

Rural primary student transition to secondary boarding school

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Abstract

The transition from primary school to high school is a particularly challenging for rural students who leave home in order to enter a boarding school environment. This presentation reports on the lived experiences, concerns and coping strategies of rural year seven students undertaking this transition. 89 students including both boarding and day students located at four boarding schools situated in provincial, rural cities participated.

The aim of this study was to identify the main issues surrounding the transition of rural students to boarding school. Quantitative research methods were applied to questionnaire data that used the *Dundee Relocation Inventory* (Fisher, 1989) and the Self Concept Scale from the *Self-Description Questionnaire-II* (Marsh, 1990). A content analysis of students' responses identified homesickness as one of the main concerns for students entering boarding school and also discovered a relationship between this issue and the self-concept of students. Additionally, two other transition issues: Feelings of Apprehension and Communal Living were identified by the content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from primary to secondary school is a phenomenon that brings many challenges for students. This period in life sees many changes occurring; these changes include changes in school environment and also the physical changes of adolescence. This transition is a particularly challenging time for rural students who leave their home in order to begin their secondary education at a boarding school.

Boarding schools prove to be a popular choice of contemporary secondary education for rural Australians (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2000). An Australian boarding school can be described as a community in which students reside under the care of resident staff in order to receive an education (White, 2004).

This paper explores the unique transition of rural primary students to secondary boarding schools. This study aims to identify the main adjustment issues facing rural students as they entered boarding school. The following research question was developed:

What are the main issues concerning the adjustment of rural secondary students commencing boarding school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature drawn from Australian and overseas contexts was undertaken as part of this study. The central purpose of this review is to examine the literature surrounding the topic of rural students' transition and adjustment experiences of secondary boarding school.

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With rural students accounting for a significant proportion of the Australian boarding students population (Independent Schools Council of Australia, 2003), surprisingly this topic is one which has received limited attention through research and, or recent literature.

In Australia, the term boarding school attaches itself to a range of institutions including:

- Boarding Schools;
- Student Hostels (Lenahan, 1980);
- Boarding Houses (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2000); and,
- Homestays (Richardson, 2003).

White (2004, p. 86) proposed a more general and operational definition for an Australian boarding school which defined an Australian boarding school as: 'a day school with a boarding house or houses attached to the main institution'. In the research reported in this study, White's (2004) definition of a boarding school will be adopted due to its functional and operational utility.

Students undertake a range of transitions during their schooling years. The primary school to secondary school transition generally takes place between the ages of 11 and 13 years (Fisher, Frazer & Murray, 1984, 1986).

When specifically examining the literature focusing on the transition from a primary school to secondary boarding school, students are not only confronted with the daunting prospect of leaving their primary peer group and the culture of their primary school, they also face the departure from their community and more importantly, their family. Therefore, the effects of this transition for such students are escalated (Downs, 2002, 2003; Vaille, Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2004). The reality of this environment change is acknowledged by staff who participated in Mason's (1997, p. 144) research who state that the change creates 'a fair amount of shock [for students]'

The difference between the general progression of students to secondary school and the progression of students to boarding school, is that the latter involves not just the two obvious transitions (adolescence and educational), but also a third transition: geographical transition. Research into the effects of geographical transition suggests that such transitions are stressful and that they can possibly increase the risk of mental or physical disorder (Fisher, 1989).

The effects of the transition to boarding school

While there has been much written describing the effects that an educational transition poses for students: for example, Dillingham and Harris (1997); and Green, Martin and Marsh (2005), significantly fewer authors have focused on this transition from a rural perspective (Johnstone, 2001; Pietarinen, 1998; and Tennant, 2005). In the review of available literature specific to this study, it emerged that even fewer authors have reported on the effect of the transition to secondary boarding school from a rural perspective (Downs, 2002, 2003; & Mason, 1997).

The most frequently reported effects of transition on students to boarding school settings were:

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1. Homesickness. (Downs, 2002, 2003; Fisher, Frazer and Murray, 1984, 1986; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2000; Kazantzis & Flett, 1998; Tilburg, Vingerhoets & Van Heck, 1996); and,
2. decreased self-concept. (Downs, 2002, 2003; Mason, 1997).

Other reported effects of the transition for rural students included:

- 1 declines in academic achievement (Green, Martin & Marsh, 2005; Kazantzis & Flett, 1998);
- 2 disrupted place identity (Downs, 2002, 2003);
- 3 increase in psychological distress (Green, Martin & Marsh, 2005; Kazantzis & Flett, 1998); and,
- 4 Negative and inappropriate behaviour (Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan 1996; Howard & Johnson, 2004).

The transition to secondary boarding school can affect students in numerous diverse ways. Very few studies that have explored the transition of students to boarding school have examined the coping strategies that students adopt in order to deal with these changes. Mason's (1997) qualitative research on the transition to boarding school reported the following coping strategies as methods participants used to adjust to their transition to boarding school:

1. Boys deal with the situation by becoming quiet and withdrawn;
2. Girls are open and communicate about how they feel to each other; and,
3. Burying themselves in activities.

The lack of focus on this aspect of the transition to boarding school signals a major deficiency in the current literature. Influenced by this gap in the literature, the present study incorporated this focus into a research question and thus aims to expand existing knowledge of this topic.

From this analysis of the available literature, the literature suggests that the main issues facing rural students making the transition to boarding school are: a) a decrease in self concept (Downs, 2002, 2003; & Mason, 1997); and, b) homesickness (Downs, 2002, 2003).

Research design and methods

The present study involved 89 students in their first year of attendance at a boarding school and used a questionnaire, focus groups and interviews to answer the research question. The study adopted the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data and information, however this paper will focus specifically on the quantitative results of the study.

Data were collected from four independent boarding schools, three located in rural New South Wales within the Riverina region and one boarding school located in rural Southern Queensland. Independent boarding schools were selected for the purpose of this study as they account for the largest percentage (94%) of boarding schools in New South Wales (Independent Schools Council of Australia, 2003). The demographics of each school are provided in the Table 1.

Table 1.

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Demographics of participating schools

School	Day Students	Boarding Students	Total Enrolments	Co-educational	Affiliation
1	565	100	665	Yes	Uniting
2	179	69	248	Yes	Lutheran
3	850	50	900	Yes	Catholic
4	277	170	447	Yes	Uniting

(Southern Weekly Magazine, 2007)

Students

Student participation in the study was voluntary. Parental permission was obtained for each participant. All students, including both day and boarding, entering year seven at the NSW boarding schools, and year eight - the equivalent transition year in the QLD boarding school - were invited to participate in the study. A total of approximately 210 students were invited to participate in the study. 95 students agreed to participate which produced a return rate of 45%. However, due to uncontrollable circumstances including a school excursion and students absences, only 89 of these students participated in the study. 44 were male and 45 were female. The ages of students ranged from 12 to 14.

44 students were boarding students and 45 students were day students. Of the 44 boarding students, 75 percent chose the word 'Farm' to describe their home address. In regard to the educational background of the boarding school students; 21 attended public schools the year prior to attending the current boarding school, while 23 attending private schools.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Section 1 sought biographical information; Section 2 incorporated Fisher's (1989) *Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI)*; and Section 3 was based on the Self-Concept Scale (SCS) derived from Marsh's (1990) *Self-Description Questionnaire-II (SDQ-II)*.

Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI)

Fisher's (1989) *Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI)* was devised as a 'diagnostic tool for the assessment of homesickness and distress following transition' (Downs, 2003, p. 3). Fisher's inventory consisted of 26 items (including two dummy items) and was designed as a diagnostic tool to gauge homesick and distress following transition.

Self-concept Scale (SCS)

The Self-Concept Scale (SCS) was generated by using three sub-scales from Marsh's (1990) *Self-Description Questionnaire-II (SDQ-II)*, which is a psychometric tool specifically designed to measure the self-concept of young adolescents (Green, Martin & Marsh, 2005). The three sub-scales used in this study were: **General Self**; **Emotional stability**; and **Parent relations**.

Results

The data generated by the questionnaire was predominately numerical. The existence of relationships and differences among the student questionnaire data were investigated using

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correlations, analysis of variance, both univariate and multivariate, and multiple regression analysis.

Self-Concept Scale (SCS)

The three scales of the SCS selected from Marsh's (1990) *Self Description Questionnaire-II (SDQ-II)* were General Self (**Selftot**), Emotional Stability (**Emottot**) and Parent Relations (**Parenttot**). Statistical analyses on each scale using all 89 students are reported in Table 2.

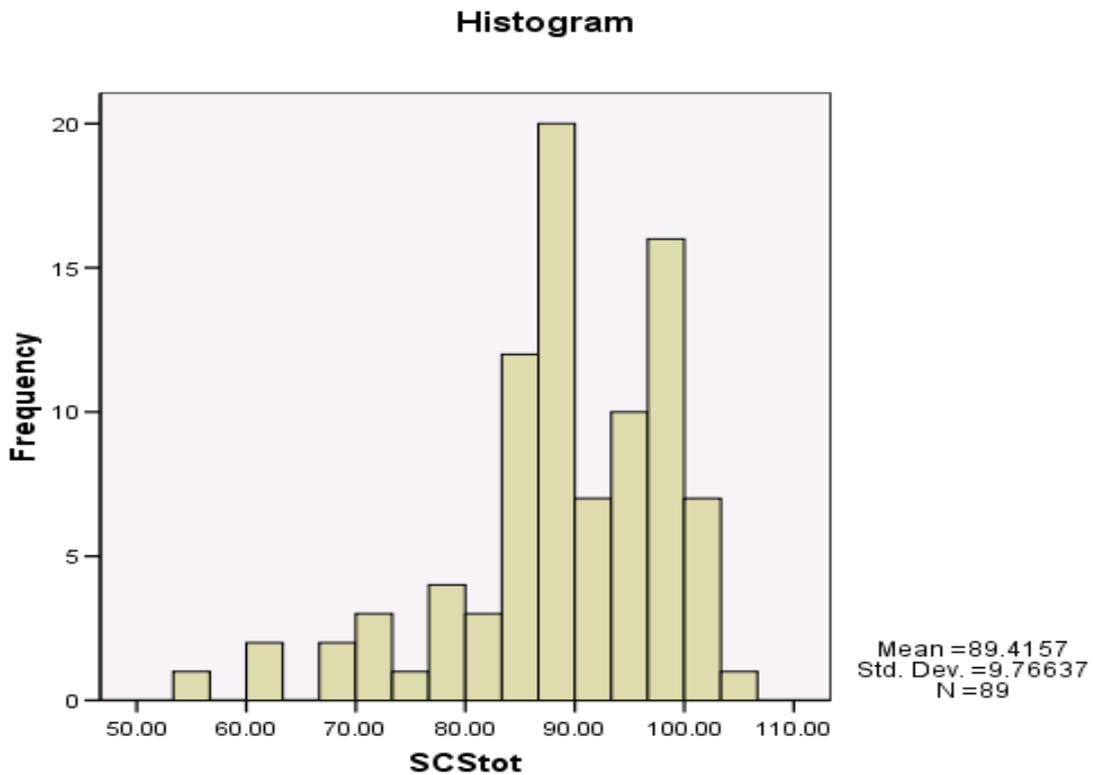
Table 2.
Statistics for the total sample on the three SCS measures

	Selftot	Emottot	Parenttot
Mean	35.34	28.44	25.61
Std. Deviation	4.43	4.62	2.63
Cronbach's Alpha	.874	.796	.723

The following graph (Fig. 1) represents the frequency and distribution of the total sample (N=89) for the Self-Concept Scale (SCS) scores based on summing scores on Selftot, Emottot, and Parenttot scales. Students' overall scores ranged from 56 -104 with a higher score indicating a higher Self-Concept Scale score. The mean of the summed scores was high (89.4157) and over 60% of scores fell above this figure. This finding indicates that the self-concept of students was not necessarily adversely affected by the transition to boarding school as the literature had suggested. This finding will be discussed later in this paper.

Figure 1.
Frequency Histogram of SCS scores

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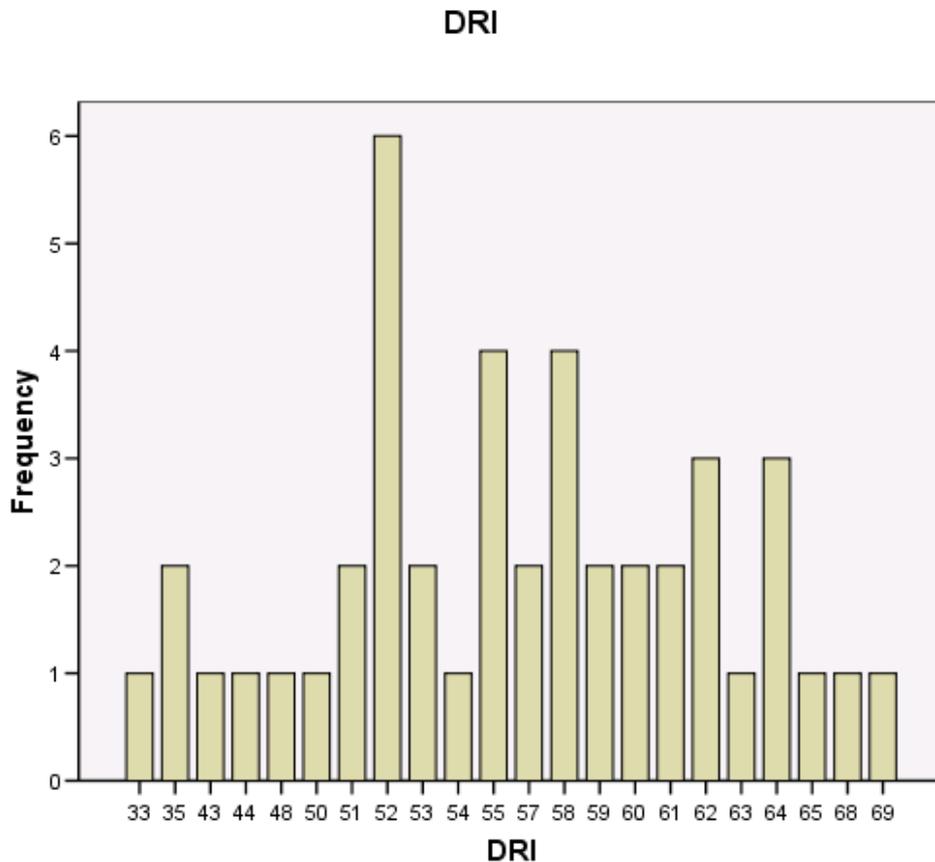
A break down of Self-Concept Scale scores for boarding students and day students revealed a small mean difference (Boarders = 90.4 and Day students = 88.5). This finding is interesting as the literature suggested that the transition to boarding school may lead to a decrease in self-concept (which in this study is expressed as the sum of these three measures), however these figures suggest otherwise, suggesting that boarding students have a slightly higher self-concept than day students.

Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI)

The following graph (Fig. 2) represents the frequency and distribution of the boarding students' (N=44) Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) scores. The scores ranged from 33 - 69 with a higher score indicating a higher incidence of homesickness. The mean of these scores was high (55.25) and over 50% of the cumulative percentage of scores were higher than this figure. This finding indicates that the incidence of homesickness within the sampled boarding students was high. This, in turn, suggests that homesickness is a main issue for commencing boarding students who are making the transition to boarding school. This finding is consistent with the literature that suggests that homesickness is a key issue for students entering a boarding school (Downs, 2002, 2003, Mason, 1998). These findings will be discussed later in this paper.

Figure 2.
Frequency histogram of DRI scores

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The participant sample for this study consisted of two groups of students: boarding students (N = 44) and day students (N = 45). The boarding students completed the three scale measures of the SCS as well as the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) scale. However the day students did not complete the DRI as it is designed for adolescents who have experienced a relocation to boarding school.

Table 3 reports on an investigation of the relationship between the three SCS sub-scales and the DRI scores of boarders using Pearson Product Movement coefficient correlation coefficient (Burns, 2000; Pallant, 2005).

Table 3.
Table of correlations for boarders on the four scales

		DRI	Selftot	Emottot	Parenttot
DRI	Pearson Correlation	1	.567(**)	.536(**)	.465(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.001
	N	44	44	44	44
Selftot	Pearson Correlation	.567(**)	1	.676(**)	.428(**)

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	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.004
	N	44	44	44	44
Emottot	Pearson Correlation	.536(**)	.676(**)	1	.226
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.141
	N	44	44	44	44
Parenttot	Pearson Correlation	.465(**)	.428(**)	.226	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.004	.141	
	N	44	44	44	44

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of this analysis indicate that each of these four measures correlate positively with each other. There are significant positive correlations between the DRI and each of the three subscales used in eth SCS. Additionally, the General Self (Selftot) and Emotional stability (Emottot) subscales have the highest correlation ($r=0.676$) while no significant relationship was found to exist between Emotional stability (Emottot) and Parent relations (Parenttot) sub-scales. These figures indicate that high scores on the DRI measure are associated with high scores on each of the three SCS scales.

Exploring Day/Boarder Student Status

A one-way MANOVA using boarder/day student status as the independent variable and the three revised adjustment measures was conducted to examine the specific question: *Do boarders and day students differ on the three adjustment measures (general self, emotional stability and parent relations)?* The multivariate testing was completed using a significance level of .05. The results of the MANOVA are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.
Results of the MANOVA

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.991	3077.663	3.000	85.000	.000
NStatus	Pillai's Trace	.060	1.815	3.000	85.000	.151

The Pillai's Trace F value for the effect of boarding status was 1.815 ($df = 3, 85$) which was not significant. Thus, it was not appropriate to examine the univariate results to identify differences for individual dependent variables. Therefore it was concluded that boarders and day students did not differ on these three adjustment measures. This finding provides a contrast to the literature (Downs, 2002; 2003; Hargreaves & Earl, 1990; and Howard & Johnson, 2004), which suggests that the transition to secondary school would have adverse effects on their self-concept.

However, the Self Total measure can be viewed theoretically as a predictor of Emotional Stability and Parent Relations (Marsh, 1990). Moreover, the correlation results indicate that this General Self measure is more highly correlated with the other two measures than they are with each other (Table 3). Thus, a second question was developed: *Do boarders and day students differ on the Emotional Stability and Parent Relations measures after controlling for the effects*

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of the General Self measure?

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was undertaken to examine the differences between boarders and day students on the two dependent variables (Emottot and Parenttot) after controlling for the effects of Selftot by using it as a covariate. The results of this analysis are provided in Table 5.

Table 5.
Results of the MANCOVA

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	P	Partial Eta Squared
<i>Intercept</i>						
Pillai's Trace	.403	28.716	2.000	85.000	.000	.403
<i>Selftot</i>						
Pillai's Trace	.514	44.995	2.000	85.000	.000	.514
<i>NStatus</i>						
Pillai's Trace	.059	2.669	2.000	85.000	.075	.059

The Selftot measure had a Pillai's Trace F value of 44.99 (df 2, 85) which is highly significant ($P < .001$). In fact, the Partial Eta Squared (.514) indicates that much of the variance in the two dependent variables Emotional Stability and Parent Relations (i.e. Emottot and Parenttot) was accounted for by this General Self (Selftot) measure.

In comparison, the boarder/day status (NStatus) had a Pillai's Trace of 2.66 (df=2, 85) which is not significant ($p = .075$). Therefore, it was deemed inappropriate to examine the univariate results. The adjusted means for the two dependent variables are reported in Table 6.

Table 6.
Adjusted means of two dependent variables

				95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
NEmottot	Day	28.312	.566	27.186	29.438
	Boarder	28.590	.573	27.451	29.728
NParenttot	Day	25.119	.307	24.510	25.729
	Boarder	26.128	.310	25.512	26.744

It is suggested from the multivariate analysis of covariance, which is consistent with the univariate result of $p = .023$, that boarders reported slightly higher Parent Relation scores on the Parenttot subscale) and suggested that a trend may exist. This finding should be further investigated with a larger sample and consequently more power.

Summary

The findings of the quantitative data as shown above have made significant contributions to providing answers to the research questions of the study. Results from the *Dundee Relocation Inventory* (DRI) instrument showed that boarding students' scores revealed that Homesickness is a key concern for rural secondary students commencing boarding school.

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While analyses conducted on the Self-Concept Scale (SCS) found that ultimately a decrease in self-concept was not a major concern to rural secondary students, it was suggestive of a trend, which indicated that boarding students had better Parent Relations (Parenttot) than day students and also that, the three SCS sub-scales (viz., General Self, Emotional Stability, and Parent Relations) were determinants of Dundee Relocation Inventory Scores, or more simply, the incidence of homesickness.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique that involves the thematic analysis of text (Sproule, 2006, cited in Walter, 2006). While it has been stated that the methods of content analysis may be adopted in either quantitative or qualitative studies (Sarantakos, 1998), this study has adopted the approach for the analysis of quantitative data generated from the responses to a series of open-ended questions from the questionnaire. The key questions pertinent to this paper included:

- Question 11: *How did you feel about coming to boarding school before you arrived?*
Question 14: *What have you found most difficult about coming to boarding school?*
Question 15: *What do you think the boarding school could do to make it easier to start school here?*
Question 16: *If you could change one thing about the boarding school, what would it be?*

The responses to these questions were coded and subsequently examined using the nine stage process of conceptual or thematic analysis as outlined by Sproule (2006 cited in Walter, 2006). The results of this analysis will be reported in the following section with results set out under each corresponding question.

Q11: How did you feel about coming to boarding school before you arrived?

The 43 comments from students' responses to this question were categorised into three main categories as shown in Table 7.

Table 7.
Students' feelings prior to entering boarding school

Type of Response	Frequency of Response
Positive	22
Apprehensive / Uncertain	11
Mixed emotions	10

The responses to Question 11 were predominately positive (51%). The main response to how students felt about boarding school prior to the transition, as indicated by students was positive. Positive comments to this question included words such as: 'Excited', 'Fine' and 'Happy'.

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The second most common category, Apprehensive/Uncertain, accounted for approximately 26% of the responses. Here, students included words such as: ‘Nervous’, ‘Unsure’ and ‘Worried’ which are typically associated with uncertainty.

A significant proportion of students experienced mixed emotions prior to entering the boarding school (23%). This type of conflicting responses is evident in the following quote: ‘I felt a bit nervous and I thought that I would get homesick, but I was excited too’.

Q14: What have you found most difficult about coming to boarding school?

The main categories arising from the analysis of students’ responses to this question are described in the following table. A total of 44 responses were analysed.

Table 8.
What did students find most difficult about entering boarding school

CATEGORY	Number of Responses	Examples of Responses
Missing Home	28	“Leaving parents and friends”. “Leaving my family”. “Missing my old friends”. “Not seeing my parents everyday”. “I miss home”. “Being so far from home”. “Homesickness”. “Leaving home”.
Rules / Routine	11	“There are heaps of rules”. “Homework times”. “Adjusting to the routine”. “Waking up early”.
Communal Living	5	“Living with heaps of people”. “Putting up with 40 other boys”. “Stuck with people you don’t really get along with”. “Trying to fit in”. “The school is a lot bigger than my old one”.

Missing Home was the most commonly reported category in response to what students found most difficult about coming to boarding school. This indicates that students found the aspect of what they had to leave behind more difficult to deal with than the actual entering of the new environment of the boarding school.

Q15: What do you think the boarding school could do to make it easier to start school here?

The four main categories presented in Table 9 were derived from the comments made by students to Question 15. A total of 32 responses were provided and the following categories were developed:: Nothing, Introductory Sessions, Rules/Routine and Other.

Table 9.
Comments made by students regarding the creation of an easier transition

CATEGORY	Number of Responses	Examples of responses
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Nothing	16	“They are pretty good now”. “Nothing, it’s really easy to start boarding”. “They do all they can”.
Introductory Sessions	6	“Get together with other new students the weekend before school starts”. “More games about getting to know each other”. “Have a session to meet all our teachers”. “Have a night where kids can board and meet people”.
Rules / Routine	5	“More space”. “Run through the routine a bit more”. “Not as many rules”. “Own room with a door”.
Other	5	“More activities when you first get there to distract you”. “Not have to stay in the first weekend”. “Buddy system with seniors and new kids”. “Have a guide to help”.

The general consensus was quite positive, with 50% of students expressing that there was nothing that they thought the boarding school could do to make the transition easier.

Q16: If you could change one thing about the boarding school, what would it be?

33 student responses to Question16 were analysed and the following categories were developed as listed in Table 10.

Table 10.

Student comments focusing on what they would change about the boarding school.

CATEGORY	Number of Responses	Examples of Responses
Facilities/Services	13	“Better food”. “More computers”. “Bigger beds”. “Bigger rooms with a door”. “Better showers”. “Have your own space”. “New dormitories”.
Rules/routine	13	“The study times”. “The bedtimes”. “Homework times”. “Keep mobile at night”. “Year sevens on cleanup duty”. “Stay up later”. “Longer sleep-ins”.
Nothing	7	“I like the school, I just wish I could still be at home”.

In response to what students would change about the boarding school, an equally high amount of comments were made in relation to the facilities/services that the boarding school offered, and the rules and/or routines in which the boarding school enforced.

The content analysis has produced some important findings in regard to the aims of the study. Missing Home, or homesickness, has been identified as a key concern for rural year seven students entering the boarding school. This finding supports those of Downs (2002, 2003) whose

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studies also found a high incidence of homesickness within students at boarding school.

The rules and routine associated with the communal living structure of boarding school has also been found to be of concern to year seven boarding students.

Summary

The results of the statistical analyses conducted in this study have identified homesickness as a key issue for rural students entering boarding school and thus, contributed to answering one of the studies research questions. Other important findings included: firstly, high scores from the *Dundee Relocation Inventory* (DRI) for boarding students suggested that homesickness was in fact an issue for rural secondary students entering a boarding school, and secondly, results of a MANOVA showed that no significant difference existed between the scores of day and boarding students on the Self-Concept Scale (SCS) measures. This finding is contrary to the literature which implies that a decrease self-concept is associated with the transition to boarding school. Subsequently, a MANCOVA followed this analysis and was suggestive of a trend - that boarders had higher Parenttot scores than day students and thus, had better parent relations.

With regard to the results pertaining to students' responses to the open-ended questions from the questionnaire, the categories generated from this analysis provided an insight into the experiences of students prior to, and subsequently, upon entering the boarding school environment. Thus, these findings make significant contributions to the research questions of the study.

DISCUSSION

Responses to the research question

This study was undertaken to identify the main adjustment issues facing rural secondary students as they entered boarding school. This aim formed the following research question:

What are the main issues concerning the adjustment of rural secondary students commencing boarding school?

A subsequent research question was generated based on statistical analyses of the data:

Do the following factors (viz., General Self, Emotional Stability, and Parent Relations) affect the adjustment of students into boarding school?

The following section will provide responses to each of these questions using the quantitative data collected and analysed in this paper.

Research Question: *What are the main issues concerning the adjustment of rural secondary students commencing boarding school?*

The findings of this study have identified that main issues for rural students making the transition to secondary boarding school, namely: Homesickness; Communal Living and Feelings of Apprehension as seen in Table 11.

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Table 11.
Main issues for students

Main Issues
<i>Homesickness</i>
<i>Communal Living</i>
<i>Feelings of Apprehension</i>

Homesickness

Results from the questionnaire indicated that homesickness was indeed the dominant issue for year seven students entering boarding school with students reporting high mean scores on the *Dundee Relocation Inventory* (DRI) measure indicating that they were indeed experiencing homesickness.

The content analysis found that the most common aspect of coming to boarding school that students found most difficult was ‘Missing Home’ (64%). This finding was consistent with the studies of Downs (2002, 2003) and Fisher, Frazer and Murray (1984, 1986) which also identified homesickness as a significant issue for students at boarding school.

Communal Living

Adjusting to communal living was the second main issue that rural students entering the boarding school found particularly challenging. Communal living and its associated aspects, was an issue that arose frequently within the findings of the content analysis of the open ended questions. A representative response was: ‘Living with heaps of other people can be annoying sometimes...’

Privacy, rules, routine and responsibilities were fundamental aspects of this issue which boarding school supervisors and the students themselves, reported as challenging during the adjustment process to boarding school. The rules and routines of the communal boarding school were found by the content analysis findings as aspects of the boarding school that students found most difficult and also were found as an area of the boarding school that should be changed in order to make the transition to boarding school easier.

Feelings of apprehension

Apprehensive or uncertain feelings prior to entering the boarding school was the final issue that this study found as impacting students making the transition to boarding school. This issue first emerged from the content analysis which found 26% of students experienced feelings of uncertainty and apprehension prior to coming to boarding school. The following comment portrays the feelings of students prior to entering the boarding school: ‘*I was excited, but I felt really nervous at the same time. I didn’t know if I would make friends*’.

Additional Research Question: *Do the following factors (viz., General Self, Emotional Stability, and Parent Relations) affect the adjustment of rural secondary students commencing boarding school?*

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The second research question of this study was answered from the analyses of the subscales from the SDQ-II (Marsh, 1990) which found that Self-concept (which in this particular study was a result of General Self, Emotional Stability, and Parent Relations scores) was not a key issue resulting from the transition to boarding school. The statistical analyses revealed that no significant difference was found between day and boarding students' self-concept scores in the quantitative results of the study, indicating that both groups of students had similar self-concept. This finding could suggest that the transition to boarding school for rural students does not create a significant influence over students' self-concept. Interestingly, however, the results were suggestive of a trend which implied that boarding students may have better parent adjustment scores than day students.

The statistical analyses identified a significant relationship between scores on the three Self-Concept Scale (SCS) scores (Selftot, Emottot, and Parenttot) and *Dundee Relocation Inventory* (DRI) scores. The three variables explained a total of 43.6% of the variance of the DRI scores. The General Self (Selftot) sub scale was the single most effective predictor, accounted for 32% which was highly significant. This finding, in turn, suggests that the Self-concept of students in boarding school can influence their level of homesickness. This finding contrasted that of Downs (2002, 2003) studies which found few significant correlations were found between self-concept scales (SCS) and *Dundee Relocation Inventory* (DRI) scores.

Implications

While this study has implications from theory and practice, it more specifically has implications for boarding school personnel, school personnel, parents and prospective students. .

Boarding school personnel

The findings suggest that all members of boarding school staff need to be aware of the issues that rural year seven students face upon entering the boarding school environment. Staff members need to be sensitive to the specific needs of these students and be able to provide support and assistance. Boarding school staff also need to monitor the extent to which students' needs are being fulfilled.

Parents of boarding students

This study suggests that parent relationships with their children play an important role in determining the adjustment of students into boarding school. This study can help the parents of boarding students by developing a better understanding of the issues that their children / students face upon entering a boarding school environment. Parents will be better informed to prepare their children for the transition to boarding school and support those students who have already undertaken the transition.

Future boarding students

This study is beneficial to those students who plan to commence their secondary education at a boarding school. The findings of this study can better prepare prospective boarding students for what to expect from this transition. Potential boarding school students can also learn of the coping skills of students who have already undertaken the transition.

CONCLUSION

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The syntheses of the findings in this study have identified some of the main issues for rural secondary students making the transition to boarding school. Therefore, this study has made a significant and valuable contribution to the limited literature surrounding the topic of transition from a rural perspective and furthermore in specific relation to a boarding school situation. While this study has helped to add depth to current data for this area, it is anticipated that further research in the area will work to further narrow the gap that exists in the literature surrounding the transition of rural students to boarding school.

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