kirkpatrick (1992) carried out a study in Australia on first year secondary school students and found that even though the academic work at secondary school was much easier than in the final year at primary school, some students still found it difficult to adjust to the academic environment of the secondary school. He related the fall of achievement to students' negative attitude about their first year

at secondary school because its academic work was much easier than it was at the final year of primary school, except that the volume of work increased resulting in students feeling a lack of control over their learning because there were many things to do at the same time. Furthermore, in UK and the USA, researchers also found that students in their early secondary schooling became disappointed because of less academic challenge in the first year at secondary school, leading to a decline in academic achievements (Green, 1997; Mizelle & Mullins, 1997; Mullins & Irvins, 2000; Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002).

In a study in America with 8th and 9th grade students, researchers found that students thought that if they were given more challenging academic work in middle school with strategies that would enable them to learn independently, it would better prepare them for high school (Green, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 1992; Mizelle & Mullins, 1997; Mullins & Irvins, 2000). Therefore, the provision of challenging academic work with the early secondary school students has been reported to relieve the frustration and the boredom that students have (Green, 1997).

Secondly, the class teacher-based environment of the primary school changes to a subject teacher-based learning environment of the secondary school that demands an amount of adaption from the pupils because the teaching styles are contrasted with what they had been used

to at primary school (Ferguson & Fraser, 1998; Herlihy, 2007; McGee et al., 2004; Pietarinen, 1998, 2000; Pointon, 2000; Ward, 2001). Furthermore, children have to adjust to several different teachers and their teaching and management styles that can be uniquely different from each other (Bates, 1998; Ferguson & Fraser, 1998; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008), thus causing the pupils' decline in their academic learning (Bates, 1998).

Thirdly, there is a lack of continuity in learning between primary and secondary schools because secondary school teachers always favoured a 'fresh start' approach rather than linking the work to primary school work (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Sometimes, secondary school teachers assumed that the whole class of new entry students had covered a particular topic in primary school and were unaware that some pupils had not (Ward, 2001).

Lastly, learning to handle the increased and more complex social interaction at secondary school is a big learning curve for many students and their preoccupations with friends and peers may contribute to the decline in students' attitude towards their school work leading to a decline in academic performance (Cox & Kennedy, 2008).

2.6.3 Steps taken to address the drop in academic performance

There are some secondary schools who have integrated different subjects to provide greater support for their new students. In a case study in one American High School, the students got good grades in the first year, but in the second year the grades fell. To improve the students' grades again, the school put four teachers in a class who worked together to teach study skills and goal setting and integrate the subjects together in ways that made the students' grades improve (Campbell, 2001).

In UK, the Ministry of Education proposed that primary schools should be doing more to prepare children for changes to the subject teaching approach in secondary schools while secondary schools should build on what had been taught at primary school (Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002). In Norwich, UK, there were many successful stories of students' improvement in academic activities when the classes were small and teachers gave their students certain programmes (Campbell, 2001).

2.7 Change of school environment and organisation

The sizes of secondary schools are much bigger and they have more classes than primary schools with different learning environments. The school programmes and rules are different or more than in the primary schools. Ward (2000) stated that:

Primary and secondary schools are characterized by different cultures and serve different functions for their clients. The former tends to be based on child-centred learning environment that is characterized by a home-room-based organization in which subject integration is an obvious feature. In contrast, partly as a factor of their size, secondary schools tend to be organization-driven and offer a learning environment that is largely subject-oriented and taught by subject specialists. (p. 365)

Researchers suggest that this transition is a time of great stress for most students because they have to move to new environments of a much bigger scale than at primary school (Slater & McKeown, 2004). Secondary schools are much bigger places than primary schools, and children know that they are expected to find their way around from one room to another every day as different class lessons are taught in different rooms (Ashton, 2008). Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) suggest that the motivational problems seen during transition may be the result of the change in school environment. The students have to encounter not only the change of environment but also peer relations, higher academic expectations and the degree of departmentalization among peers.

At secondary school, the sense of belongingness or feeling of school membership by the new students may be lower than when they were in primary school (Isakon & Jarvis, 1999). This transition from primary to secondary school to the outsiders and their families is a new stage of growing maturely. However, in the internal dynamics of schools, it is common for secondary school teachers to treat new students as younger

and less independent compared to the way they had been treated in primary schools (Yates, 1999).

Therefore, “making an easy, worry free transition that assists the students in coping with some of these changes can help them feel that their new school cares about them and their successes” (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006, p. 16). The challenges facing students as they enter secondary schools include higher level of learning, concerns about physical and sexual changes, making and keeping friends and desires for more autonomy (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Pietarinen, 2000). Pratt and George (2005) state that “transferring from primary to secondary school is a key rite of passage for boys and girls, as they move from the seemingly familiar and safe environment of the primary school, to the unfamiliar and strange surroundings of the secondary school” (p. 1). The school policies and different learning approaches can affect students in secondary schools.

2.7.1 School policies

School policies have the potential to aid or to constrain the development of a child’s social capital (Leonard, 2005; Morrow, 1999). Different secondary schools in different countries have their own policies with regards to the placement of students in a class who come from the same primary or middle schools or even from a catchment area (Weller, 2007). Simple policies such as separation of best friends from the same primary school

will cause stress to the students because they have been in the same class since primary school. On the other hand, it can be good for secondary schools as well because sometimes best friends can make a lot of noise in classes (Weller, 2007).

2.7.2 Different learning approaches

Primary and secondary schools have different learning approaches. At primary school, the approach is largely child-centred, where a teacher teaches the students in the same room for the rest of the year. This approach involves a large block of time in which the subjects are integrated into themes or units of work. However, at secondary school, teachers use more specialised approaches to teaching, where several teachers teach separate subjects to a class (Ward, 2000). Pietarinen (1998) argues that the change of teaching styles from a child-centred approach to a specialised subject approach can cause stress and anxiety among the new secondary school students that can affect their academic performances in the first year. She then suggests that secondary school teachers should understand their students in transition and take into account their previous physical, social and pedagogical environment and learning strategies practised in primary schools and apply them in their own teachings in the first year at secondary school.

2.8 Pupils' social adjustment at secondary school

Researchers have described social adjustment as coping in different situations that is a form of reorientation between children's perceptions of a situation and the abilities they bring to the situation (McGee et al., 2004; Ward, 2001). These researchers suggest that students' adjustment period may last until they are able to show that they can cope by making appropriate responses to the demands of a new environment. Furthermore, Pietarinen (1998) argues that the success or failure of this coping process by the students depends on mutual timing of these changes that is related to each pupil's adjustment in the secondary school that they have just entered and on the pupil's ability to cope with these situations.

Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) suggest that the transition between primary and secondary school is further complicated due to puberty, social and emotional development, the growing importance of peer relationships, and the development of higher cognitive skills in students. Furthermore, Cox and Kennedy (2008) argue that the social dimension of school life appears to be an important influence on how students feel about schooling more than other factors because unless a student is happy, he or she will not perform well at school. There are new pupils who might have low self-esteem at school. Therefore, such students need social support from the school administration and other students.

2.8.1 Pupils with low self-esteem

Students with low self-esteem are thought to be more vulnerable to the threats and challenges of transition (Baumeister, 1993). Those who lack confidence in their own abilities will avoid seeking help the most (Midgley & Maehr, 1998). They are less confident about their ability to cope with the challenges that lie ahead of them, whereas those with healthy self-esteem may cope with the threats and challenges of transition and are more likely to benefit more in their academic and personal growth (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Furthermore, they suggest that “for individual [students] who might be vulnerable or at risk during primary-secondary transition in particular, it will be important that support [provided by secondary school] is targeted at the appropriate dimension of self-esteem [of the new students]...” (p. 233). Marks (2004) argues that regardless of the type of family the students come from, students who are unhappy at home are more likely to have lower overall well-being than children who come from happy homes. Therefore, he suggests that there should be some policies put in place to support such students because family life is the core determinant of life satisfaction and personal development of children.

2.8.2 Providing social support

At the time when friendship and social interactions are becoming important for young adolescents at primary schools, the transition into secondary school disrupts friendship networks and interferes with students' success in secondary school (Barone et al., 1991). Therefore, it is very important

that students who just have entered secondary schools should be given some social support activities like giving new students the opportunity to settle down quickly and to develop relationships with older students and other new students (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998; Maclver, 1990; McGee et al., 2004). Students who attend primary and middle schools with transition programmes are more likely to experience a smooth transition to high schools than students who attend schools without transition programmes (Smith, 1997).

2.9 Friendships at school

One researcher suggests that the problems related to socialisation during transition will arise until students feel secure in their new school. The students will start to feel secure when they start to make new friends (Green, 1997). Schaverien (2004) suggests that the reasons that boarding school students may have difficulty in making and maintaining intimate personal relationships are multi-faceted. The common factor is that the intimate relationships with parents, siblings and pets are lost when the students arrive at school. They are substituted by many anonymous strangers. Therefore, making new friends at school is very important for the students because it will help them to settle down quickly and feel at home with everybody. Furthermore, Ridge (2002) explains that “friendship plays an important role as a social asset; it is a valuable source of capital, and an integral part of an increasing complex and demanding social world.” (pp. 142-143).

Students and teachers are two important groups of people that each individual student will always interact with at school. They can have an impact on the students' social adjustment and school work.

2.9.1 Friendship with students

Friendship features amongst the greatest worries of students in transition even if new friends are made. It is one aspect in life that many students may anticipate with excitement (Graham & Hill, 2003; Pratt & George, 2005). Measor and Woods (1984), in their study of transition between primary and secondary in one comprehensive school in UK, found that friendship plays a crucial role in providing support, reassurance and security for students at this stage of transfer between primary and secondary school. Furthermore, Kvalsund (2000), in her study in rural schools in Norway found that the main pattern of students' relationships is according to age and gender.

Pietarinen (2000), in her study in Finland, suggests that the result of her study shows clearly that the social peer group is very significant to the students when in transition from primary to secondary school. She argues that pupils need the support of their classmates from primary school as a coping strategy during the transfer. Furthermore, Ward (2001) in his study in New Zealand found that students preferred to mingle with friends that they already knew socially in their former school as this could provide a certain amount of security for them in their new school.

However, peer group formation has been portrayed as detrimental to good academic achievement, but others argued that it constitutes an important form of learning as students could help each other with their school work (Blatchford, 1998; George & Browne, 2000; Pratt & George, 2005; Rudduck, Berry, Demetriou, & Goalen, 2003; Weller, 2007). Students who are accepted by their peers at school tend to get on well compared to students who inhabit a more peripheral position (Demetriou, Goalen, & Rudduck, 2000; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997).

2.9.2 Good relationship with teachers

Students often have quite different feelings about their various teachers, which may have an impact on how they feel about a particular subject. Research shows that what students think about a particular subject is often dictated to a large extent by the feelings of the teacher taking the subject (McGee et al., 2004). Orosan, Weine, Jason, and Johnson (1992) in an USA based study states that “teachers are an important link in the quality of a transfer student’s adjustments. Children’s social and academic development may be influenced by the gender stereotypes teachers have... in students” (p. 397).

Cox and Kennedy (2008) argue that teachers play a major role in how students feel about a particular subject and their attitudes towards school work. Teachers’ good relationship with students is very important in

schools in order to build students' confidence in their own academic abilities. They stated that:

Students told [them] that they felt more engaged and enjoyed their classes more when they felt their teachers listened to what they had to say and helped them to understand new concepts by clearing things, when they taught them new things and had the ability to make boring things seem interesting, and when they were able to inject a sense of humour into their teaching and interactions with students. (p. 119)

Furthermore, another study with some Maori secondary school students in New Zealand, by Bishop and Berryman (2006), found that students identified the relationships with their teachers as the most influential factor in their achievement abilities in the classroom. They revealed that the ways their teachers taught them, their daily interactions with them, and the different teaching strategies they used strongly influenced their engagement with learning or not.

Pietarinen (2000) argues that teachers are very important people both as part of the social network of each individual school and as leaders in the teaching and learning process of the students. A teacher has two goals in the classroom: to find ways to generate good communication within each new group of pupils; and to develop interactions with them. Pietarinen urges teachers to understand the importance of students' transition from primary to secondary school and to take into account their physical, social and pedagogical environment and past learning strategies. It is also important for schools and teachers to be aware of any external factors that

may affect students' learning and achievements such as family issues like bereavement, sickness, and divorce (Cox & Kennedy, 2008). These negative external factors can have an impact on the students' wellbeing and their ability to concentrate and learn at school. Therefore, teachers must build good relationships with the students and try to know each individual student's background in order to help them both academically and socially.

2.10 Cultural factors

The transition between primary and secondary school does not only involve transition between the two cultures of the two types of schools but it can also pose some problems and concerns for the students who do not belong to the 'majority' culture (McGee et al., 2004). According to Tiedt and Tiedt (1999), each of us is born into a culture. Our family attitudes, languages, and other behaviours are internalised by us and our beliefs continue to be shaped by all our experiences after birth. It is only when we encounter other cultures that we begin to see the differences, to wonder and, of course, ask questions. Tiedt and Tiedt (1999) define culture as:

A complex integrated system of values, beliefs, and behaviours common to a large group of people...It may include shared history and folklore, ideas about right and wrong, and specific communication styles-the 'truths' accepted by the members of the group. Members of a culture 'speak the same language', so they understand the unspoken assumptions, and they have similar expectations of life. (p. 11)

Ward (2005) states that when the cultural demands of the new secondary school environment are familiar to those former primary students, then their transition is more readily accommodated at secondary schools compared to those who are unfamiliar with those cultural demands. In his study in New Zealand schools, Ward (2005) found that the students of minority cultures can easily be accommodated by primary schools because those students come in as individuals or in small groups, but when they transferred to secondary schools, they found it difficult to accommodate all of them because one school may receive students from a variety of primary schools. Each primary school, however, has its own particular organisational structure that can be different from organisational structures in other primary schools. Also each primary school has a diversity of students of different ethnic cultural backgrounds, so when the students reach secondary schools, it will be quite difficult to meet their individual demands because there are so many of them. Ward (2005) stated that:

Due to organisational constraints in accommodating a wide variety of cultures in most schools, it is difficult for schools to address the multiple forms of diversity. As a result...those students who are not of the dominant culture ... are vulnerable to the degree of match between what the school offers and their needs. (p. 38)

Therefore, he argues that students of same ethnic cultural groups usually find security in a new school setting by making affiliations with members of their own culture.

However, in other countries like the USA, it is the students' own ethnic cultures and practices that cause them to find it difficult when they reach secondary schools even though their first language is English and the language used in schools is English. According to Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992), the difficulties faced by the African American and Hispanic students when they reach secondary schools were due to parental practices, familial values about education, beliefs about the occupational rewards and lack of peer support for academic success compared to other ethnic groups. The parental and peer support for academic success was not strong in the two ethnic groups. Therefore, their children would always find it difficult gaining admittance to high academic schools in the USA.

Previous studies in the USA and UK have indicated that children of certain ethnic groups encountered more difficulties than average children during transition (Galton & Morrison, 2000). Graham and Hill (2003) explain that:

Children from minority ethnic backgrounds move between and manage different cultural worlds at home, at school, and in other areas of their lives, and the transition to secondary school may thus have particular connotations for them. Anecdotal evidence indicates that they can feel disadvantaged as regards [to] certain specific knowledge areas, while some of their own expertise is not acknowledged. (p. 1)

2.11 Socio-economic factors

In addition to cultural factors, socio-economic factors also have an impact on transition between primary and secondary schools. Students who come

from poor families are less likely to get a good education than the students who come from financially well off families. Jason, Betts, Johnson, Smith, Krueckenberg, and Cradock (1989) found that children who come from low socioeconomic status often experienced difficulty in academic work and were confronted with multiple life stressors. This is similar to a study in Spain by Peraita and Pastor (2000) where children who came from families with low socio-economic status were found to be more likely to drop out of schools than children who came from high socio-economic status families. Furthermore, students who came from rural areas with lower socio-economic levels and were away from their families seemed to have a lot of disadvantages when in schools compared to other students who were staying close to their parents (Ak & Sayil, 2006).

Another study in New Zealand by Nicholson and Gallienne (1995), looking at the reading achievement of 13 year olds in their first year at secondary school in two contrasting socio-economic areas, found that while the children in the lower socio-economic areas had scores close to the national average, the children of the working class parents had scores towards the lower end, with only 9% above the national average and the rest (91%) below the national average. A study in the USA with black Americans by Simmons, Black, and Zhou (1991), found that the relatively greater increase in problem and suspension or probation of African-American males was present only in the lower socio-economic status

families and disappeared in the higher socio-economic status families. This was mainly due to lack of permanent homes, employment, and help and good learning materials at home.

a) Lack of permanent homes and work

The lack of permanent homes and the non-availability of jobs within families of lower socioeconomic status affect the children's transfer from one school to another. Wylie and Chalmers' (1999) study of schooling in Palmerston North in New Zealand found that children of lower income families were more likely to change schools than children of higher income families. This was related to the low income of families and lack of permanent homes and employment, rather than a decision based on school choice by the parents and the students themselves.

b) Lack of help and good learning materials at home

Researchers suggest that parents of the students with lower incomes are usually people without good qualifications. Therefore, they do not know how to help their children with their schooling at home as well. A study in UK by Eltis, Low, Adams and Cooney (1987) found that the lower socio-economic status parents, although confident in the primary school situation, did not know how to go about seeking the school's help in the secondary schools because they lacked a good educational background to help their children. They further argued that although the children of the

lower socio-economic status parents gained more confidence and academic achievement on transfer to high schools they did not reach the same level as the children of higher socio-economic status parents.

In a study in the Netherlands, Kloosterman, Ruiter, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp (2009) found that at primary school, high socio-economic status children had a higher academic performance level than low status children. Even independent of academic performance, high status children were more likely than low status children to proceed to higher secondary education. In the USA, families with better cultural, social and economic resources sent their children to elite private schools more often than families with lower socio-economic status. These elite private secondary schools were usually organized to promote college and selective college attendance (Persell, Catsambis, & Cookson Jr, 1992). Therefore, the children of the higher economic status families had an advantage over the children of the lower status families who did not have the chance to attend such elite schools because their parents could not afford to meet the high cost of school fees. Okoye (2009) argues that the higher the socio-economic status of a family, the higher the motivation of their children to learn, preparing them for highly regarded vocations. He explains that this higher motivation comes from a good reading atmosphere, good diet, a play ground, provision of books and other materials, and the opportunity of attending the best schools available, common to children of wealthy

families. All these help to promote effective learning and good performance at schools.

2.12 Gender differences

There are some studies that reveal differences related to gender. Orosan et al. (1992) suggest that boys appear to display more disruptive behaviour problems than girls during elementary grades whereas girls were more readily assimilated by peers than boys. Marks (2004) found that girls enjoyed schooling more than boys. He suggests that gender difference in terms of schooling is that girls enjoy schooling earlier than boys. Therefore, these researchers proposed that the higher anxiety found in boys may suggest that boys have greater difficulty than girls in handling stress in transition, peer acceptance and teacher expectation (Marks, 2004; Orosan et al., 1992).

Another study by Crockett, Petersen, Graber, Shulenberg, and Ebata (1989) found that girls tended to show poorer image than boys in transition. In Australia, Ferguson (1996) found that the satisfaction levels for boys in terms of class work increased after transition while for girls it decreased. In UK, Trend (2007) found that girls expressed higher levels of general anxiety and subject-oriented worry than boys. Therefore, these researchers suggest that girls tend to have more difficulty than boys in transition (Crockett et al., 1989; Ferguson, 1996; Trend, 2007). Another study by Pratt and George (2005) in UK found that both girls and boys

experienced the same anxiety and stress in them. Therefore, there was no difference between the two genders.

2.13 Addressing the problems of transition

2.13.1 Middle schools

There are some countries like New Zealand and USA that have middle schools. They are between primary and secondary schools that are purposely established to help with the transition of the students between primary and secondary school and mostly offer two years of learning, but again the situation differs from country to country. According to Ward (2000),

In New Zealand, the traditional transition school for most pupils is the intermediate school. Such schools cater to 11 and 12 year-olds (years 7 and 8) and feature home-room teaching, characteristic of primary schools, with some additional specialist teaching. In this way they offer the pupils the continuity of the familiar integrated curriculum delivery model, while introducing specialist teaching which is more characteristic of secondary school. (p. 366)

Middle schooling is seen to be characterised by a set of school practices involving an integrated curriculum between primary and secondary schools, teacher team work and collaboration between the two schools, outcome based curriculum and assessment and helping students to develop a higher level of thinking and problem solving (Carrington, 2006). However, even though middle schools offer transition between primary and secondary schools, students are still faced with confusion and challenges when entering secondary school. Ward (2000), in his study in a

Hamilton middle school in New Zealand, found that when students first entered secondary schools, they experienced confusion and met many challenges. However, this was short-lived.

Smith (1997) argues that students who attended full transition programmes had smooth transitions and performed better in high schools than students with partial or without transition programmes. However, MacIver (1990) argues that the transition programmes tended to provide important logistical information for the students but did not reduce their experiences of disconnection in social, academic, and organisational expectations. Furthermore, Zeedyk et al. (2003) say that “even when the new circumstances eventually lead to increased self-confidence, stronger connection to peers and greater motivation, it seems there is almost always a considerable period of stress and worry” (p. 68).

2.13.1 Transition programmes

Hertzog and Morgan (1998) state that “researchers found a positive relationship between a decrease in student retention and dropout rate and the degree of implementation of transition programmes practices” (p. 95). Some examples of these programmes are pastoral support (May, 2002), mentorship programmes (Ascher, 1997), budding with older students (Highland Council, 2000), and peer counselling (Slater & McKeown, 2004). These researchers suggest that the most common activities are bringing the new students to visit their new schools, hosting meetings with

administrators of both exiting and receiving schools to discuss programmes and articulation, and having counsellors from both levels meet (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Mizelle & Irvin, 2008). These programmes have proved to be successful in reducing stress and improving academic performance in schools.

2.13.2 Orientation programmes

The orientation programmes for feeder primary schools are very important for secondary schools or middle schools to organise with their feeder schools so that new students will have some knowledge of the programmes and activities that are going on at the secondary schools. Orientation programmes are activities that bring primary, middle and secondary school teachers, administrators and counsellors to learn about one another's programmes, courses, curriculum and requirements (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998; McGee, 1987). The effective transition system involves continuous planning among teams of teachers and school leaders of both primary and secondary schools (Bottoms, 2002). Bottoms further suggests that the communication between primary and secondary schools should focus on raising the expectations of the students, academic preparation and additional help for low performing students to meet the standard of the school.

2.13.3 Orientation activities

Orientation activities can range from a single session on the first day of school to an ongoing programme lasting up to a full semester that involves students, teachers and parents of both primary and secondary schools (McGee et al., 2004). Sellman (2000) stated that many secondary schools in many countries now-a-days offer their new intakes an early opportunity to visit the school for a day, to be shown around the buildings or even to experience some sample lessons before the new students arrive at school. The common orientation activities include: parents' involvement and formal transition support programmes.

a) Parents' involvement

When parents are involved in their children's transition to secondary schools, students tend to have higher marks in their academic work (Linver & Silverberg, 1997; Paulson, 1994) and they are better adjusted to the new school environment (Hartos & Power, 1997). Mizelle (2003) states that parents' involvement in the transition process can be encouraged through a variety of activities. Parents may be invited to participate in a conference with their children, and the secondary school counsellors can discuss school work and other related matters. Parents can also visit the secondary schools with their child, spend a day there to help them understand what their child's life will be like, and to help them to design and facilitate some articulation activities for their child.

b) Formal transition support programmes

Many educational authorities are now conducting some type of formal transition support programmes to help students in transition (Zeedyk et al., 2003). The most common one is for the primary school pupils to visit the secondary school that they are going to attend, thereby having the opportunity to meet new teachers, talk with secondary school pupils and tour the new buildings. Other strategies include buddies between primary and secondary students, providing information leaflets written by secondary schools for primary school staff, students and parents and having secondary school pupils return to their primary schools to talk with potential pupils. Furthermore, there are some primary schools in UK that work with some peace organizations to give training programmes for their final year students in self-confidence and conflict resolution skills to prepare their students for the transition to secondary schools (Sellman, 2000). Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) state that in the USA, the most common orientation activities are bringing the new students to visit the school; hosting meetings with administrators and teachers of both primary and secondary schools to discuss programmes and articulations; and having their school counsellors meet.

2.14 Conclusion

This literature review has shown the experiences of students on their transition from primary to secondary school. It has examined the experiences of the students before they transferred from primary to

secondary school and then it examined the experiences of the students after they have transferred to secondary school. It has revealed that for some pupils the change was more traumatic and had a lasting effect on them while others felt that they were part of their secondary school community after a few weeks.

The literature review also explored students' anxieties and personal feelings on transition and talked about adolescence development as most of the students in transition are in the adolescence period and also it discussed the change of the school environment and organisation which really have a great impact on students' transition.

It also discussed how social adjustment at secondary school is very important because it directly affects students' academic performances at school. If the students are not happy in schools, they will not perform well. The academic attainment is the main purpose of students going to school. However, there is often a decline in academic performance when students are in transition from primary to secondary school.

The literature review also focused on friendships at school. A good friendship at school is one of the main catalysts for students to quickly adjust to secondary school life. Friendships with fellow students and

teachers are very important for students to socially adjust to school life both in and outside of the classroom.

The literature review also looked at cultural factors, socio-economic factors and gender differences because all of these factors affect students in their transition as well.

Finally, it looked at how to address the problems of transition. The main strategy that many countries used is transition programmes and activities mainly provided by secondary schools for their feeder primary schools. Some countries like the USA and New Zealand have middle schools between primary and secondary schools purposely to help students with the transition. Middle school features home-room teaching characteristic of primary school and some additional specialist teaching, a feature of secondary school (Ward, 2000).

There is an extensive literature available for several countries. However, I was unable to find literatures that are specific to Melanesian countries like the Solomon Islands. Therefore, I concluded that there was no study that has been carried out in the Solomon Islands and other Melanesian countries on this area. I then formulated my research question similar to the research questions of other researchers to find out whether there is a similarity between the Solomon Islands students' experiences and those of

students in other countries and also between their strategies. Furthermore, I also want to find out how my study will inform the transition programmes of boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands.

Therefore, my two research questions are: *What do Solomon Islands students experience when in transition from primary schools that they attend daily to boarding secondary schools located far from their homes and villages, and what formal and informal strategies are available for them? How can the experiences of the students and the transition literature inform the transition programmes for boarding secondary schools?*

In the next chapter, I will describe the research methodology I used in this study to explore the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The design of a research project guides the research in terms of the theoretical, analytical and practical underpinnings on which the research will be based (Creswell, 2003). Research is defined for this project as listening to the 'voices of the students' about their experiences of transition from primary schools they attend daily to boarding secondary schools that are located far from their homes and villages, and the strategies that schools used to help the students in transition. The collaboration between the researcher and the researched is the creating and sharing of knowledge (Olsen, 2003) which can be used by others to make a difference to their lives. Therefore, my research is intended to create the sharing of knowledge which can be used by stake holders to make a difference in the lives and wellbeing of the young Solomon Islands students.

This chapter describes the research paradigm, methodology and ethical considerations. This research uses mainly qualitative methodology and the main method used was interviewing. My major participants consisted of two groups of young students aged 11 to 12 years old that is 9 year one students and 7 year two students, in addition to the three principals and one deputy principal. I did my research in four boarding secondary schools in different areas of the Solomon Islands.

I first explain the theoretical perspectives that underpin the research methods, and validity and trustworthiness. I then focus on the ethical considerations, interview as a qualitative method of data collection and finally on the processes that were used to gather my information.

3.1 Research paradigm

There are many ways of looking at the world of social knowledge. Paradigms are lenses through which a person sees the world, a set of assumptions about what knowledge is and how it can be researched (Bell, 2005; Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, 2007; Creswell, 1998). The lenses or paradigms include normative/positivistic/empirical-analytic research, interpretive/naturalistic research and critical research (Popkewitz, 1984). However, for the purpose of this research, I will write only about the interpretive research paradigm which I have used in my research.

3.1.1 Interpretive paradigm

The interpretive research paradigm is concerned with how individuals make meanings of their social situations and settings (Bouma, 1996). In interpretive research, meanings and experiences are constructed by individuals to create meaning out of their lived experiences and actions shown in their natural social contexts (Creswell, 1998). An interpretive researcher would seek to discover the intrinsic or humanly created meanings and experiences that are shared by the research participants

(Clark, 1997). Furthermore, an interpretive paradigm suggests that people are the actors of their lives, operating in free will and independently (Wright, 2002).

However, the interpretive paradigm is frequently criticised for being too general (Markula, Grant, & Denison, 2001), as well as allowing the researcher to create his or her own meanings (Grumet, 1991). Therefore, as a researcher and a former boarding school teacher myself, I knew that I needed to allow the students to speak freely of their own individual experiences and principals/deputy principal on the strategies they used at school rather than trying to put words into their mouths to suit my own end.

3.2 Research methodology

The way we see the world depends on where we view it from and what we are using to see the world. Anderson and Arsenault (1998) explain:

How we see the world is largely a function of where you view it from, what you look at, what lenses you use to help you see, what tools you use to clarify your image, what you reflect on and how you report your world to others. (p. 3)

Furthermore, research takes many forms that incorporate many tools, methods and techniques through which we try to understand the world around us. All research relates to a question or a problem to which researchers try to find an answer or understanding (Anderson, 1990). In this research, the qualitative approach to research was employed, where I interviewed adults and young secondary school students. These students

are still regarded as children. Therefore, “it [was] important to understand the world of children through their own eyes rather than the lens of the adults” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 374) as they are the main participants of my research. I will explain what qualitative research is, and then explain aspects of how to conduct research in general. Finally, I will illustrate the ethical consideration that I have applied in my research.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research aims to discover or uncover the lived realities or constructed meanings of the research participants. This means qualitative research uses methods that gather descriptive accounts of the participants’ experiences or situations to enhance understanding of a particular phenomenon or a situation (Mutch, 2005). Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, where the researcher makes an interpretation of the data collected by developing descriptions of the settings, analysing and making interpretations and drawing conclusions. It is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter disciplinary field that cuts across the humanities and the social and physical sciences (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research as research that

begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is

inductive and establishes patterns and themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. (p. 37)

The natural setting is the place where the researcher mostly discovers or uncovers what is to be known about a phenomenon or a situation of an interest at hand (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The qualitative researcher often goes to the site of the participants to conduct the research, which enables him/her to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be involved in the actual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003). The participants too are carefully selected for inclusion based on the possibility that each participant or setting will expand the variability of the sample (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This means that rather than sample a large number of people with the intent of making generalizations, qualitative researchers tend to select a few participants who can best shed light on the phenomenon under investigation. Both verbal and non verbal data are collected (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Therefore, the qualitative researchers always look for the active involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with those involved in the study (Creswell, 2003).

The researcher “systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). This introspection and acknowledgement

of bias, values, interests and reflexivity typifies qualitative research today (Creswell, 2003; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Consequently, in relation to the nature of this project, I must always be aware of my bias as a teacher/researcher and try to reduce it and let the students tell their experiences of transitions and the school principals talk about the strategies used at boarding schools.

3.3 A suitable approach for researching children

The majority of my participants are children and students. According to Morrow and Richards (1996), children are defined as those who are up to the age of 18. There are some inherent characteristics which make children different from adults. They have a limited cognitive and linguistic development, less experience of the world, and may have a lower attention and concentration span (Cohen et al., 2007; Punch, 2002). As children they have something important to tell us (adults) that we may use in the decisions we make on their behalf (Manion, 2007) that directly affect their lives and wellbeing. This rationale is very important when research involves children as users of services because the main driver is to improve the services adults deliver to children (Punch, 2002).

In my research, I used Pidgin English language (the *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands), with my student participants as it is the common language in the Solomon Islands that everybody understands. I also allowed sufficient time for them to think and recall their transition

experiences. Children too may lack confidence at communicating directly with unfamiliar adults especially in a one-to-one situation (Punch, 2002). Therefore, I always asked the participants to bring their friends with them if they were not feeling confident to be with me. The students are the main users of boarding secondary schools and the staff and school administrators are the ones delivering those services. Therefore, it was important to get the views of the students on transitions and the views of the principals/deputy principal on the strategies they use to deliver the services to the students.

3.4 Validity and trustworthiness

There are different kinds of validity (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). Bell's (1999) general definition is that "validity tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe" (p. 104). The validity and trustworthiness of a piece of research are very important for its integrity. In other words, the conclusions that researchers come up with should be accurate and trustworthy and there should be a clear relationship between what is studied and what is reported. O'Leary (2004) elaborates:

Validity is premised on the assumption that what is being studied can be measured or captured, and seeks to confirm the truth and accuracy of this measured and captured 'data', as well as the truth and accuracy of any findings or conclusions drawn from the data. It indicates that the conclusions you have drawn are trustworthy. There is a clear relationship between the reality that is studied and the reality that is reported, with cohesion between the

conceptual frameworks, questions asked, and findings evident. (p. 61)

Therefore, conclusions need to be justified from what was found, and what was found needs to accurately reflect what was being studied (O'Leary, 2004).

The interview method, which I used in my research, is perhaps the best way of assessing people's inner feelings because researchers can personalize with their participants and have the opportunity to probe deeper into people's feelings and experiences. However, if the researchers are not careful then it can distort their data as well. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) argued that because interviews are interpersonal, humans interacting with humans, it is inevitable that the interviewer can have some influence over the interviewee and the data; for example, by giving a leading question to the participants or 'putting words' into their mouths. Therefore, the questions influence the answers and end up distorting them and they no longer become trustworthy (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007).

Consequently, for the validity of my data, I used open ended questions and not leading questions. The importance of open ended questions is that they enable respondents to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the kinds of definition of the situation (Silverman, 1993). I used two

lenses in my interviews: those of the adults and those of the children, because the principals/deputy principal are adults and the young students are children. The questions for the students were conducted in the common language in the Solomon Islands so that the students could express their experiences well. I also used the triangulation method by using three sets of data which were first year students, second year students and principals/deputy principal to help with the validity of my data. Triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). The final thing that I did was to have the participants check their transcripts for accuracy.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Researchers are unconditionally responsible for the integrity of their research project. They must abide by the regulations of their institutions and the laws of the society in which they are conducting their research because the laws of the society stand in the world of research. If it is illegal for the general public, then it is illegal for a researcher or a research participant (O'Leary, 2004). Therefore, in this research I adhered to the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations of the University of Waikato (University of Waikato, 2008), the laws of the Solomon Islands and the Solomon Islands boarding secondary schools' rules and protocols.

Ethics in research involves the principles of right and wrong that a particular group accepts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This means “all human behaviour is subject to ethical principles, rules and conventions which distinguish socially acceptable behaviour from that which is generally considered unacceptable” (Anderson, 1990, p. 17). For example, the University of Waikato’s Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulation has guidelines that a researcher should abide by so that his or her participants are not harmed in any way. These guidelines place emphasis on two issues which have dominated recent guidelines when dealing with human beings as subjects. They are informed consent and protection of subjects from harm (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007).

Interviews have ethical dimensions which concern interpersonal interaction and produce information about the human condition (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). “And whenever human beings are the focus of investigation, we must look closely at the ethical implications of what we are proposing to do” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 101). Therefore, in all the steps of the research process, researchers need to engage in ethical practices all the time (Creswell, 2002).

In this research, my method is interviewing student participants who come from different ethnic backgrounds and languages and who live together in

boarding secondary schools, and interviewing principals/deputy principal. Therefore, in the context of this research, the issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and social and cultural considerations, were taken into account.

3.5.1 Informed consent

An important fundamental ethical principle in research is 'informed consent'. This principle forms the basis of the relationship between the researcher and the participants and serves as a foundation on which other ethical considerations can build (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). It is based on the participants' democratic right to freely decide for themselves whether to take part in a research project as a participant or not. This means participants have the right to be fully informed of the purpose of the study and researchers must respect the participants' right to withdraw from the research project at any time during the research process until the initial part of writing up, should they wish to withdraw if their safety or privacy has been threatened or for other reasons that they may wish to withdraw.

The participants must be fully informed and understand the nature and the purpose of the study, and any risks and benefits (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007; Creswell, 2002; Mutch, 2005). Any restrictions to be imposed by the research project on the participants' freedom must be fully understood and agreed to by the participants before any research project

can proceed (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007; DePoy & Giltin, 1998; Punch, 1998).

The agreement between the researcher and the researched must be based on full and open information (Christians, 2005; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). O'Leary (2004) defines this as participants having a full understanding of their involvement in the research project, including their time commitment in the project, the types of activities they may be engaged in, topics to be covered, and all the physical and emotional risks that may be potentially involved.

To document the discussions a consent form which describes the purpose of the research, procedures involved, the possible risks and discomforts, the benefits of the research to the wider community and the right of the participants to withdraw from the study at any time should be signed by the participants (Burns, 2000; Mutch, 2005). According to DePoy and Giltin (1998), it is an official statement developed by the researcher that informs the research participants of the purpose and scope of the study. This includes a description of the procedures through which the researcher is asking the participant questions and assurance that participation is voluntary, and whether there are any known risks to the participant in the study and if so, what they are and what measures should be taken if they occur.

For this research, most of my participants were students and most of their parents were in their respective villages far from the school and some in different islands. Therefore, it was of utmost importance that I obtained consents from their parents. With the help of certain staff and the students themselves, we managed to contact their parents through the two way radios because this is the only fast available means of communication to contact the parents in the rural areas. I also explained thoroughly to the students about the nature of the project and their rights pertaining to the research so that the students could decide for themselves whether to take part in my research or not. The first and second year students are young and may not have really decided for themselves if I did not explain their rights as participants.

3.5.2 Ensuring privacy through confidentiality and anonymity

The right to privacy gives the participants the freedom to decide for themselves what aspect of their personal information should be communicated to others and what aspect should be withheld (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Therefore, the questions asked are focussed on the main research questions so that the participants are not made to feel that their privacy has been invaded or their time has been improperly used (Bishop, 1997; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007; Wilkinson, 2001).

Confidentiality helps protect the participants' privacy. It means that even though researchers know their participants from the information given,

under no circumstances will they reveal their identity in public (Christians, 2005; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). Furthermore, no one other than the researcher or research team can have access to the participants' information unless those who have access to the data are identified to participants before their participation (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007; DePoy & Giltin, 1998).

Protecting the identity of the participants through confidentiality may involve deletion of participants' names, addresses or other means of identification from the data obtained (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). Even when quoting and reporting information obtained from research, protecting the identity of the participants is vital (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). However, according to Christians (2005), ensuring confidentiality has proved to be problematic because sometimes it is possible for others to work out who the respondents are. This can possibly happen in countries where the population is small, as in the case of my country, the Solomon Islands. In the case of my study, I selected four boarding secondary schools in different parts of the country and there are more than thirty boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands. Therefore, to easily identify my twenty participants and which schools they come from will be quite difficult.

Anonymity goes a step beyond confidentiality because a participant's privacy is protected, no matter how personal or sensitive the information is or not. For example, in the case of questionnaires they should absolutely bear no identification of the participants (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). This means the researcher cannot easily identify who the participants are or even to know them personally (Mutch, 2005). However, in the case of an interview where it involves a face-to-face interview, it is not anonymous because the participants can be easily identified by the interviewer but at most, the interviewer can promise confidentiality to the participants (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007). This is what I did; I promised my participants confidentiality in that their names and those of their schools would not in any way be disclosed. Therefore, I used the principal means of ensuring anonymity: that is not to use the names of the participants or any other means of personal identification (Cohen et al., 2000, 2007) in my data, thesis or any future reports.

3.5.3 Social and cultural sensitivity

Issues of social and cultural sensitivity (University of Waikato, 2008) are ethical considerations that I took into account because boarding secondary schools are made up of both staff and students who come from different cultural backgrounds, and schools too have norms which a visitor should adhere to.

When conducting my research, I always asked the school principals for the venues and times for conducting my interviews because schools have their daily programmes and I must not disturb their programmes and activities. They are the ones that usually allocated the venues and the times for me to interview my student participants. This is because I am a male researcher and half of the student participants are females and in most cultures in the Solomon Islands, seeing a stranger of the opposite sex in unusual places and times is culturally disrespectful. Also in accordance with the school rules, a male and a female found together in odd places and at odd times will be reported to school administrations for disciplinary actions. Therefore, because of these sensitive issues, I always consulted the school principals for the venues and times to safeguard the student participants, and me as a researcher.

So, in conducting this research, I was aware of these different cultures and norms of the boarding schools, in particular how the student participants and principals/deputy principal participants would view the notions of privacy, identification and confidentiality (Punch, 1998).

3.6 Interview as a qualitative method of data collection

Semi-structured interview is very appropriate when researchers are trying to investigate people's thinking, beliefs, views, values, prejudices and feelings about certain issues that concern the inner 'perspective' of participants, and which other research methods such as observation and

survey could not easily identify. Wellington (2000) stated that interviewing allows a researcher to investigate and probe things that cannot be observed. Furthermore, Luck and Miranda (2007) argued that semi-structured interview has been considered useful because it illustrates the inner 'perspective' and can provide some insight into the actual experiences of people. For example, when dealing with people's personal lives, it is through interviewing that researchers can find the reasons why they behave in certain ways.

3.6.1 Limitations of the interview

While interviews are well known for their adaptability (Bell, 1999), there are also limitations to them. They are time consuming (Bell, 1999; Cohen et al., 2000, 2007) and costly to conduct (Whiting, 2008).

It is time consuming because it takes time to conduct the interview, listen to tape recordings after the actual interviewing and to transcribe what the participants have talked about. In the case where a participant does not want to be tape-recorded, the interviewer must write down everything on paper and if anything needs clarification, the interviewer must stop the interviewee to clarify certain things and then move on again. It takes a lot of time and energy to do these things.

It is also costly because a researcher needs to buy a tape-recorder and tapes, and there is the cost of transport, accommodation and food while

out in the field. Those who preferred to use telephones rather than face to face interviewing will also incur a lot of expense through telephone or cell phone bills. These costs applied to me in my situation when I was in the Solomon Islands doing my field work. I used face to face interviewing for which I travelled to four boarding schools by using sea and land transport, which was expensive, plus the cost of accommodation, food and telephone or two-way radio bills when contacting the principals before arriving at their schools.

Problems can also arise during the interview. Field and Morse (1989) highlighted disruptions, such as telephone calls and people knocking at the door. This is true while I was interviewing a school principal in the Solomon Islands; his telephone was ringing and our conversation had to be stopped to allow him to answer the phone before we continued with our interview again and after a few minutes, somebody knocked at his door. There were two disruptions.

The use of tape-recorders to record interviews can be problematic. They can be intrusive and can affect the degree of privacy experienced by the interviewee (Scott & Usher, 1999) because the interviewees know that exactly what they said will be played later. This can make the participants feel uncomfortable to speak properly or express themselves well. The presence of tape-recorders can also inhibit good questioning and listening

skills. As Tolich and Davidson (1999) stated, the presence of a tape recorder can create complacency because the interviewers might think that everything is already recorded by the tape-recorder and they can listen to them later while transcribing. While this is true, also sometimes tape-recorders will not work or sometimes the interviewer might forget to turn on the tape-recorder during the interview and has to go back and ask the participant to do the interview again. This happened to me while I was interviewing a student in the Solomon Islands; I forgot to turn on the tape-recorder. I did not realize it until we had finished the interview, so we had to do the interview a second time.

3.7 Research process

In this section, I describe the research process, including access to the four boarding secondary schools and the participants, who included the schools' principals/deputy principal and the first and second year students, as well as the devices I used to collect and to analyse the data.

3.7.1 Access to boarding secondary schools

To conduct research in boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands, permission must be sought from the principals as they are the immediate heads of the schools. However, the Ministry of Education and the Provincial and Church Education Authorities should also be informed of any research that will be carried out in any schools that comes directly

under their jurisdiction. In my case, it is to inform them that I will be conducting research in their schools.

A few months before I arrived in the Solomon Islands to do my fieldwork, I sent letters to the principals of the four boarding secondary schools asking their permission to do research in their schools (see Appendix 3). A letter was also sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education to inform her that I was going to carry out research in certain boarding secondary schools, with copies to the Provincial and Church Education Authorities that own the schools (see Appendix 2).

I was granted permission by the principals of the four boarding secondary schools to do research in their schools. The Chief Education Officers of the Education Authorities are also supportive of my research and so they wrote to the school principals in support of my research before I arrived and also they welcomed me when I called into their offices.

3.7.2 Selecting the participants

The four principals of the four boarding secondary schools are automatically my participants because one of my questions is for the head of the school. I had already sent my invitation letters to the school principals with the letters to ask permission to conduct research in their schools two months before I arrived in the Solomon Islands. However, when I arrived at one school, the principal was busy so he asked his

deputy to be my participant instead so that is the reason I had three principals and one deputy principal as my participants.

For the students, I arrived at each boarding school before I invited them to be my participants because it was difficult for me to invite them in advance while I was in still New Zealand as I did have not their class lists. It was the school principals or careers masters who provided the students' lists for me in the schools and they are the ones that provided the appropriate venues for me to conduct the interviews.

I used the stratified sampling method to select my participants according to classes, genders and their province or district. According to Cohen et al. (2000, 2007), "stratified sampling involves dividing the population into homogenous groups, each group containing subjects with similar characteristics" (p. 111).

Firstly, in the first National Secondary School, I had to identify four Provinces that each participant came from and the students' genders and then randomly select the students. In the second National Secondary School, I had to select another four Provinces different from the ones that I had used in the first school because there are nine Provinces that make up the Solomon Islands, and I wanted my participants to reflect the provinces across the whole country. For the Provincial and the Community

High Schools, I also selected from each district or region that makes up that particular province. I deliberately used this technique to get a fair representation of the provinces that make up the Solomon Islands and the district or region that makes up that Province to achieve a spread across the country.

3.7.3 Conducting the interviews

When interviewing the student participants, it was important that I used the language that all of them commonly understood and the venues had to be conducive for them to be able to freely participate and speak about their experiences.

All the interviews were carried out in the boarding secondary schools' compounds. For the students, they were conducted in the afternoons after class hours, and for the principals and deputy principal during official hours when they were free.

I interviewed the students in Pidgin English (the *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands), between ten to twenty minutes per student because children are different from adults in cognitive and linguistic development, attention and concentration span (Cohen et al., 2007). This is because they were young (aged 11 and 12), and they might not openly speak or express their experiences well if I were to use English language and if the time for interviewing them was too long for them.

There was one face-to-face interview with each participant which lasted between 10 to 20 minutes for the students and the principals/deputy principal between 5 to 10 minutes. The interview questions (see Appendix 9) were derived from my two research questions. The questions for students were mainly about their experiences in transition, that is their experiences of leaving home and when they were at school and how they managed to cope with their difficulties and problems. The questions for the schools' principals and deputy principal were mainly about the strategies schools used to help their students when they first arrived at school (see Appendix 9).

3.7.4 Data transcription

The interviews at the two rural boarding secondary schools were transcribed in the schools because out of the four boarding schools that I researched, three schools were in the rural areas and I had to spend a week in each school. For these two schools, I had to travel a full day by ship to reach them because they are located in another island far from the capital of the Solomon Islands, Honiara. Those two boarding schools are also quite far from each other as well so I had to travel by ship to go from one school to another. I had to transcribe everything at school so that my participants could check their transcripts before I moved on to the next school because it would take months to reach them if I was to send them later and then it would take more months for them to come back to me in New Zealand. Furthermore, those two schools are in remote places where

transport and postal services are not easily accessible. Therefore, the only possible solution was to transcribe them at school and let my participants check them there. Otherwise I might receive them back very late or not at all.

For one school, there was no computer, so I had to pay a teacher to type my transcripts with the only manual type-writer at the school. I had to transcribe as soon as I completed interviewing certain participants in a day because it depended on the availability of ships to transport me from one school to the other. Therefore, I had to complete every transcript and let the participants check them before I moved to the next school. This was an in-depth process for me because I had to complete everything before the ship arrived as well as translating responses into English language, because I had conducted the interviews in Pidgin English. This was by choice because if I were to use English language then it would hinder the students in expressing their experiences of transition well.

I managed to transcribe all the schools' material in the Solomon Islands, except for the last school that I visited. I did not have enough time to transcribe all the interviews at that school as I just spent three days there before I returned back to New Zealand. I was late in returning back from another island where I had been conducting research with two of its schools due to a shipping problem. This school is just outside of Honiara,

the capital of the Solomon Islands, so it was quite easy for me to send the transcripts back to that school. For that school I did all the transcribing here in New Zealand.

3.7.5 Data analysis strategies

Qualitative data analysis deals with meaningful talk and action (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Its validity could be determined by comparing the themes that come up in the research project to the ones in the literature (Bell, 1999; Burns, 2000). There are some computer programmes that are available to use for data analysis of research projects (Bell, 1999; Burns, 2000; Creswell, 2003). However, for this research project, I used the thematic analysis approach where I identified the common themes that came up from the participants' data. According to Mutch (2005), thematic analysis is a qualitative strategy that gathers common themes together from the data. I read the year one and two students' data and then gathered their common themes together, followed by the principal's/deputy principal's data.

The thematic approach has really helped me to identify the common themes in my interview data. It is the most suitable approach for analysing and reporting personal interview data (Mutch, 2005) and it can also help the researcher to easily identify the emerging patterns and the recurring themes from the interview data (Byne, 2001).

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the methodology that is relevant to this research. The qualitative approach was important because it was essential to get the descriptive account of the lived experiences of the participants. A suitable approach to researching children was also very important for this research because most of my participants were young students and they were different from adults. Therefore, understandings from children's own accounts rather than adults' were very important for getting a more accurate description of the students' lived experiences.

The ethical issues that are relevant for this project have also been covered, which include informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity and social sensitivity in relation to both the children and the adult participants.

The research method used in this research was semi-structured interview ranging between 10 to 20 minutes per interview for a student and between 5 to 10 minutes for a principal/deputy principal. This section also explained the limitations of the interview method. The last part of this chapter covered the research process that included: access to institutions, selection of the participants, where and how the interviews were conducted and logistical problems. For this research, the thematic approach to analysis was used. The results of the data analysis and the discussion of the results with the literature are in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This study explored the experiences of 9 first year students and 7 second year students of boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands when in transition from primary schools which they attended daily to boarding secondary schools located far from homes and villages, and the strategies that boarding secondary schools used to help them. The students were in transition from primary schools in their own ethnic groups to boarding secondary schools where there was a mixture of students.

The first year students were only three months at school when I carried out this research so they were in a transition period from primary to boarding secondary schools. The second year students were already more than a year at boarding secondary schools so they were reflecting on their transition. The principals and deputy principal were the top administrators of their schools and they knew the strategies to help the transition of the new students to their schools.

This research was based on the following questions:

What do Solomon Islands students experience when in transition from primary schools that they attend daily to boarding secondary schools

located far from their homes and villages, and what formal and informal strategies are available for them? How can the experiences of the students and the transition literature inform the transition programmes for boarding secondary schools?

Information was gathered from 10 to 20 minute interviews with the students and 5 to 10 minutes interviews with the principals/deputy principal based on questions from an interview schedule. The data was analyzed through the process of thematic analysis in order to elicit the recurring themes that appeared relating to the experiences of the students when in transition and the strategies that secondary schools used to help the transition of the new students.

There were students from rural areas who were attending boarding secondary schools in urban areas, and some students from urban areas who were attending rural schools. There were also students who had siblings or relatives attending the same boarding secondary school, while others were by themselves.

There were three year one students at Frazer High School. When I asked a prefect to go and tell two female students whom I had identified, a year one girl and a year two girl, two year one girls arrived, so I had three year one students instead, a male and two females.

I interviewed the deputy principal of Wesley College instead of the principal because the principal was busy on that day so he asked me to interview the deputy principal instead.

The themes that emerged from the students' personal experiences include: experiences leaving for boarding schools, positive feelings on arriving at school, negative feelings on arriving at boarding school, difficulties and problems encountered at boarding school, positive experiences at secondary schools, academic work, extra-curricular activities, accommodation, and food. These include both positives and negatives and their personal strategies to overcome some of their difficulties and problems.

The themes that emerged from formal strategies that were available at boarding schools include: principals' general observations and expectations of the first year students, good dormitories and classrooms, orientations, class assemblies, dorm teachers, cultural groups, and religious groups.

The results include comments from 9 year one students and 7 year two students whose ages range from 11 to 12 years, and from three principals and one deputy principal. The schools have a diverse range of students, mostly Melanesians and a few Polynesians and Micronesians. For this

study, pseudonyms are used instead of schools and students' real names (see tables 1-5 in Appendix 10 for participant details).

4.1 Feelings on leaving for boarding schools

The feelings of the students on leaving their parents, homes and villages for boarding secondary schools include feeling sad and nervous.

4.1.1 Feeling Sad

Most of the year one and two students felt sad when they were about to leave their parents for the boarding secondary schools for the first time. Fifteen out of 16 students said they felt sad when they were about to leave their parents.

This is illustrated by the following comments from some of the year 1 and year 2 students.

Year 1

Ross says: "When I am ready to leave my parents, I felt sad because I will leave my parents for the first time to come and live here by myself for the next five months". For some students, they have to travel to other islands and not only that but they have also experienced the change of life from being a rural person to an urban person or vice versa because of the location of their boarding schools. Mary, who comes from a rural area, was accepted to do her secondary schooling in an urban boarding secondary

school and this is her first time to leave her parents and village. She elaborates:

When I am about to leave my parents, I felt sad because it was my first time to leave my parents and village in a rural area to come to another island to live in a boarding secondary school in an urban area by myself.

On the other hand, students who come from urban areas and are now attending boarding secondary school in rural areas are also facing problems. This is the experience of William:

When I am about to leave my parents, I felt really sad because I will not see my parents for a longer time. I am going to stay far from my parents as they are staying in Honiara [capital] on another island.

There were students whose parents are living quite close to the boarding secondary school that they are attending. This is the experience of John, who comes from an urban area.

When I was about to leave my parents this year, I somehow felt sad even though my parents are in town. To live in a school as a boarding student will be a new experience for me. Therefore, I have the feeling of excitement at being away from my parents and at the same time feel sad.

Year 2

For some students, it was their first time to leave their parents to spend five months in school before visiting them again and they had to travel to other islands to attend schools. Ann elaborates:

When I was about to leave my parents to come to this boarding school last year from another island, I felt sad because it was my first time to leave my parents and to come and board in this school for five months.

There were some students from rural areas who were feeling sad to leave their parents back in rural areas and also feeling lonely and frightened to travel alone by boat for a number of days to reach school. Peter explains his experience:

When I was ready to leave my parents, I felt sad to leave them because I really loved them. My province is the most remote province in the Solomon Islands and it took three days by boat to reach the capital, Honiara, where I will be attending a boarding secondary school. It will be my first time to travel alone as well as to leave my parents and my province for the first time so I was feeling sad and frightened.

Some students were accepted to a Provincial or Community High School in another island or province; therefore, those students knew that they would be alone. This is Luke's experience:

When I was about to leave my parents, I found a big difference in myself, I was feeling sad and found it difficult to leave my parents to come here to live by myself. I also felt sad because I will not see my parents for a much longer time and I do not know any student here as I come from another island.

The results of this study show that the majority of the students who come from towns and villages that are quite far from their boarding secondary schools expressed only negative feeling of sadness when they were about to leave their parents. This does not reflect previous studies where students expressed both positive and negative feelings when they were about to leave primary schools for secondary schools (Anderson et al., 2000; Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Galton & Wilcocks, 1983; Graham & Hill, 2003; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Measor &

Woods, 1984; Mizelle, 1999; Phelan et al., 1994; Schaverien, 2004; Stradling & MacNeil, 2000; Ward, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003).

For most of the interviewees it was the first time they lived apart from their parents. There were students who came from the urban areas and were attending schools in rural areas and those from rural areas attending urban schools. Although the students were asked to recall their experiences when they were about to leave their parents, all they talked about was missing their parents and homes. The results may or may have been different if the students had been interviewed while they were still in primary schools.

The results show that only few a students whose homes and villages that were quite close to their boarding secondary schools expressed both positive and negative feelings when they were about to leave their parents. This is supported by previous studies where students expressed both positive and negative feelings when they were about to leave primary schools for secondary schools (Anderson et al., 2000; Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Galton & Wilcocks, 1983; Graham & Hill, 2003; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Measor & Woods, 1984; Mizelle, 1999; Phelan et al., 1994; Schaverien, 2004; Stradling & MacNeil, 2000; Ward, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003).

4.1.2 Feeling nervous

Some of the year one students felt nervous when they were about to leave their parents for boarding secondary schools. A comment by one of the students illustrates this. Tom explains:

When I was about to leave my parents, I felt nervous because I am thinking of whether I will be able to cope with the life of this [boarding] school or not...I am thinking of what will happen to me if I might not manage to live to the life and the expectation of the school, for example like [doing] work session and following the school rules because it will be different from the primary school that I have attended.

While a lot of research found that the students used various terms to describe how they felt at going to high school with scared and nervous being the dominant terms (Johnstone, 2009), the Solomon Islands students did not. Feeling nervous is not a dominant term but rather feeling sad. This is possibly because of the situations of the boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands where most schools are located far from most students' homes and villages.

4.2 Positives feelings on arriving

The positive feelings of the students on arriving at boarding secondary school include feeling happy and 'feeling all right'.

4.2.1 Feeling happy

Some students from both year one and year two felt happy when they arrived at boarding secondary schools. Two students' comments provide some reasons for this.

Year 1

One student was happy when he arrived at the boarding secondary school of his choice. Tom explains: “When I arrived at the beginning of this year, I felt happy that I have arrived at the school that I wanted to attend...”

Year 2

Others, like Janet, felt happy when they met some of their friends and had one-talks (same language) at the school. Janet elaborates: “When I first arrive at school, I was happy because I had the chance to see some of my friends and had one-talks (same language) with those who are attending the same school”.

The results show that some students felt happy when they finally arrived at the boarding secondary schools of their choice. They felt happy because they were accepted by the secondary school of their choice after having to sit the Secondary School entrance examination and obtaining the pass marks for that secondary school and now they have finally arrived at that school. Others, however, felt happy to be in boarding schools because it gave them an opportunity to meet some of their friends and “one-talks” with people who can speak the same dialects whom they might not had the chance to meet if they were accepted to a non-boarding secondary school. This is also similar to the findings of Brown and Armstrong (1986) in secondary schools in UK where some students expressed positive

feelings when they initially arrived at secondary schools. However, the only difference is that almost half of the students in UK expressed positive feelings whereas of those in the Solomon Islands only a few expressed positive feelings.

4.2.2 Feeling all right

One year two student mentioned that she felt all right when she arrived at her boarding school. Ann tells of her experience:

When I first arrived at school, I felt all right because I already knew some students because we have attended the same primary schools at home and in Honiara. I mixed around with them and settled down quickly.

The results show that a few students felt all right when they arrived at their boarding secondary schools because they already knew some students they attended primary schools with. Therefore, they easily mixed with them and settled down quickly. This finding is similar to Ganeson and Ehrich's (2009) study in Australia, which showed that:

Knowing others from primary school helps students feel safe and less nervous particularly in the early days and weeks in high school. When students see familiar faces amongst so many unfamiliar faces, they feel more confident and able to cope in the new environment. (p. 68)

Furthermore, Weller (2007) argued that when children start a new school these connections of close friends from primary schools are important for them as they represent a shared past, common experiences and similar anxieties between the students.

4.3 Negative feelings on arriving

The negative feelings of the students when they arrived at boarding secondary school include feeling homesick, lonely, shy and afraid.

4.3.1 Feeling homesick

Five of out of 16 students, all girls, said they felt homesick when they arrived at boarding school. The year two students, however, had managed to overcome their homesickness because they had been at boarding school for more than a year, compared to the year one students who were just three months at school.

Year 1

Separation from parents was a particular issue for some students as Mary notes:

When I just arrived here at Dudley High, I felt homesick for leaving my parents back in another island and coming to such boarding school. Even though I have a brother at school, I am still feeling homesick because it is my first time to leave my parents and my home.

Others found that having old friends from primary schools at boarding secondary schools with them helped them to settle down at boarding schools. Rachel elaborates:

When I arrived this year, I felt homesick because I am now by myself without my parents. In classes, I felt happy because there are some students from the same primary school that I attended last year who are with me in the same class.

Year 2

Similar to the year one students, the year two students too were feeling homesick when they arrived at boarding school because they were not used to being away from their parents. It was other students' words of encouragement and advice that helped them to stay on in boarding secondary schools. Margaret explains:

When I arrived here last year, I was homesick and always thinking about my parents. I was not getting used to the life of staying out of my family. I am feeling homesick for some time until other girls came and advised me, talked to me until I was not afraid to stay here without my parents or thinking about them all the time.

The results show that only female participants mentioned that they felt homesick when they arrived at school and no male participants mentioned feeling homesick. This does not support previous studies which found that both males and females expressed homesickness (Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Pratt & George, 2005). Cultural factors may be a contributing factor here because girls tend to be very close to their parents in Melanesia. Furthermore, parents in the Solomon Islands are reluctant to allow girls to go to boarding schools because of what they see as social dangers. To them education or schooling becomes a means of taking students away from their communities often permanently when they find jobs and settle in urban areas (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2004). In most cases going to boarding secondary school will be the first

time that girls will actually leave their parents. Therefore, they will be feeling homesick and thinking about their parents at school.

The results indicated that having old friends from primary schools at boarding secondary schools with the students helped them to settle down at boarding schools. This finding is similar to Ganeson and Ehrichs' (2009) study in Australia which showed that:

Knowing others from primary school helps students feel safe and less nervous particularly in the early days and weeks in high school. When students see familiar faces amongst so many unfamiliar faces, they feel more confident and able to cope in the new environment. (p. 68)

Weller (2007) noted that when children start a new school (secondary) these connections with close friends from primary schools are important as they represent a shared past, common experiences and similar anxieties. She further stated that this "transition is... a shared but passing moment for acquaintances from primary school [because] once the moment has elapsed the importance of a shared past fades, except for those children who cannot find commonalities with their peers" (p. 346).

Students managed to overcome their homesickness with the help of some of their old friends from primary schools and from other students' words of encouragement and advice.

4.3.2 Feeling lonely

Both the year one and two students felt lonely when they arrived at boarding secondary schools but its degree depended on the number of people they knew at school. If they had siblings, relatives and friends at school, they did not feel as lonely as those who did not have any siblings, relatives and friends. Four out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The comments from these students illustrate the value of this support. John explains: "When I arrived at school, I felt lonely because I did not know everybody but it was not that bad because I have a big brother and sister here at school". William also faced loneliness, but his cousins who are there at the same school helped him. William elaborates:

When I arrived at school, I felt lonely because I did not know anyone in the dormitories. [However] when going to the dining hall, it was all right because some of my cousins went with me...As well as going to the classroom... because one of my cousins is attending the same class that I am attending.

Year 2

There were students who felt lonely when they arrived at school because they did not have any siblings, relatives or people from their islands or provinces at school. Luke elaborates:

Last year there was no student from my island at school apart from me, so I stayed here by myself. I sat quietly on my bed and only talked when other students talked to me.

Luckily there is one girl from my island coming here this year so now I am feeling much happier than last year.

This finding is similar to Pratt and George's (2005) study in UK that some groups of first year students in secondary schools described their first term at secondary school as lonely and unsettling. However, the boarding nature of the Solomon Islands secondary schools is possibly different to that in many countries because they are mostly located far from most students' homes and villages, and students have to live in boarding schools for five months before visiting their parents for a one month break before returning back to their boarding schools again. There are no email facilities or telephones that students can use to contact their parents. They can use only letters that can take several weeks to reach their parents.

Students managed to overcome their loneliness with the help of their siblings, relatives and some old friends from primary school who are also attending the same boarding school.

4.3.3 Feeling shy

Some of the year one and two students felt shy when they arrived at boarding school. They felt shy because they were new at the school and to the majority of the students. Six out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The students felt shy when they arrived at boarding secondary school because many of the students at the school did not know them as they came from other places. Comments from Nelly and Rachel illustrate this. “When I arrived at school I felt shy of other students because they are from other places” (Nelly). “In classes...I am feeling shy of other students [because] they are from other places or villages” (Rachel).

Students felt shy when going to the dining hall to have meals because they were not used to having meals with many people. Claire explains:

I found it difficult to eat in the dining hall where there are so many students from different places; I am always feeling shy to eat in the dining hall because I am not used to eating with so many students. At home we eat with less number of people in our houses...whereas at school, we eat with five hundred students....

Year 2

Students mentioned two places that they always felt shy to go into. They are the dining hall and the classroom but the dining hall appeared to be the worst place because there were so many students. Ken explains:

In class, I felt shy of other students in the first week because I did not know many of them. In the dining hall, I was too shy to go and eat inside because there are many students and most of them are big students and I am one of the most tiny students in year one.

The results show that some students tend to have shyness in them until they have stayed much longer in boarding secondary schools. They felt

shy to go to the dining hall and the classrooms where there were a mixture of students. Solomon Islands as a Melanesian country has a lot of ethnic groups that have different cultures and languages that are diverse from each other, so when the students come together to live in a boarding school, they tend to feel shy when meeting other students. The Melanesia regions are the most culturally and linguistically diverse region on earth (Friedlaender et al., 2008; Knauft, 1999). Therefore, when the students come together in boarding secondary schools from different cultures and languages, students tend to feel shy when meeting different students.

4.3.4 Feeling afraid

Only the year two students mentioned that they felt afraid when they arrived at their boarding secondary schools. Two out of 16 students stated this.

Some of the new students naturally have the feelings of fear about the bigger students at school. Lesley explains: "Seeing bigger students makes me to feel afraid of them as it is my first time to see big students". Others, however, are afraid of the older students as Peter comments.

When I arrived at school, I was feeling afraid because I do not know everybody at school. I was afraid of other students who are older than me at school or else they might start asking about me and where I come from and then start teasing me. I was so shy that I sat quietly on my bed and did not even say a word to a person sitting close to me and I was also feeling lonely. However, at the end, everything seems okay.

The results show that some students fear other students, mostly the senior ones. Naturally, young people may fear others who are bigger than themselves when they first meet them and this was exactly what happened to some of the year one students of the Solomon Islands. This finding is similar to Mizelle's (1999) study in the USA that in transitions both from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school, students had concerns about contact with older and rougher students.

4.4 Strategies to overcome negative feelings on arriving

In this section, I present the students' views on the strategies they used to overcome their negative feelings on arriving.

4.4.1 Friendship

The year one and two students both said that friendship helped them to overcome their difficulties and the problems they encountered at boarding secondary schools. Nine out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The first year students became happier and settled down at school when they started to know many other students through creating friendship with each other. Friendship helps dispel feelings of homesickness and loneliness and allows for happiness to come in. Nelly stated: "In terms of lonely, I am now starting to feel happy because now I am starting to know

many students". They do not only know students but they become friends.

William elaborates:

When I went around and met other students and told stories with them, we became friends. When I have more friends, my loneliness is starting to disappear and now I am starting to feel much happier.

Some students noted that they felt happy when they arrived at school but after a few days, they wanted to return back to their homes. Finding some friends encouraged them to remain at school. Tom explains his experience:

When I arrived at the beginning of this year, I felt happy that I have arrived at the school that I want to attend but after a few days, I have a second thought that I wanted to go back home. However, after three days, I made up my mind that I should stay at school after finding some friends at school and I thought that they will take care of me.

Year 2

The year twos also noted the positive outcomes of friendship. Ken elaborates: "When I arrived here last year, I always thought of my parents but now I am feeling happy staying here because I have a lot of friends. Therefore, I am no longer feeling homesick".

Some junior students preferred to make friends with the bigger students and when they knew them personally they felt less lonely. Peter explains: "When I started to know many students especially bigger boys by telling stories with them and starting to know them by names and becoming their good friends, my loneliness slowly faded away".

Even starting to know students and telling them to accompany them to the classrooms and dining halls will make students feel happy and settle down at school. Lesley explains:

When I stayed here, I started to get used to everybody, so I started to ask some students to go with me to the classrooms and dining halls. Therefore, I started to feel settled and happy here at school.

The results show that the main strategy that students used to overcome their difficulties and problems was creating friendship with other students. Students became happier and started to settle down at school when they started to know other students through making friendships in the first year. This is similar to the findings of Hertzog and Morgan (1998), that the most important area to students in making transition to high school was developing close friends. Furthermore, students will start to feel secure at school when they start to make friends (Green, 1997), and their loneliness starts to disappear.

The results show that there were some first year students who felt happy when they arrived at school but after a few days, they wanted to return home but finding friends at school encouraged them to remain in school. According to Pietarinen (2000), having a social peer group is very significant to the students when in transition from primary to secondary school because it helps them at school.

The second year students' experiences were similar to the year one students, when they were at year one. However, one of the strategies that they used was to make friends with bigger students at school because it was like a form of security for them to avoid bullying from other students. This is in line with findings of other researchers (Brown & Armstrong, 1986; Graham & Hill, 2003; Mizelle, 1999, 2005; Odegaard & Heath, 1992; Phelan et al., 1994; Schumacher, 1998; Sellman, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003), that bullying is the biggest worry of the students when they are ready to enter secondary schools. Therefore, new students preferred to make friends with big students to avoid bullying from other students. This finding is similar to Lucey and Reay's (2000) study in two primary schools involving final year students in one demographically diverse inner London borough, where for many children a partial resolution to fears around bullying from older unknown children was to have their friends from the primary schools come with them into their new secondary schools or to know somebody older in the secondary school already before they reach school.

4.4.2 Social activities

Some of the year one and two students said that their involvement in social activities helped them to settle down at school. Five out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

Some students managed to overcome their difficulties and problems by being involved in some activities, sports or just mixing with many students.

Claire elaborates:

I got used to the life of this school and its boarding nature when I mixed around with students of different cultures and languages by telling stories with them, going for a walk, working together, playing together in the sport fields and doing other school activities and school programmes together.

Boarding secondary schools have school activities and they are also enjoyable. When students follow the same routines every week, they get used to the life of the school. Tom explains:

Every day it has school activities, so it is nice. I am happy with the school activities here and following the same routine every day and week, so I finally get used to the school life here and the school activities are enjoyable as well.

Some students have the determination to overcome their difficulties and problems at boarding schools. William explains:

I am used to boarding school life because it was a new chapter in my school life, so I have to cope with it because there is no parent to look after me here. I get used to it when I have involved myself with many school activities so that my mind forgets about home and my parents.

Year 2

Similar to the year one students, the year two students were used to social activities as Ann explains: "I always go for playing, walking, chatting and mixing with other students to forget about home".

The results show that one of the strategies that students use to overcome their difficulties and problems is to be involved in school activities, sports and mixing with other students. Some students got used to the life of boarding school when they mixed with students of different cultures and languages by telling stories with them, going for a walk, working together, playing together in the sport fields and doing other school activities and school programmes together.

Furthermore, some of the school activities are also enjoyable for some of the students. Therefore, following the same routine of school activities every week where some of them are enjoyable, they finally get used to the life of their school. Others, however, had the determination to overcome their difficulties and problems they faced living in boarding school because it was a new chapter in their lives living without their parents. They got used to the boarding school life when they involved themselves with many school activities to try to forget about their homes and parents.

4.5 Difficulties and problems encountered at secondary schools

In this section, I present the difficulties and problems that students encountered at boarding secondary schools. They are change of status, tight school programmes, unfamiliar cultures and languages, and insufficient pocket money.

4.5.1 Change of status

The effects of change of status were unhappiness at being juniors and ordinary students, and being treated as small children.

a) Unhappy to become juniors and ordinary students

Some year one and two students experienced unhappiness at becoming junior students at secondary school as they had been used to having responsibilities as seniors at primary schools and no longer had this status at secondary school. Five out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

William's comments illustrate this feeling.

I was unhappy about this because at primary school, I was a senior student so many junior students looked up on me. They sought help and advice from me but now it is the reverse I have to go and seek help and advice from the senior students here because I am now a junior student.

Dickson found this a very difficult transition. "When I was at primary school, I was a senior student and a prefect and when I arrived here this year, I am a junior student again. It is like putting us low".

Year 2

Some students said the experience was like starting pre-class again after reaching standard six, the end of primary school. Luke explains:

It is like we are in a pre-class after reaching the end of primary school education. When I reached standard six, I thought that I was somebody senior but now I am a junior

student again where the senior students of this school are looking after us and advising us junior students.

Some of the students were not happy about bigger students at secondary schools giving them advice and telling them what to do as they had been school leaders themselves at primary schools. Ken explains:

I am not feeling happy to become a junior student and was not given any responsibility position in secondary school because at primary school I was a senior student and a prefect and most of the students are looking up at me. I was feeling unhappy about this because the bigger students are our leaders and we the junior students are just following their advice and instructions all the time.

There were students who had been student leaders in primary schools and they had enjoyed the respect that the junior students showed them. When they reached secondary school, they became junior students and the respect they once enjoyed was no longer there because the senior students were their student leaders. They became unhappy because they no longer had this status of being senior and a school leader at secondary schools. This is in line with the findings in UK (Graham & Hill, 2003; Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008; Pellegrini & Long, 2002) and in Norway (Kvalsund, 2000), where students moved from being the oldest and the most experienced in primary schools to being the youngest and least mature in secondary schools. As well it is similar to the findings of Yates (1999) in Australia where in their physical size and know-how, they went from being the oldest and expert in primary school to being the youngest and smallest in secondary school

b) Treated as small children

One year two student felt she had been treated as a small child by the senior students. Margaret explains:

When I arrived here last year, I was treated like a small girl especially by the senior students. We are treated like small girls here whereas at primary school, I was the head girl then where I was the leader of every student from grade six and below, so I have the power to punish or talk to the students.

The results also show that the new students at boarding schools in the Solomon Islands had been treated as small children by the senior students and their bigger siblings and relatives at schools. For some of them they had been school leaders at primary schools like school prefects and even some had been head boys and head girls of their primary schools at home.

4.5.2 Tight school programmes

Four of the year two students said they found it difficult to follow tight school programmes. This issue was not mentioned by the year one students. Peter explains why he found it difficult.

At school there are many school programs and rules to follow. Everyday has school programs and we students have to be in a certain places at certain times of the day for the whole week. I did not get used to such tight programmes and too many rules to follow because at home there are only few rules and I get used to those. Because there are so many rules that I sometimes just overlooked them and I ended up breaking them and was punished for those.

At boarding schools there are school programmes and activities from morning until lights out at night for the whole week and students have to be in certain places at certain times of the day. Some of the students in the Solomon Islands did not get used to such a tight programmes and too many rules to follow because at their homes or villages there are only few rules and programmes This is in line with the findings of Lambert's (1968) study in UK that there were some students who did not want to be boarders because they did not want to follow many school programmes and participate in many activities, and Ako's (2002) study in Australia that there were students were concerned about school rules and procedures.

Students have to attend classes in the mornings, and work sessions and sports in the afternoons. The evening parts of the week days are mainly for prep and the weekends for social activities. This is similar to how Kahane (1988) describes the life in boarding schools.

Boarding schools encompass many different kinds of activities, each based on unique principles. These principles include discipline based on formal rules and aimed at fostering a sense of order; academic activities, aimed at transmitting knowledge and professional skills; extracurricular activities, in which the primary group exerts pressures to encourage conformity; and informal activities (often expressed in sports, music, art, and excursions), which often generate innovativeness and a sense of freedom. (p. 216)

Students did not follow their own minds but had to attend school programmes and activities till lights off every night. Therefore, the students

did not have much free time of their own to do anything they wish. Some students in UK preferred to be day students because they wanted to enjoy the weekends doing something at their own homes (Lambert, 1968). The situation in UK at the time was that the students could choose either to attend as a boarder or as a day student in a secondary school and those secondary schools were in the same town where their parents were living or they could visit them in the weekends. However, in the Solomon Islands, most of the boarding schools are quite far from students' villages and they do not have the choice to choose between boarding and day school as most of the National and Provincial secondary are mainly boarding schools and the country is made of many scattered islands and some islands do not have any secondary schools on them.

4.5.3 Unfamiliar cultures and languages

Some of the year one and two students came across problems with students from other cultural groups because they were unfamiliar with their cultures and languages. Four out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The using of own dialects by certain cultural groups in the school compound made some of their friends feel out of place and become lonely. Claire elaborates more:

I have also faced problems with students from other cultural groups especially when they speak their own languages, and if I do not understand them I feel lonely.

Year 2

The minority students in schools can come across problems with other ethnic groups. Margaret, who comes from a minority racial group of Polynesia, explains:

I also came across problems with students of other cultures and languages in the dormitories especially when certain groups of students speak on their own dialects. I have to stay quiet and just listen to them... Sometimes we also came across the problem that certain girls became angry when other girls made fun of their languages...

Luke, who was alone by himself in a boarding school last year when nobody from his island was with him, found it difficult to understand other students when they were communicating in their own dialects. He comments:

I found language problems last year because I am from another island. However, I now begin to know certain words of the common language in the area and therefore I... can communicate with other students by using certain common words.

The results show that some of the students came across problems with students from other ethnic groups especially when they spoke in their own dialects and their friends who did not understand them felt out of place and they became lonely. This is more common with the minority groups in the country because their population is small in number. Therefore, if they were accepted for National Secondary Schools, they would always be in a

minority. In similar situations there were students who chose to go to some Provincial and Community High Schools of other provinces. In most cases a student from another Province would be alone by himself or herself in a boarding school of another province. The most common problem that the Solomon Islands students always face is not understanding the common language of the area where the school is situated. This is similar to what McGee et al. (2004) described in transition between primary and secondary school, that it is not only involves transition between the two cultures of the two schools but it can pose some problems and concerns for the students who do not belong to the 'majority' culture.

4.5.4 Insufficient pocket money

One year one student from a rural area was finding the pocket money given to her by her parents insufficient to meet her needs at school. Mary explains:

The first problem that I have faced this year is money. I do not have enough money because I am living in an urban secondary school where everything costs money and my parents are staying far away in another island in rural areas.

The results show that students from the rural areas who are attending boarding schools in the urban areas found the pocket money given to them by their parents was insufficient to meet some of their needs. They could not easily contact their parents in the rural areas because some of them lived in a different island from where the school was situated and

due to lack of good communication services in the rural areas, they could not contact them. This is similar to the findings of Ak and Sayil's (2006) study in boarding primary schools in Turkey, where students from lower socio-economic levels and rural areas far away from their families in order to attend school seemed to have a lot of disadvantages. Furthermore, Schaverien (2004) argued that children who come from less privileged families suffer when they enter boarding secondary schools because they lack money and some of the basic materials that privileged children have.

4.6 Strategies to overcome difficulties and problems

In this section, I present the students' strategies by which they managed to overcome their difficulties and problems at boarding secondary school. These include: accepting change of status, attending school programmes and observing rules with the help of teachers and friendship.

4.6.1 Accepting change of status

One year two student accepted the change of status from being a senior student at primary school to becoming the most junior student at secondary school after being at secondary school for more than a year.

Margaret explains:

I have got used to the change from being a senior student at primary school to being a junior student in secondary school because the senior students [here] treat us as juniors. As well, my elder sister and cousins who are senior students

here treat me like a small girl...So I have already got used to the life of being junior again, so when I return home it will be different.

The results show that another strategy that students used to overcome their difficulties and problems at school is to accept the change of status from being a senior student at primary schools to becoming the most junior students at secondary schools. This is in line with the findings of Campbell (2001) that students felt more organized in their studies and were beginning to make long term goals after they started to feel better about themselves and their new schools. They got used to the change because the senior students treated them as juniors. As well, their elder siblings and cousins who were senior students treated them like small children.

4.6.2 Attending school programmes and observing rules with the help of teachers

Some of the year two students stated that they overcame their difficulties and problems after attending school programmes and observing rules for some time. Four out of 16 students stated this.

Janet elaborates:

I just follow everybody to the school programmes and activities and observe the school rules and then I finally get used to the boarding school life. Teachers too are also helping us to settle down well into boarding school life.

Students should slowly overcome their shyness after some time. Ken explains: "After two or three weeks from the start of my first year, my

shyness about going to the dining hall slowly disappeared as I continued to go to the dining hall”

The results show that one of the strategies that some students used to overcome their difficulties and problems at school was to attend school programmes and observing rules for some time and finally they became used to the boarding school life. Those who were too shy to go to the dining hall for meals slowly overcame their shyness after two or three weeks from the start of the year as they continued to go to the dining hall.

Teachers were the main people that helped the students to settle down well into boarding school life. This is similar to what Cox and Kennedy (2008) found in New Zealand, that teachers play a major role in how students feel about a particular subject and their attitudes towards school work. Their good relationship with students is very important in schools in order to build up students’ confidence in their own academic abilities. Furthermore, Pietarinen (2000) in her study in Finland stated that teachers are very important both as part of social network of each individual school and as leaders of the teaching and learning process of the students.

4.6.3 Friendship

One year two student said that friendship helped her to overcome her difficulty and problem with unfamiliar cultures and languages. The students who encountered difficulties and problems with other students’

cultures and languages overcame these through friendships. Margaret explains:

I became used to mixing with students of different ethnic groups and languages when many girls came and told stories with me, advised me on school life and so I am interested in them and if anything happens, I am not afraid because I have a lot of friends.

For students who encountered problems with others of different cultures and languages, it was building good friendships with them that helped them overcome their problems. According to Tiedt and Tiedt (1999), it is only when people encounter other cultures that they begin to see the differences, to wonder and of course ask questions. Having good friendship with many students at school helps dispel feelings of homesickness and loneliness and allows for happiness to come in. This is similar to the findings of Measor and Woods (1984) that friendship plays a crucial role in providing support, reassurance and security for students at this stage of transfer between primary and secondary school. According to Ridge (2002), good friendship at school plays an important role as a social asset; it is a valuable source of capital, and an integral part of an increasingly complex and demanding social world. It is a valuable source of capital because creating friendship at school at a young age helps them to be good citizens and have care for one another in the future.

4.7 Positive experiences at boarding secondary schools

In this section, I present the positive experiences that students felt when they arrived at boarding school. They are happiness, relief, and immediate help on arrival.

4.7.1 Happiness

Two year one students were happy to be accepted by the school of their choice.

Claire explains:

I am happy that I was chosen to do year one here at Wesley College as it is one of the top secondary schools in the country and I was fortunate to score high marks in grade six examinations.

The other student was happy to be selected to the school which his parents had attended and he felt proud following in the paths of his parents. Tom elaborates:

One of the things that made me happy to come here was that my mother did her secondary education here at Wesley College National Secondary School, so I am interested to come here because of that pride.

The results show that there were students who were happy to be accepted by the school of their choice, especially those who were accepted to do their secondary education at National Secondary School because this school enrolls the best students all over the country who have scored high marks in the secondary school entrance examination. This examination still exists in the Solomon Islands today due to shortage of spaces in

secondary schools for all the primary school children. Therefore, expressing happiness at obtaining high marks in the secondary school entrance examinations and being selected to secondary schools is still common in Solomon Islands students today. This is in line with the findings of Mizelle (1999) in the USA that students felt happy to go to secondary school because they were going to have more choices and make new friends. Also, they were going to learn new subjects and do practical subjects at secondary schools (Graham & Hill, 2003). Furthermore, it is also in line with the findings of Lambert's (1968) study in UK that there were students who wished to live in boarding schools rather than at home because to them the atmosphere at home seemed dull and restricting and sometimes silly, compared to boarding school where it was free and the students were living in their own conventions.

The results also show that students were happy to be selected for the school which their parents had attended and they felt proud following in the paths of their parents. Therefore, they were interested to go to that boarding secondary school because of that pride.

4.7.2 Relief

Some of the year one and year two students felt a sense of relief at becoming junior students at secondary schools after being school prefects at primary schools. Seven out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The students felt relief when they arrived at boarding secondary school because they were not given responsibilities like they were at primary schools when they were senior students. Two students' comments illustrate this feeling.

When I was a senior student at primary school, I was so busy with responsibilities given to me by the school but here at secondary school I am feeling happy because I am not busy like I was at primary school, so I have enough time to do my homework. Also I am feeling happy that the school prefects are looking after us. (Clare)

When I was a senior student at primary school, I had a lot of work looking after many junior students as I was a school captain then. Now that I am a junior student at secondary school, I do not have a lot of responsibilities, so I am feeling relieved because the bigger students are looking after us junior students. (Nelly).

The results show that students felt a sense of relief at becoming junior students at secondary schools after being school prefects at primary schools because they were not given responsibilities as they had been at primary schools when they were senior students. At primary schools they were busy with responsibilities given to them, that is looking after many junior students, but when they reached secondary schools, they were not as busy as when at primary school, so they had enough time to do their homework. They felt relieved because the bigger students were looking after them as the junior students.

4.7.3 Immediate help on arrival

The people who helped the first year students when they arrived at boarding schools were siblings, relatives, friends from primary school and dorm mates at boarding school.

a) Siblings/Relatives

Some of the year one and two students stated that their siblings and relatives were the first people to help them when they arrived at school.

Three out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The first year students' older siblings and relatives were the ones who usually helped them when they arrived at boarding secondary school.

Rachel elaborates: "My brother helped me when I just arrived, so I am okay with the life of this school". Others, however, stated that it was their relatives who helped them. William says:

My uncle is teaching here so if I need anything I can go and ask him as well as seeking help if I find anything difficult with my school work. I am feeling happy staying here because he is here to help me.

The results show that the student's siblings and relatives were the first people to help them when they arrived at school. These people usually come with the first year students from their villages to boarding schools. Therefore, they usually helped the students during the journey in the ships until they reached their boarding schools and helped them to settle down.

Others, however, had relatives who were school's staff, so they were lucky that they had somebody to look after them at boarding school. Therefore, if they needed anything they could go and ask them as well as seeking help if they found anything difficult with their school work. They felt happy staying at school because staff relatives were helping them.

b) Friends from primary schools

Two year one students stated that their old friends from primary schools helped them to feel at home quickly when they attend boarding schools together.

Tom explains:

There are some of my classmates from the same primary school who are attending secondary school with me here at Wesley College, so I am feeling happy about it because they are my old friends at primary school and my friends here at secondary school.

Friends from primary school helped to extend student friendships to other students who came from other primary schools, islands and provinces because these students had relatives from other places, and through them a student could quickly know other students. John explains:

When I arrived here this year, I just felt happy because many of my classmates in primary school also came here. With those classmates I extend my friendships to other students of other schools and provinces.

The results show that their old friends from primary school helped them to feel at home quickly when they attended boarding schools together. This

is consistent with Ako's (2002) findings that students mentioned friends as the top source of help during the transition. The students felt happy about this because they were their old friends at primary school and now they were together at one secondary school. This is similar to the findings of Pietarinen (2000) in Finland that pupils need the support of their classmates from primary school as a coping strategy during the transfer. As well the students preferred to mingle with friends that they already knew socially in their former school as this could provide a certain amount of security for them in their new school (Ward, 2001).

The results also show that old friends from primary schools helped to extend friendships to other students who came from other primary schools, islands and provinces. These students have relatives from other places, and through them, students can quickly know other students. This is in line with what Ridge (2002) said that friendship is an integral part of an increasingly complex social world and for children it is an entry into a wider networks of friendships.

c) Dorm mates

One year two student stated that dorm mates helped each other by initiating social interaction. Ken elaborates: "When I just arrived in our dormitory, there were many new students so we introduced ourselves to each other and we had conversations to make us feel at home".

The results also show that dorm mates in the dormitories helped each other by initiating social interaction. In many boarding schools in the Solomon Islands, the first year students usually have a dormitory of their own. Therefore, the new students usually introduced themselves to one another and had conversations to make them feel at home in their new house. This is similar to the findings in New Zealand with students sharing a dormitory so that dorm mates usually helped each other when someone faced problems and they usually stuck together as dorm mates (Kennedy, Bishop, & Bennie, 2002).

4.8 Academic work

In this section, I present the students' views on their academic work. This includes positive aspects and some problems students encountered at secondary schools and how they overcame them.

4.8.1 Finding school work not too difficult

Some of the year one and two students stated that they did not find any problem with their academic work when they arrived at secondary school.

Almost half of the students stated this.

Year 1

Some of the students said that they were feeling satisfied with the work at secondary school. Ross said: "In terms of school, I am okay". One student

felt that his previous schooling had prepared him for secondary school academic work. John elaborates:

In terms of school work, I am okay because I did my primary school here in town and this boarding secondary school is also in town. Therefore, I did not experience much difference. The primary schools in town are more advanced than primary schools in the rural areas in terms of good teaching materials, more qualified teachers, better classrooms and are more exposed to town life, which can easily expand our thinking and knowledge in terms of English language and many activities that are occurring in town.

Year 2

Some of the year two students were also satisfied with the school work. Peter's comment illustrate this: "In terms of school work, I am okay. I found my school work all right; I just got on with it."

The results show that almost half of the students in both year one and year two found school work not too difficult. This finding supports a previous study in UK that almost half of the students just transferred from primary schools to secondary schools expressed positive feelings towards the school work in the first week (Brown & Armstrong, 1986). However, it does not support a previous study where it was reported that student academic achievement is negatively affected by transition (Galton et al., 1999) because not all of the Solomon Islands students were affected by the transition. It also does not support Beverton's (2003) suggestion that the social upheavals caused by moving from primary to secondary school are so great that unless schools intervene in a positive way students find

learning difficult during the first year, because not all the students in the Solomon Islands found school work difficult in the first year. One of the contributing factors may be because school syllabuses and text books for both primary and secondary schools in the Solomon Islands are written by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, there is continuity from primary school curriculum to secondary school curriculum. This is in line with the idea in UK that the Ministry of Education proposed that primary schools should be doing more to prepare children for changes to the subject teaching approach in secondary schools while secondary schools should build on what had been taught at primary school (Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002).

The results also show that students who attended primary schools in urban areas had higher esteem than students who attended schools in the rural areas because they thought that their schools in towns and cities are more advanced than primary schools in the rural areas in terms of good teaching materials, more qualified teachers, better classrooms and they are more exposed to town life, which can easily expand their thinking and knowledge in terms of English language. This is in line with the findings of Samsiah and Kamaruzaman (2009), that children who come from wealthy families usually have parents who are well educated. Therefore, they have had more exposure to English language and other learning materials than students who come from less educated parents. Most of the parents in the

rural areas in the Solomon Islands are uneducated compared to most parents living in urban areas. Therefore, they cannot help their children in English language and most of the other subjects as well.

4.8.2 Finding difficulty with English language

Two students, a year one and a year two, both from the rural areas were having difficulty with their English language.

Year 1

The students who come from rural areas found English language more difficult than students who come from urban areas because their primary schools are not well equipped with good learning materials such as reading books. Claire explains: “I have a problem with English language because I attended a rural primary school far from town without good learning materials”. However, she continued to attend classes in a secondary school where there were good learning materials, this had a positive effect on her learning. Claire explains more: “As I continued to attend classes here, I began to understand English language more and could do my school work better”.

Year 2

Some rural students, even those who have reasonable English language skills, did not have the courage to speak it. Ken explains: “In class, I do

not have a problem with the English language but I just don't have the courage to speak it".

The results show that some of the students from the rural areas found difficulty with their English language. They found English language more difficult than students who come from urban areas because their primary schools are not well equipped with good learning materials like reading books and good classrooms. This is in line with the studies of rural students in Australia that they faced lower student/teacher ratios than urban schools, lack of staffing, limited choices of classes, lack of specialisation in teaching staff, and fewer resources for library, sports and computer facilities (Halton, 1994; Tomlinson, 1986). Furthermore, most of the parents of the students from the rural areas are also uneducated. Therefore, they do not use the English language with their children or provide a kind of exposure to help them with the language compared to children in urban areas where most of their parents are well educated. According to Samsiah and Kamaruzaman (2009), highly educated parents have learnt the English language themselves and are able to use the language with their children as well as providing some kind of exposure for them to reading materials and other learning materials compared to parents who are less educated.

Even those who have reasonable English language skills did not have the courage to speak it and this affected their learning as well. This is in line with the findings of Graham and Hill (2003), that some minority ethnic students in UK found English language difficult and this hindered their school progress. However, according to Collins and Harrison (1998), the continuity of the support for the students in transition whose first language is not English is deemed essential in order for them to understand the language well so that they can succeed in their schooling. English language is the medium of instruction in the Solomon Islands schools and usually it is the third or fourth language for most of the rural students. Therefore, the rural students found English language quite difficult when they reached secondary schools. They also had low self-esteem when compared to students who came from urban areas in terms of English language because they felt that they were from the rural areas and their primary schools were not well equipped as well. Therefore, they had the mentality that they were not good enough in English language compared to students from the urban areas.

The strategy that students from the rural areas use to understand English language better is to continue to attend classes in secondary schools where there are good learning materials, better classrooms and more qualified teachers.

4.8.3 Find difficulty in subjects taught only in secondary schools

Some year one and two students found difficulty in subjects that are taught only in secondary schools. Three out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

There are certain subjects that are taught only in secondary school but not in primary school. Because they were new to the students, they found them difficult. William explains:

At first, I did not catch up with some of the subjects like Agriculture, Industrial Arts and Business Studies. The reason why I could not catch up was that these subjects are new to me as they are not taught at primary schools...

However, as he continued to attend classes, William slowly understood the new subject, as he states: "As I continue to attend classes, I now begin to get used to these new subjects".

Year 2

The year two students found all of the new subjects difficult in the first year because they were new to them but in the second year they managed to cope with them. Margaret explains: "The subjects were okay except Home Economics where we had to sew baskets and clothes. I found it difficult to sew because I did not sew at home before". However, she said that her learning experience was different in year 2. Margaret elaborates:

I am now more used to Home Economics classes this year than last year because our teacher who is teaching us this year is explaining things more simply. Therefore, I find Home Economics classes more interesting this year.

Ken on the other hand, found all new subjects difficult in the first year but in the second year it became easier for him to understand those subjects.

Ken explains:

There are some subjects that are new to me like Industrial Arts, Agriculture and Business Studies. I found them difficult to understand in the first year but as I continue to attend classes, it becomes easier to understand and these subjects become normal to me.

The results show that some students found difficulty in subjects that are taught only in secondary schools. In the Solomon Islands, there are certain subjects that are taught only in secondary schools but not in primary schools. Students will only learn them at secondary school and because they are new to them, they tend to find them difficult. Most students managed to cope with new subjects in the second year because they are practical subjects; therefore, it needs time for the students to understand them.

The strategy that students used to overcome their difficulties was to attend such classes and slowly they understood them and they became more interested. According to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2004) in the Solomon Islands, primary schools should lay the foundation of practical skills development by teaching basic practical skills. However, this is not the case in the Solomon Islands today.

4.8.4 Secondary school subjects more difficult

Some year two students mentioned that secondary school subjects were more difficult than the primary school subjects. Two out of 16 students stated this.

The students found secondary school work difficult when they were in year one but when they reached year two they were able to cope. Ann explains:

Some of the school work in class is difficult for me. They are more difficult than at primary school. However, I am now able to cope with secondary school work...Firstly; I have to learn by myself by reading my notes and doing my home work and exercises. Secondly, I learn from other classmates or my friends in the same class.

Others, however, argued that school work was hard but their teachers explained it to them properly so it became easier. Margaret explains: "The school work is hard but our teachers explain it to us properly so it is okay". However, there are some teachers who are not really helpful. Luke explains: "Some teachers of certain subjects are not really helpful. For example, our Social Studies teacher always misses classes for no good reasons. Therefore, we are not really happy with him".

The results show that some students felt that secondary school subjects are more difficult than the primary school subjects. They mostly found secondary school work difficult when they were at year one but when they reached year two they were able to cope. A contributing factor may be because of the change from one teacher per class at primary school to a

subject per teacher at the secondary school. This change demands an amount of adaptation from the pupils because the teaching styles are contrasted with what they had been used to at primary school (Ferguson & Fraser, 1998; Herlihy, 2007; McGee et al., 2004; Pietarinen, 1998, 2000; Pointon, 2000; Ward, 2001). At primary school, students have one teacher teaching all the subjects throughout the year whereas at secondary school they have several teachers teaching their specialist subjects. Therefore, new students have to adjust to several different teachers and their teaching, and management styles that can be uniquely different from each other (Ferguson & Fraser, 1998; Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008).

Sellman (2000) stated that “the start of a new school is also the time of new subjects, several new teachers, increased responsibility and the freshness of a new start, which for better or for worse can challenge established social hierarchies” (p. 27). Therefore, the new students find this lack of integration between different subjects and the compartmentalisation of subjects an additional challenge because they have little experience of subjects being taught as discrete units in primary schools (Beane, 1991; Cumming, 1986). Research shows that what students think about a particular subject is often dictated to a large extent by the feelings of the teacher taking the subject (McGee et al., 2004).

4.9 Extracurricular activities

In this section, I present the students' views on the extracurricular activities at boarding secondary schools. They are work sessions and sports.

4.9.1 Work sessions

Some of the year one and two students found work sessions difficult. However, the year two students managed to overcome this difficulty because they had spent more than a year at boarding school. Six out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

Work sessions at boarding secondary schools were one of the major activities in the afternoons. Therefore, students tended not to have free time to relax after classes. William explains: "The school programme is quite tight; therefore, there is no free time for us in the afternoons because they are occupied by work sessions". They were also heavy compared to what the students usually did in their homes because they had to clean the school compound and make gardens. Rachel explains: "Here at boarding secondary school, there is a lot of work outside of class like gardening and cutting grass which is quite demanding...whereas at home we just have a light work". For some students like Tom from an urban area it was their first time to hold bush knives or even cut grass. Tom explains: "I do not know how to brush grasses with bush knives". Others, however, said that they enjoyed work sessions. Nelly elaborates. "I felt happy about work

session here because it is my first time to do some hard labour compared to home where I have to do little work”.

Year 2

There were students who did not know how to cut the grass with bush knives but as they continued to attend the work sessions, it became normal to them. Ken explains: “I found it difficult to work outside on the grass because I do not know how to use bush knives or doing manual work like cutting or weeding grass as I was not used to this at home”.

The results show that students found work sessions difficult. Work sessions at boarding secondary schools are one of the major activities in the afternoons. Therefore, students tend not to have free time to relax after classes. Work sessions are also heavy compared to what the students usually do in their homes because they have to clean the school compound and make gardens whereas at their homes and villages, they have light work. This is similar to the findings of McBeth’s (1983) study of the experiences of the West-Central Oklahoma American Indians, conducted by interviewing former boarding students from early 1900s to 1940s, that most boarding schools during those days carried out extensive farming operations, and a half day of work produced food and crops to finance a large part of school operations.

For some students who come from urban areas it was their first time to hold bush knives or even cut grass. Even some students from the rural areas did not know how to cut grass with bush knives. However, as they continued to attend work sessions, it became normal to them. Others, however, enjoyed work sessions because it was their first time to do some hard labour compared to their homes where they did little work.

4.9.2 Sports

Only the year one students mentioned sports to be enjoyable. Sport was also one of the common activities that students did in the afternoons and many enjoyed it. It also helped students to settle down quickly to a boarding school life as Dickson's comment indicates.

When I was in town last year, I played during training sessions only [whereas at school], we have sports on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, so I am starting to feel at home.

This result is in line with the findings of Eccles and Wigfield (1991), that when children reach adolescence, they are becoming more interested in non-academic activities like sports or outdoor activities.

4.10 Accommodation

This section includes both positive features and problems students encountered and how they have overcome them.

4.10.1 Positives

One year one student felt happy that schools provide good dormitories and classrooms. Nelly explains: “I felt happy that our school provide us with good dormitories and classrooms”.

The results show that some students felt happy that schools provided good dormitories and classrooms. For some of the students from the rural areas, the school dormitories may be better than their own houses at their own villages. Most houses in the rural areas are made of bush materials compared to schools, which have permanent houses with corrugated roof irons.

4.10.2 Lack of privacy

Some of the year one and year two students encountered problems in dormitories in terms of privacy, however, the year two students were more than a year at school so they had managed to overcome their problems. Three out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

When the students first arrived at boarding school, they found it difficult to live together in a dormitory with other students. Mary explains: “[I am]...not used to staying in dormitories where there is a mixture of students”. It can be very noisy sometimes and some students’ beds can be messy from others sleeping on them during recess hours. Dickson elaborates:

Students always sit or sleep on my bed so my bed is always messy and dirty. I am tired of washing my bed sheets, blankets and pillows so that sometimes I want to fight the students who sit or sleep on my bed during day times.

Year 2

A number of students arriving at school compared the dormitories, thinking that they would be like their own homes where they have their own rooms and they still found communal living difficult. This is the experience of

Margaret:

When I arrived at the dormitories, I thought that we would have a room each but we have to share a room with a number of students. I am not getting used to sharing room with others because of noise.

However, students did get used to living in dormitories when they started to know everybody and became friends. They started to appreciate one another's diversity and always used a common language to communicate with each other. Margaret explains how she was able to cope with her situation:

I became used to mixing around with students of different cultures and languages [in the dormitories] when many girls came and told stories with me, advised me about school life and I became interested with them...Now that I have a lot of friends, we usually use Pidgin English language to communicate with each other, which everybody commonly understands.

The results show that when the students just arrived at boarding school, they found it difficult to live together in dormitories where there is a mixture of students. Living in the dormitories where there are a lot of students can be very noisy and students' beds can be in mess. Students can lie on

other student's beds during recess hours so that some students' bed sheets, blankets and pillows became dirty and some students became annoyed. This is in line with the findings of Lambert (1968) in UK that there were some students who hate sleeping in the dormitories due to noise, grunts from passionate dreamers, snores, and the endless whispering of those who need no sleep at all.

A number of students arriving at boarding secondary schools compared the school dormitories with their own houses at their homes and villages, thinking that they would have a room of their own but that was not the case. They had to share one big open room with a lot of students. Therefore, they found communal living difficult because it was different to what they were used to at home.

However, students became used to living in dormitories when they started to know everybody and became friends. They started to appreciate one another's diversity and always used Pidgin English (the *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands) to communicate with each other.

4.10.3 Close spacing and small size beds

Some of the year one and two students stated that the beds in the dormitories were small and there were no places to put their belongings. Three out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The dormitories did not have enough space for the students to put their belongings. Claire explains: "There are not enough spaces in the dormitories to put all of our things". In some extreme cases, some boarding schools did not have enough beds for everybody in the dormitories so some ended up having to share a bed between two students. Rachel explains: "In our dormitories, there are not enough beds; some of us have to share a bed to sleep which is not conducive to sleeping properly".

Year 2

The beds in some of the school dormitories were small; therefore, students were not feeling happy sleeping on those beds. Sometimes students fell to the floor. Luke says:

When I arrived in the dormitories, I felt sad because I would not sleep on good beds as they are too small for us students to sleep... At first night I fell on the floor but now I am used to such a small bed.

The results show that in some of the boarding schools in the Solomon Islands, the beds in the dormitories are small and there are no places to put their belongings. Some students were not feeling comfortable sleeping in narrow beds and some students fell on the floor in the first night. In some extreme cases, they did not have enough beds for everybody in the dormitories so some ended up having to share a bed between two

students which is not conducive to good sleeping. The selection for students' intake to all the secondary schools is centrally done by the Ministry of Education according to number of beds and desks in each secondary school as indicated by each school to the Ministry of Education. This problem might come about when the school principals accept transfer students. Therefore, the number of students is more than the number of beds in the dormitories.

4.11 Food

This section includes both positive features and problems students encountered and how they overcame them.

4.11.1 Positives

Some of the year one and two students stated that the food in the school dining hall was good because it was free and they had three meals in a day. Two out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

While the food in the dining hall was not enough or the right kind of food that students wanted, there were some students who were happy about free meals every day. Claire explains: "One of the positive things that I came across when I arrived here was that I have free meals in the dining hall even though the food was not enough and not the kinds of meals that I want".

Year 2

There were some students who were happy to have three meals a day at boarding school because at their home villages they usually had one or two meals a day. Peter explains: "I was given free food in the dining hall every day and I really enjoyed having three meals in a day because at home we just have one or two meals a day".

The results show that while the food in the dining hall was not enough or the right kind of food that students wanted, there were some students who were happy about free meals every day. Furthermore, there were some students who were happy to have three meals a day at boarding school because at their home villages they usually have one or two meals a day. This is similar to the findings of McBeth's (1983) study of the experiences of the West-Central Oklahoma American Indians that schools provided food and clothing which could not be provided by the low income families. She stated that some students wanted to go home but their parents told them that they should be better off living in boarding schools where they have three meals a day than at home where they just have a meal a day.

4.11.2 Small amount of food

Some of the year one and year two students stated that the amount of food available was too small for them and sometimes they were hungry. Six out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

The amount of food provided by schools in the dining halls was quite small compared to what some students had in their homes. William comments: "The food in the dining hall was quite small compared to the foods that I had at home". Nelly stated that: "Sometimes I was still hungry because the food in the dining is not enough".

However, when the students continued to eat small amounts of food every day, their bodies got used to the small amounts. Rachel explains "As I have continued to eat small amount of food in the dining hall every day, I have now started to get used to eating such a small amount of food".

Year 2

These students expressed similar views but as they had been at the school for some time, they had overcome some of their problems relating to food. Luke tells his experience: "Every day I am always facing the same problems like the food in the dining hall is not enough..., however, as the semester has gone on I am now used to the small amount of food in the dining hall".

The results show that the amount of food provided by schools in the dining halls was quite small compared to what students usually had at their homes and villages so that sometimes the students were still hungry.

The strategy that students used to overcome their hunger was to continue to eat small amounts of food every day until their bodies became used to the small amounts of food provided by school. However, consuming a small amount every day is not really healthy for the students' growth in terms of physically, socially and academically (Vereecken, Bobelijn, & Maes, 2005).

4.11.3 Same diet every day

Some of the year one and two students complained about eating the same diet every day at the schools' dining halls. Four out of 16 students stated this.

Year 1

Two students said that the food in the dining hall was always the same and this was still a problem for them. Dickson's comment illustrates this view.

The first problem that I faced this year was eating rice all the time; there was no change of diet in the dining hall... I am yet to cope with eating rice all the time... This is my first four months here so I am yet to get used to such life.

Year 2

In reflecting back to their first year Margaret explains: "I did not get used to the food in the dining hall because it was the same diet all the time". Furthermore, the food did not meet the expectations of the students as Ken's comment illustrates: "The food in the dining hall did not follow my

mind because it was small and not the kind of food that I usually had at home”.

The results show that students ate the same diet every day at the schools’ dining halls. It was always a small quantity of rice with soup, which did not meet the expectations of the students because servings were small and not the kind of food that they usually had at home. This is also another health issue as healthy foods are very important during the adolescence period because of the rapid growth and development of the body at this stage of development (Vereecken et al., 2005).

Both the year one and two students did not get used to the same diet of food every day as far as the second year.

4.11.4 Having to eat at certain times

One year two student stated that he found it difficult to eat only at certain times at boarding schools. He found this difficult because at his village, he had meals any time depending on when he was hungry. Lesley explains:

When I arrived here last year, my problem was hunger because we eat at certain times...At home I just follow my mind to eat but here I have to follow time to eat so sometimes I was hungry.

However in being forced to eat at certain times he gradually became accustomed to eating three meals a day. Lesley explains: “I tried to eat

according to time even though I have food to eat, I just forced myself to eat according to time, so now I am used to it”.

The results show that some students found it difficult to eat at certain times of the day at boarding schools. This is because in the Solomon Islands villages, people can have meals at any time depending on when one is hungry so when the students arrived in boarding schools in the first year, they cannot cope with having breakfast in the morning, lunch in the afternoon and dinner in the evening. They just wanted to eat at any time as long as they felt hungry. However, after some time being forced to eat at certain times they gradually became accustomed to eating three meals a day even though they had food to eat.

The strategy that students used to overcome their difficulty of wanting to eat all the time was to force themselves to eat according to the time set by the school. Therefore, they became used to having three meals a day.

4.12 Principals’ and deputy principal’s general observations and expectations of the first year students

In this section, I present the views of the principals and deputy principals. Two themes emerged from the interviews: first year students are much younger than before, and the schools’ expectations of first year students.

4.12.1 First year students much younger than before

Secondary schools nowadays are enrolling more younger students compared to the past where the students were more mature. Therefore, staff are now facing a problem of students being distressed when they arrive at school. Fox explains:

Now that we are enrolling more younger students to our year one class than before when students were more mature, we are now facing the problem of year one students crying when their parents come and drop them at school. Some students cry as soon as their truck, car, or bus leaves the school.

One of the principals commented on the strategy followed in his school to deal with this problem. Fox explains:

Normally, we advise prefects to give encouraging words to new students who might cry or be feeling lonely. If any new students who cannot cope with this problem are really feeling homesick, then we encourage the student leaders to report them to us so that we teachers can help them.

The results show that secondary schools nowadays are enrolling much younger students compared to the past where the students were more mature. Therefore, secondary school staff are now facing a problem of students being distressed when they arrive at school, that is they usually cry when their parents drop them at school. Some students cry as soon as their vehicles leave the school. In such a situation teachers normally advise their school prefects to give encouraging words to new students who might cry or feeling lonely. If any new students cannot cope with this

problem of crying or are feeling really homesick, then student leaders should refer them to teachers so that they can comfort them.

According to one school principal, this problem came about when the Ministry of Education put down the age limit to enter primary school to five or six years old only so when the students enter secondary school they are still too young to look after themselves at boarding schools. In the past children normally entered primary schools at the age of eight, nine or even much older so when they reached secondary school they were already mature enough to look after themselves.

4.12.2 Schools' expectations of the first year students

Jim's comment shows that schools have leniency in dealing with the first year students that is to give them time to settle down.

Jim explains:

Our expectation is that it will take some time for new students to really settle down within the school system. In the first week, we do not expect all the new students to know everything about school...At the same time the students learn in classes, they also learn about the school environment, programmes and rules. It continues in a circle until the new students master the school programmes and really settle down. By the end of the first semester, we expect all the first year students to settle down, know all the school rules and be accustomed to the school programmes... For the first semester, we just give warnings and do not really tighten up school rules for the new students who might break the school rules or do not attend school programmes.

The results show that some boarding schools have some leniency in dealing with the first year students in the first semester to give them time to settle down. Their expectation is that it will take some time for the new students to settle down within the school system. Therefore, in the first semester, schools normally give warnings to new students who might break school rules or do not attend school programmes. This is mostly due to the nature of the boarding schools in the Solomon Islands and its diverse culture. Most of the students' homes and villages are located far from the boarding schools and students will spend five months in schools before seeing their parents for a month break.

Schaverien (2004) argued that boarding school students may have difficulty in making and maintaining intimate personal relationships especially when parents, siblings and pets are left behind at home when the students arrive at school and they are substituted by many anonymous strangers. However, the anonymous strangers experienced by other boarding schools in other countries may be different from those in the Melanesian countries because Melanesian countries are known to be the most culturally and linguistically diverse region on earth (Knauff, 1999; Narokobi, 1989). Therefore, when the Solomon Islands students come together in a boarding school, they live together with many students of diverse ethnic groups and languages. Living in such an environment and being quite young and away from their parents for a long time will be quite

difficult for the students of the Solomon Islands to bear. This is supported by the literature that even though the transition programmes tend to provide important logistical information for the student they do not reduce the students' experiences of disconnection in social, academic, and organisational expectations (MacIver, 1990).

4.13 Strategies to support the transition of the first year students

In this section, I present the strategies used by schools to support the transition of the first year students. This includes: good dormitories and classrooms, orientations, form assemblies, dorm masters/mistresses, cultural or provincial groups and religious groups.

4.13.1 Good dormitories and classrooms

James explains this further.

The living environment like dormitories will be first thing. We must make sure that there are enough beds and the dormitories must be in good condition so that the students will not feel out of place. Also we must check that there are enough desks so that students will enjoy learning in the classrooms. If there are not enough desks then the students might feel sad and may want to transfer to other secondary schools. In order for the students to come and enjoy the living and the study environment here, we have to check that we have good dormitories and classrooms.

The results show that the living environment like the dormitories and the classrooms must be in good conditions so that students will not feel out of

place when they first arrive. Dormitories are their houses for most of the year. Therefore, the dormitories must be in good condition with enough beds for every student. In the situation of the Solomon Islands where most primary school students do not have the chance to visit their secondary schools beforehand, good condition dormitories is the first strategy that schools used to capture students' first impression that their school is a good one and they are going to live in good comfortable dormitories. This is similar to the situation in some countries like New Zealand, where school managers work hard to increase privacy for their students in the dormitories by urging authorities to reduce the number of students in a dorm or providing a room for each student (Kennedy et al., 2002), so that students will live happily in the dormitories where they have more privacy to do their studies.

The classrooms also must have enough desks so that students will enjoy learning in the classrooms. If there are not enough desks then the students might feel sad and may want to transfer to other secondary schools. In order for the students to enjoy the living and the study environment at school, teachers have to check that they have good dormitories and classrooms for their students.

4.13.2 Orientations

Jim explains the process and what is covered.

In the first week of the academic year, we have a one week orientation for all students. During that week, we give notices about school rules, the requirements for school fees, classes, boarding students and day scholars. The form teachers will help out their classes in this orientation week.

Other schools have an assembly for all new students including the first years and other new students as an introduction to the school. Fox explains:

Firstly, when the new form ones come into the school with all others and not necessarily the form ones but along with all new students, we conduct an assembly for them especially to introduce them to the school rules and other expectations which the school expects them to carry out when they come in as new students.

In some schools the deputy principal carries out this task. James explains:

When the students arrive, the deputy principal will go through all the school rules with the students and what is expected of them. The deputy principal as the head of the disciplinary committee will go through all the school rules with all the new students in the assembly hall.

Some schools have a get together meal for all students in the first week with a hula dance. Robin explains: "We have a get together meal to open the term with a hula dance".

The results show that the orientations for the first year students depend on each boarding school. Therefore, each school has its own style of orientation that suits its situation. For one school, it has one week orientation where it give notices about school rules, the requirements for school fees, classes, boarding students and day scholars. For another school, it conducts an assembly for all new students on the first day

especially to introduce them to the school rules and other expectations which the school expects them to carry out when they come in as new students. For some schools it is usually the deputy principal, the head of the disciplinary committee, who will go through all the school rules with all the new students in the assembly hall. Furthermore, for some schools as part of orientation to welcome new students into their schools, they have a get together meal for all students in the first week with a hula dance. This is similar to what McGee et al. (2004) described about orientation activities in schools; that they can range from a single session on the first day of school to an ongoing programme lasting up to a full semester that involves students, teachers and parents of both primary and secondary schools. However, in the Solomon Islands most parents and teachers of primary schools cannot be involved in transition programmes in boarding secondary schools because of distance.

4.13.3 Class assemblies

Class assemblies are used by a number of schools to help in the transition process. The class teacher of each class helps the students to talk about academic matters that concern students, vocational and social guidance, and health. James explains:

We usually have class periods on Friday mornings, period one, where class teachers usually go to their respective classes to talk about how to study, explain assessment procedures, and help students to make their own study time tables. The other Fridays, we will look at vocational, social guidance and health issues. The vocational guidance is where teachers will talk about jobs. We explain to the

students what education is and how it contributes to their future wellbeing. The social guidance talks about good relationships with other students. The health issues talk about good health because health is part of the general school life.

The results show that class assemblies are used by a number of schools to help in the transition process. The class teacher of each class helps the students to focus their minds on academic matters, vocational and social guidance, and health to help them build up from secondary school. There is usually one class period for each week for each school. On academic matters, they will talk about how to study, explain assessment procedures and help students to make their own time tables. This is consistent with Ako's (2002) findings that students' academic concerns may suggest that it is important to build students' confidence in the classroom by helping them by teaching homework and study skills.

On vocational matters, teachers will talk about jobs and explain to the students what education is and how it contributes to their future wellbeing. The social guidance talks are about good relationships with other students and the health issues talk is about good health because health is part of the general school life.

4.13.4 Dorm masters/mistresses

Schools assign staff to oversee the dormitories. They are responsible for the students in the dormitories and students are encouraged to talk to

these people if they have personal problems or issues. Robin explains: “Dorm masters/mistresses see to students’ personal needs and see if they can be addressed.

This result is similar to the findings in New Zealand that teachers are assigned to the hostels. Like the situation in the Solomon Islands schools, dorm masters/mistresses are the ones that usually the first to welcome the students into the hostels and encourage them to be supportive of one another (Kennedy et al., 2002).

14.3.5 Cultural groups

a) National Schools

The National Secondary Schools because their intakes are from all over the country, usually have cultural groups according to the provinces in the Solomon Islands to help with the transition of the students.

Jim explains:

We have cultural groups in school. For example, Malaita Province has three cultural groups, Western Province has one cultural group, and Temotu Province has one cultural group and so on. The senior students in each cultural group will lead their own groups and they are the ones that usually help their new first year students from their own provinces or ethnic groups to settle down in school. They are the mentors of the new students and at the same time advising them to behave well at school, to follow the school rules and the school programmes.

The student leaders of each cultural group make programmes for their groups with the help of their teachers. Fox explains:

The provincial leaders will also help out with the new first year students when they arrive at school. They will take care of them, look after them, advise them...especially the school rules...whatever, the student leaders and teachers think that is good for their provincial groups, then they should go ahead with their programmes that may help their group in school.

b) Provincial and Community High Schools

The Provincial and Community High Schools have groups according to their districts in their provinces because their intakes are mostly from a province. Robin explains:

Each district group has their own bush sections. The intention of the bush sections is for the students to make their own gardens, practice their own cultures and speak in their own dialects. In a week, we usually have two days as cultural days. The first day is on Thursday afternoon after work session where students will go to their bush sections and their teachers are encouraged to go and see them. The second day is on Sunday morning after breakfast where each cultural group usually meets. The student leaders will talk to their own cultural groups with the help of their teachers.

However, other schools have their bush sections in the weekends as

James explains:

We have bush sections according to districts, so on Saturdays; students usually go to their bush sections. This is the time that the students will go and play, speak on their own dialects and sing their own language song.

The National Secondary Schools usually have cultural groups according to the provinces in the Solomon Islands to help with the transition of the students because their intakes are from all over the country. The bigger provinces which have a lot of students in a school usually have more than

one cultural group divided into different regions of the province whereas the smaller provinces that usually have a smaller number of students have one cultural group. The senior students in each cultural group will lead their own groups and they are the ones that usually help their new first year students from their own provinces to settle down in school. Most of the schools set a time for the provincial groups to meet and the student leaders of each cultural group make programmes for their groups with the help of their teachers. Cultural groups help their own students to stay as a group, advising them to behave well at school, to follow the school rules and the school programmes.

The results show that Provincial Secondary Schools and Community High Schools have cultural groups according to their districts in their provinces because their intakes are mostly from a province. Most of these schools have bush sections according to each district or regions of the province. The intention of the bush sections is for the students to make their own gardens, practice their own cultures and speak in their own dialects usually in the weekends. This is the time that the students will go and play, speak in their own dialects and sing their own language songs.

4.13.6 Religious groups

The religious groups provide opportunities for students to practice their faith. However, they often take on other roles as Jim explains:

We have religious groups like Anglicans, SSEC, SDA, Roman Catholic and other smaller religious groups where their leaders will help in mentoring the new students on school programmes, rules and what is expected of them at school. However, religious groups are mainly for religious activities like prayer and worship, so sometimes they might not really touch on school rules.

The results show that some boarding schools such as government schools have religious groups that provide opportunities for students to practice their faith. Their student leaders are also encouraged by schools to help in mentoring their new students on school programmes, rules and what is expected of them at school when they gather for religious activities like prayer and worship during weekdays and weekends when they usually meet.

4.14 Conclusion

The results and discussions have affirmed much of the current discourse on the experiences of the students in transition between primary and secondary schools in particular to boarding schools. This chapter has identified and discussed the students' experiences when they were about to leave their parents, first arrived at school and the strategies they used to overcome their difficulties and problems they encountered. It also looked at the strategies that schools used to help their first year students.

The present findings revealed that there were some differences and similarities with the literature. These differences may come about due to the different

context of the Solomon Islands boarding schools to other countries. In the Solomon Islands students have to live in boarding schools for five months before visiting their parents. As well as the fact that most boarding schools are located far from students' home and villages.

The first difference was that a lot of studies found that students used feeling scared, nervous and excited as the dominant terms when they were about to leave primary school for secondary school. However, in the case of the Solomon Islands students, feeling scared, nervous and excited were not dominant terms, only feeling sad. This was possibly because of the situations of the boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands where most schools are located far from most students' homes and villages.

The second difference was that only female participants mentioned that they felt homesick when they arrived at school. This does not support previous studies which found that both males and females expressed homesickness. Cultural factors may be a contributing factor here because girls tend to be very close to their parents in Melanesia.

The strategies that the Solomon Islands students used to overcome their negative feelings like feeling sad, homesick and lonely were through creating friendship and being involved in school activities, sports and

mixing with other students. However, most studies found that students overcame their negative feelings through friendship but they did not mention social activities. This may be because of the boarding nature of the boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands where students did not have the chance to return home until after five months. Therefore, social activities may also help them to overcome their negative feeling when they were away from home.

The third difference was that the Solomon Islands students felt a sense of relief at becoming junior students at secondary schools after being school prefects at primary schools because they were not given responsibilities as they had been at primary schools when they were senior students. However, the literatures only talked about students feeling a sense of relief to be in boarding schools with their friends rather than with their parents whom they felt were boring.

The fourth difference was that the basic necessities provided by most boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands such as food in the school dining halls and the school dormitories were not adequate . The amount of food was small with the same recipe throughout the whole year. The beds in the dormitories were not wide enough for good sleeping. Also the schools did not provide privacy as most dormitories have only one big room for everybody.

The strategies that the Solomon Islands students used to overcome these problems were unique. In terms of food it was not really healthy because they forced themselves to eat the small amount of food until their bodies became used to it. In terms of no privacy in the dormitories, it was through friendship that they overcame this problem.

The major difference in transition programmes provided by schools was that the Solomon Islands schools have cultural groups and bush sections to help their new students to settle down quickly into school life. This was mainly due to the many cultures that the Solomon Islands has. Furthermore, most programmes used at boarding schools in the Solomon Islands were in isolation from their feeder primary schools compared to some countries where secondary schools and their feeder primary schools may be quite close to each other.

In the concluding chapter, further suggestions will be provided for future research based on the findings of this study. The chapter will also explain the limitations of this study. As well as it will make recommendations about what could be done to the transition programmes in the Solomon Islands boarding secondary schools to address the gap between the problems and difficulties that students faced and their own strategies and the strategies that schools provided.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

My research was based on these two main questions. *What do Solomon Islands students experience when in transition from primary schools that they attend daily to boarding secondary schools located far from their homes and villages, and what formal and informal strategies are available for them? How can the experiences of the students and the transition literature inform the transition programmes for boarding secondary schools?*

This study looked at the experiences of first and second year students of the Solomon Islands when in transition from primary schools they attend daily to boarding secondary schools and the strategies that are available for them in secondary schools. There has been no previous study carried out in this area in the Solomon Islands and the Melanesian region where students have to live in boarding secondary schools for five months in their first year before visiting their parents for a month's holiday. My participants included 16 students, 3 principals and 1 deputy principal of four boarding secondary schools.

My theoretical framework was the interpretive paradigm and I used the qualitative method to gather my data. It was interviewing method where I

used one face-to-face interview. In interpretive research, meanings and experiences are constructed by individuals to create meaning out of their lived experiences and actions shown in their natural social contexts (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, I interviewed the students and the principals/deputy principal in their boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands and then I interpreted what they told me and then put the information into data.

One of the significant findings to emerge from this study is that there was a difference between the year one and two students on the strategies to overcome their problems and difficulties they encountered at boarding secondary school. The year one students did not overcome their problems and difficulties after three months. The common problems and difficulties that students usually faced at school were: finding difficulty to accept the change of status from being a senior student at primary school to the most junior student at secondary school; unfamiliar cultures and languages; and insufficient pocket money. The strategies that year two students used to overcome these problems were: humbly accepting the change of status; attending school programmes and observing school rules for some time with the help of teachers; and creating good friendship with other students.

Another significant finding to emerge from this study is that there was a difference between the students from the urban areas and from the rural areas in understanding English language. The students from the rural areas found English language difficult compared to their counterparts from the urban areas. The strategy that the students from rural areas used to overcome their difficulty of not understanding English language well was to continue attending classes in secondary schools where there are many good learning materials.

The third significant finding to emerge from this study is that the amount of food in the school dining halls in the Solomon Islands was small with the same recipe throughout the whole year. The strategy that students used to overcome the small amount of food provided by schools was to continue to eat the small quantity of food until their bodies were used to it. However, there was no strategy to overcome the same recipe of food throughout the whole year.

The fourth significant finding to emerge from this study is that in most schools, the beds in the dormitories are not wide enough for good sleeping. As well as they do not provide privacy as most dormitories have only one big room for everybody. The strategy that students used to overcome the problem of lack of privacy living in dormitories was to know everybody and to establish friendships. They also used Pidgin English (the

lingua franca of the Solomon Islands), to communicate with each other rather than their own dialects.

The strategies provided by boarding secondary school included: good condition dormitories and classrooms, school orientations, class assemblies, dorm masters/mistresses helping the students in the dormitories, cultural and religious groups. However, they were not adequate enough by looking at the many difficulties and problems the students encountered and some of the strategies the students used were their own personal strategies and not the boarding school ones. Therefore, this study is in a position to inform the transition programmes for boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands.

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the education transition from primary to secondary schools especially boarding secondary schools in the Solomon Islands where students have to live in boarding secondary schools located far from their homes and villages for several months without having any good communication means to contact their parents.

As such, this study has contributed to our understanding of the positives and the difficulties that the students in the Solomon Islands face in transition and the strategies they use to overcome their difficulties and

problems. This research will serve as a basis for further studies in other Melanesian countries and the Small Island countries of the Pacific where such study has not yet taken place. This study may help school teachers and stake holders to know more about their students' situations and make some policies to improve their lives and education.

5.2 Limitations of the current study and further research

There are limitations related to this research which must be considered. First, the current study did not get the views of the same students when they were still at primary schools, only when they were already at boarding secondary schools. The students were asked to recall their experiences when they had just arrived at boarding school after three months for the year one students and more than a year for the year two students. A second limitation was that I was unable to involve as many students, principals and boarding secondary schools as possible due to transport difficulties and time constraint. I interviewed only 16 students, 3 principals and 1 deputy principal in four boarding secondary schools. The results of this study may or may not have been different if there had been many boarding secondary schools with many students and principals involved as well as interviewing the same groups of students while they were still at primary schools.

Therefore, research on the transition from primary school to boarding secondary school needs to continue to broaden the scope and focus to

include as many boarding secondary schools and their students as possible. Interviewing the student participants should begin when they are still at primary school ready to leave for boarding secondary school and then when they just arrive at boarding secondary school. In doing so, it may give a clearer picture about the experiences of the students.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for the future which are outlined below.

- a) It is recommended that boarding secondary schools should put into their transition programmes the strategies that year two students developed in their first year to overcome their problems and difficulties with the year one students because after three months the year one students were yet to overcome their problems and difficulties.
- b) Teachers should give some responsibilities to the year one students who have been school leaders at primary schools to help nurture their peers to attend school programmes and observe school rules.
- c) It is recommended that secondary schools should provide English language programmes specifically for the rural students as these

students always find English language difficult due to a lack of good learning materials and qualified teachers in their previous schools.

d) It is recommended that schools should be providing more variety of foods for the students. All the boarding schools in the Solomon Islands have a lot of land for farming. Therefore, the Agriculture department of each school should do more to produce food for their students. Eating a small amount of food every day and the same diet throughout the whole year is not healthy for students' physical growth and mental thinking.

e) It is recommended that dorm masters/mistresses should interact more with their students when they first arrive at school and plan some social interaction for their students so that they can quickly become friends and feel happy to live together in one dormitory because most dormitories in the Solomon Islands do not provide any privacy as dormitories only provide one big room for everybody.

5.4 Conclusion

It is hoped that the findings of this research will be useful for boarding secondary schools, day secondary schools, primary schools, Ministry of Education, Church and Provincial Education Authorities and our Teachers Training College (SICHE). To make the transition experiences of the students smoother in the future, getting the views of the students on their

own experiences and strategies to overcome their problems and difficulties will help boarding secondary schools to devise a good transition programme for their future incoming students.

This information may also be useful for primary schools to prepare their students for the life in boarding secondary schools as this transition is between primary and boarding secondary schools. The better the strategies that primary schools use to prepare their students for boarding school, the smoother the students' experiences are in transition. In this transition their final destination is boarding secondary school. Therefore, this study may be vital for both schools to know.

There are a number of changes that need to be made. The Ministry of Education should give more attention to rural primary schools of the country and equip them with good learning materials, good classrooms and qualified teachers because at the moment these schools are not well equipped. Therefore, most of the students from the rural primary schools found English language difficult when they arrived at secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education should also look into the grants given to schools to purchase food for the students because the amount of food that students got from the school dining halls was small in amount and the same recipe everyday which is not good for students' health.

The Ministry of Education should look more to the issue of boarding schools at this present time because according to one school principal in the Solomon Islands (a participant), boarding secondary schools were meant for more mature students in the past, but today they enrol young students at the age of 11 and 12 years. Therefore, these young students always face difficulties at school because they are still young to be away from their parents.

Finally, the Education Authorities which own the schools should encourage their teachers to share information about their schools programmes and activities so that primary school teachers can help their students before they leave for secondary schools and secondary school teachers can help their new students when they just arrive.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Ethics approval letter

Dean's Office
School of Education
Te Kura Toi Tangata
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4466
Ext 8283
www.waikato.ac.nz



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To: Godfrey Vasethe
cc Rosina Merry

From: Dr Rosemary De Luca
Chairperson School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Date: 19 February 2009

Subject: Research Ethics Approval

Thank you for submitting the amendments to your research proposal:

Student voices: The experiences of the Solomon Islands students when they are in a transition from primary to boarding secondary school

I am pleased to advise you that your application has received ethical approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the School's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Dr Rosemary De Luca
Chairperson
For School of Education Research Ethics Committee

**Appendix 2 Information letter to the permanent secretary
of the Ministry of Education**

3/42 York Street

Hillcrest

Hamilton 3216

New Zealand

26th February 2009

The Permanent Secretary,

Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

P.O Box G28

Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Dear Madam,

**Subject: Carrying out a research project on the transition of the
Solomon Islands' students from primary to boarding secondary
school**

I am writing to inform you that I am carrying out a research project with four Secondary Schools in the Solomon Islands, under the supervision of Rosina Merry and Dr Rosemary De Luca from the University of Waikato, school of Education. The research is part of my Master of Education degree.

The main focus of the research is on the experiences of the Solomon Islands' students when they are in a transition from primary to boarding secondary school. The research topic that I will base my research on is:

“Student’s voices: The experiences of the Solomon Islands students when in transition from primary to boarding secondary school”.

The research will involve interviewing sixteen (16) students and four (4) principals/deputy principals in four secondary schools in the Solomon Islands.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to our understanding of both the positive and negative things that Solomon Islands students usually faced when they just arrive in boarding secondary schools and what schools should do in order to help them settle well into their studies.

The research process will involve at least one face to face interview with each of the 4 principals/deputy principals and 16 students (Forms 1 & 2) on the month of April and May, 2009.

The research will strictly adhere to the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations (2008) and the relevant sections and requirements of the Research Act of 1982 (Research Act, 1982, Solomon Islands) which provides guidelines governing any research activity in the Solomon Islands.

Any information shared will be solely used for academic purposes.

I will be undertaking research with these four following boarding secondary schools: King George VI School; Selwyn College; Sir Dudley Tuti College and Muana CHS.

I am a Solomon Islander, a teacher by professional and I am doing a 2 years in-service training here at the University of Waikato, New Zealand.

For any queries please feel free to contact me through phone 02102913009 or email: gv8@students.waikato.ac.nz .

Alternatively you can contact my two Supervisors: Rosina Merry and Dr Rosemary De Luca from The University of Waikato.

Rosina Merry

Phone: Work 07 838 4466 ext. 7809

Email: rosinam@waikato.ac.nz

Dr Rosemary De Luca

Phone: Work 07 838 4500 ext. 7907

Email: deluca@waikato.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Vasethe

cc: Director of Secondary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

cc: Church of Melanesia Education Authority

cc: Isabel Province Education Authority.

Appendix 3 Information and invitation letter to school principals

3/42 York Street
Hillcrest
Hamilton 3216
New Zealand
28th February 2009

Principal

-----High School

Dear Sir/madam,

RE: SEEKING PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

As part of a Masters degree in education I am enrolled in at The University of Waikato, I am undertaking a research project with forms one and two concerning their experiences of transition from primary to a boarding secondary school. The working title of my study is 'student voices: The experiences of the Solomon Islands students when they are in a transition from primary to boarding secondary school'. Through this research project, it is hoped that the findings will contribute to our understanding of both the positive and negative experiences that the Solomon Islands students usually face when they just arrive in a boarding secondary school. I am approaching you to ask permission to come to your school and to interview four of your students (two students each in forms one and two) and either you or the deputy principal.

In consultation with you, I will randomly select two form one students and two form two students (each form pair should consist of a male and a female). The focus of the interview will be to seek students' experiences

on their transition from primary to secondary school. The interviews will take place at your school after school hours and when the students are free. I anticipate that the interviews will last up to 45 minutes.

All participants will remain anonymous. Data will be treated confidentially and stored securely. Participants can decline to answer interview questions and can withdraw from the research project at any time up until I have returned their interview summaries for checking. If a participant wishes to withdraw, he/she can fill in the withdrawal form and give it to me or he/she can hand it over to you who will then pass it on to me. The primary use of the findings is to contribute towards my MEd. Data may also be used in seminars and/or conference presentations and publications. Any reports of this research will employ pseudonyms to retain confidentiality.

Upon my arrival at your school, could you please introduce me to your forms one and two classes in a low key way: who I am, that I am conducting a research for my Masters degree, that your school supports my work and I will be approaching some students for an interview.

I should arrive at your school on the second week of May, 2009. I will contact you through wireless or other means of communication before I actually arrive at your school.

I hope that your students will be interested in participating. I have attached a copy of the general questions for your interest.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Vasethe

Mobile phone: 02102913009

Email: gv8@students.waikato.ac.nz

If you have further queries please contact Rosina Merry and Dr Rosemary De Luca from The University of Waikato.

Rosina Merry

Phone: Work 07 838 4466 ext. 7809

Email: rosinam@waikato.ac.nz

Dr Rosemary De Luca

Phone: Work 07 838 4500 ext. 7907

Email: deluca@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix 4 Consent forms for schools and principals/deputy principal

a) Informed Consent for schools

I have read the above information and consent for you to invite students to participate in the study under the conditions outlined in the letter.

Sign: _____

Date: _____

b) Informed Consent for principal/deputy principal

I have read the above information and give my consent to participate in the study under the conditions outlined in the letter.

I consent to participate in an interview for this study

Sign: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5 Invitation letter to the randomly selected students

3/42 York Street

Hillcrest

Hamilton East 3216

New Zealand

28th February 2009

Dear students,

As part of a MEd I am enrolled in at the University of Waikato, I am undertaking a research project with students in form ones and twos. The working title for my study is: 'Student voices: The experiences of the Solomon Islands students when they are in a transition from primary to boarding secondary school'. Through this research project, it is hoped that the findings will contribute to our understanding of both the positive and negative experiences that the Solomon Islands students usually face when they just arrive in a boarding secondary school. From those findings, schools and the Ministry of Education should put certain mechanisms that should foster smooth transition which should help new students settle well into their studies.

I am approaching you to invite you to participate in an interview. The focus of the interview will be to seek your experiences on your transition from primary to this boarding secondary school. What are some of your difficulties and what went well for you? I anticipate that the interview will last up to 45 minutes.

All participants in this research will remain anonymous. Data will be treated confidentially and stored securely.

You can decline to answer interview questions and withdraw from the interview at any time until I have returned your interview summaries for checking. If you want to withdraw, you can fill in the withdrawal form and then give it to me or your teachers who will then pass it on to me or you can verbally tell me that you want to withdraw.

The primary use of the data will be to contribute to my MEd. Data may be used in seminars and/or conference presentations, publications and research. Any reports of this research will employ pseudonyms to retain confidentiality.

I hope that you will be interested in participating and I have attached a copy of the general research questions for your interest. You are welcome to nominate somebody (staff/student) to accompany you during the interview process.

If you have any queries contact me on:

Mobile phone: 02102913009

Email: gv8@students.waikato.ac.nz

If you have further queries please contact Rosina Merry and Dr Rosemary De Luca from the University of Waikato.

Rosina Merry

Phone: 07 8384466 ext 7809

Email: rosinam@waikato.ac.nz

Dr Rosemary De Luca

Phone: Work 07 838 4500 ext. 7907

Email: deluca@waikato.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Vasethe

Appendix 6 Consent and withdrawal forms for students

a) Informed consent

I have read the above information and I am willing to participate in the study under the conditions outlined in the letter.

I consent to participate in an interview for this study

Sign: _____

Date: _____

b) Withdrawal form

I wish to withdraw from the research project

Sign: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7 Information and invitation letter to the parents/guardians

3/42 York Street

Hillcrest

Hamilton 3216

New Zealand

28th February 2009

Dear parent/guardian,

As part of a MEd I am enrolled in at the University of Waikato, I am undertaking a research project with students in form ones and twos. The working title for my study is: 'Student voices: The experiences of the Solomon Islands students when they are in a transition from primary to boarding secondary school'. Through this research project, it is hoped that the findings will contribute to our understanding of both the positive and negative experiences that the Solomon Islands students usually face when they just arrive in a boarding secondary school. The findings should help boarding secondary schools and the Ministry of Education should put certain mechanisms that will foster smooth transition from primary to boarding secondary school which should help new students settle well into their studies.

I am approaching you to invite your child for an interview. The focus of the interview will be to seek the child's experiences on your transition from primary to this boarding secondary school. What are some of his/her

difficulties and what went well for him/her? I anticipate that the interview will last up to 45 minutes.

All participants in this research will remain anonymous. Data will be treated confidentially and stored securely. Participants can decline to answer interview questions and withdraw from the interview at any time.

Participants can withdraw from the study at any time until I have returned their interview summaries for checking. The primary use of the data will be to contribute to my Med. Data may be used in seminars and/or conference presentations, publications and research. Any reports of this research will employ pseudonyms to retain confidentiality.

I hope that you will be interested in the project and allow your child to participate. I have attached a copy of the general research questions for your interest.

If you have any queries contact me on:

Mobile phone: 02102913009

Email: gv8@students.waikato.ac.nz

If you have further queries please contact Rosina Merry and Dr Rosemary De Luca from the University of Waikato.

Rosina Merry

Phone: 07 8384466 ext 7809

Email: rosinam@waikato.ac.nz Dr Rosemary De Luca

Phone: Work 07 838 4500 ext. 7907

Email: deluca@waikato.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Vasethe

Appendix 8 Informed Consent for parents/guardians

I have read the above information and consent my child to participate in the study under the conditions outlined in the letter.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 9 Interview schedule

a) Questions for first year students

1. What are some of the things that went well for you when you just arrive in this school?
2. What are some of the problems that you have faced when you just arrived in this school this year?
3. Tell me about how it feels for the first time leaving your parents and friends at home and coming to board in a secondary school for 6 months?
4. How do you cope with this situation?
5. How different is boarding secondary school from your own home?
6. How do you cope with this situation?
7. You are a senior student in your primary school last year and now you are a junior student in a secondary school. What is it like?
8. How do you cope with this situation?

b) Questions for second year students

1. What are some of the things that went well for you when just arrived in this school last year?
2. What are some of the problems that you have faced when you just arrived in this school last year?
3. Tell me about how it felt for the first time leaving your parents and coming to board in this secondary school last year?
4. How did you cope with this situation?
5. How different is boarding secondary school from your own home?
6. How did you cope with this situation?

7. You are a senior student in your primary school two years ago and became a junior student in a secondary school last year. What was it like?
8. How did you cope with this situation?

c) Questions for the principal/deputy principal

1. As the principal/deputy principal, tell me some of the strategies and mechanisms used to support the transition of new students into this school?

Appendix 10 Participant's details

Table 1 Students of Dudley High School (Capital, urban area)

Names	gender	age	Year	Where the students come from (urban/rural)	Number of siblings at the same school	Parents living/distance
John	M	11	1	urban	2	Same city
Mary	F	11	1	rural	0	Another island (rural area), 1 day travel by boat.
Peter	M	12	2	rural	0	Another island (Rural area), 3 days travel by boat.
Ann	F	12	2	rural	1	Another island (Rural area), 1 day travel by boat.

Table 2 Students of Wesley College High School (A few kilometres outside of the capital, rural area)

Names	gender	age	year	Where the students come from (urban/rural)	Number of siblings at the same school	Parents living/distance
Tom	M	11	1	urban	0	Same island (Urban area), 1 hour travel by car
Claire	F	11	1	rural	0	Same island (Rural area), 3 hours travel by car.
Ken	M	12	2	rural	0	Another island (Rural area), 1 day travel by boat.
Margaret	F	12	2	urban	1	Same island (Urban area), 1 hour drive by car.

Table 3 Students of Frazer High School (rural area)

Names	gender	age	year	Where the students come from (urban/rural)	Number of siblings at the same school	Parents living/distance
William	M	11	1	urban	1 (uncle, teacher)	Different island (Urban area), 1 day travel by boat.
Rachel	F	11	1	rural	1	Same island (Rural area), 1 hour travel by boat.
Ross	F	11	1	rural	0	Same island (Rural area), 1hour travel by boat.
Luke	M	12	2	rural	0	Different island (Rural area), 1 day travel by boat.

Table 4 Students of St Ann Community High School (rural area)

Names	gender	age	year	Where the students come from (urban/rural)	Number of siblings at the same school	Parents living/distance
Dickson	M	11	1	urban	0	Different island (Urban area), 1 day travel by boat.
Nelly	F	11	1	rural	0	Same island (Rural area), 3 hours travel by boat.
Lesley	M	12	2	rural	0	Same island (Rural area), 1hour travel by boat.
Margaret	F	12	2	rural	1	Same island (Rural area), ½ hour travel by boat.

Table 5 Principals and deputy principal of the 4 boarding secondary schools

Names	gender	Schools	Positions	Numbers of years on that post	Experience/Qualifications
Jim	M	Dudley High Schools	Principal	1	Four years as deputy principal. He holds BSC, MSC and a teaching qualification.
Fox	M	Wesley College High School	Deputy Principal	10	He has been teaching for a number of years before taking up the post of D/P ten years ago. He holds a Dip teaching and a BEd.
Robin	M	Frazer High School	Principal	7	Has been a principal in three schools and just transferred to this school this year. He holds a Dip teaching and a BEd.
James	M	St Ann Community High School	Principal	4	He has been a deputy principal for three years before taking up the post of principal. He holds a Dip teaching.