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The Rhetoric and Reality of Transition from Primary to Post-primary Schooling

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Abstract

The origins of this work stem from the researcher's observations of disenchantment among some of the student cohort who transfer from primary school to post-primary school. The research project set out to determine the nature of the disenchantment among the first year post-primary students in the post-primary schools in a town in the west midlands of Ireland in which the researcher works, and to explore if it were possible to identify these students while in their first year in the school. The research project involved an examination of the induction programmes used in the post-primary schools. The aspirations of the school managements as articulated for their first year pupils were compared with the actual provisions which were made in the schools.

A variety of research instruments was employed. These consisted of :

1. a survey among all the students transferring from primary to secondary school in the catchment area in September 1996;
2. a semi-structured interview with the principals of each secondary school in the town;
3. an analysis of the timetable in each secondary school;
4. an analysis of the attendance figures of the first year students in the school year 1996-1997 in each secondary school in the town;
5. an analysis of the detention (punishment) figures in one school in the town over a period of four school years.

The relevant current research in a number of countries , including Ireland, is surveyed. The findings of this project are much in line with other comparable international research. Recommendations are made that may contribute to easing the difficulties experienced by pupils transferring from primary school to post-primary school.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents   Page

Chapter 1.

Introduction

In 25 years of teaching the researcher has noticed how some of the first year pupils in post-primary school seem to undergo a major transformation in their natures over the first two terms of their first year in the school. They start school full of enthusiasm, in the main, for what appears to be a whole new adventure, and in a relatively short time they are recognisable as belonging to one of two groups. Those groups might be categorised as

1. pupils who are coping well and getting involved in their new school,

2. pupils who have not made the transition well, and are beginning to flounder and to develop a set of coping strategies which land them in more and more trouble as time goes by.

The reasons for this division have interested the researcher for a long time, and the researcher wondered if there was a reason for it within the school (as suggested by Boldt 1994), which something could be done about, or whether it was something which was beyond the school's control and required the help of agencies external to the school.

There are three post-primary schools in the town in which the researcher works. They consist of a 680 pupil boys school, a 450 pupil girls school, and a 150 pupil co-educational school. The single sex schools are both Catholic Voluntary schools, and the co-educational school is run by the local Vocational Education Committee. The town is in the west midlands of Ireland

with a population of 6,500 inhabitants. The town is a market town , with some industry and some of these industries have been on the brink of closing in the recent past. There is a lot of new building going on in the town and around it , and yet it is a town where the school population is slowly declining, with a steady decline in each post-primary school of between 5 and 15 pupils per year for the last five years, and there is no sign of an end to this decline.

The pupil intake in the three post-primary schools in the town originates in 18 primary schools . The furthest of these primary schools is 12 kilometres from the town, and the nearest is adjoining one of the post-primary schools. These primary schools range in size from two-teacher schools in the rural areas to an eighteen-teacher school in the town. The researcher wondered, in the light of the work carried out by Shanks and Welsh (1986), if the movement from these relatively small primary schools to the larger post-primary schools was a factor in the lack of coping skills that occurred in some of the pupils.

All of the primary schools are co-educational , and only one of the post-primary schools is. The researcher wondered if there was any difference between the coping skills of the first years in each type of secondary school. A number of studies have looked at the gender differences to be found in children coping with transfer between primary and post-primary school: O'Flaherty (1977), Sheehan ((1981), Knox (1987) in Ireland: and Nisbet and Entwistle (1966 and 1969), Beynon (1985), Measor and Woods (1984), Pumfrey and Ward (1977), Spelman (1979), Wigfield et al (1991) and Youngman (1978, 1980, 1986) in other countries. The researcher wondered if their findings would be replicated among the schools in the study.

4

As a research project the researcher decided to take a close look at the transfer procedures in the post-primary schools in the town. It was also decided that the pupils who transferred in September 1996 would be surveyed to examine their feelings on how they experienced the transfer , and to find out if there were many pupils who were still experiencing difficulties as a result of the new environment they found themselves in. Youngman (1978) describes six types of reactions by pupils to transfer . These are discussed in more detail in the literature review. Youngman found that four of the reactions are not problematic, but two are. He describes these problematic reactions as 'worried' and 'disenchanted', and he felt that students with these reactions needed help to make the transfer successfully. The researcher wished to ascertain if there was evidence of children with these problematic reactions among the transferring cohort in this study.

The researcher also decided to interview the principals of the three post-primary schools and to find out if there were differences between their approaches to transfer and if there were any differences between what they felt they were doing and what they were actually doing. An analysis of the timetables of the schools , and the replies of the students in questionnaires and essays would be used to identify any differences.

Three research questions were identified for the project. They are:

1. **Are first year pupils who may later present with difficulties identifiable in their year of intake in post-primary school?**

2. **What provisions are made for first year pupils?**

3. Is there any difference between the rhetoric of the principals (as representatives of the school management and staff) and their implementation of the rhetoric ?

The thesis is organised as follows.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on transition between school sectors . A description is given of some of the research in to the main issues which have arisen in this topic, issues such as :

1. Age of transfer ,

2. Curriculum continuity,

3. Contact between primary and post-primary schools,

4. Good practice , such as in the Plowden and Pupil Transfer Reports.,

5. Pupil anxiety, and pupil self esteem,

6. Subject centred versus child centred approaches,

7. Myths,

8. Middle schools,

9. Gender differences,

10. Induction programmes.

A lot of the research is not Irish , but there is some and it is included in the review.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology which was used throughout the research It is a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis and both are described.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research project .

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from the conclusions. Areas for future research are also mentioned.

In the next chapter the literature review is described. It was found in the literature that a number of different terms were used to describe the movement of children from one sector of education to another. Some refer to it as 'transition' , others as 'transfer' , and in the United States of America it is known as 'vertical articulation'. This researcher uses 'transfer' or 'transition' to describe the change.

Chapter 2.

Review of the Literature

2.1. Introduction

Research on transition between different school sectors has been carried out since the early part of this century. The research tended to be part of government reports and the reports were produced in England. (The Hadow Report, 1927; The Norwood Report, 1943, and The Plowden Report , 1967). After the publication of the Plowden report a number of studies on the effects of transition were carried out in the British Isles , most notably those of Nisbet and Entwistle (1969), Dutch and McCall (1974), and Youngman and Lunzer (1977).

In Ireland around the same time there were some studies carried out , in particular those of O'Flaherty (1977), Raven (1977), and Sheehan (1977). In the north of the country a major study was carried out by Spelman (1979). A report was published by the Department of Education in 1981 , the Report of the Pupil Transfer Committee.

Research was also being carried out in other continents around the same time. In the United States of America research was carried out by Simmons and Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1973) , by Simmons, Blyth et al ., (1979), and by Cotterell (1982). In Australia research into the experiences of students after entering secondary school was carried out by Cotterell (1986).

Research has been ongoing in this topic since then , sometimes focusing on the issue of curriculum continuity, other times on issues such as middle

8

schools , school rejection by pupils , pupils' self-concepts and self-esteem, induction programmes and reactions to the Plowden Report.

For a more detailed look at this research it will be dealt with in two sections, dealing with research outside of Ireland , and then with research in Ireland.

2.2. Research outside of Ireland

It was in the Hadow Report (1926) , *The Education of the Adolescent*, that the issue of transition between school sectors was first looked at in a government report. One of its recommendations was that the existing systems of elementary and secondary education should become a single, 'end-on' system of primary and secondary schools. It recommended that primary education should be regarded as ending at about the age of eleven plus. At that age it felt that a second stage of education should begin which would be marked by the common characteristic that its aim was to provide for the needs of children who were entering and passing through the stage of adolescence. This led to the distinction between primary education and secondary education that has survived to this day, the former being the education of childhood and the latter being regarded as the education of the adolescent. It recommended a 'clean break' at transition from one sector to the next, and there seems to have been no realisation that such an approach might be problematic for some pupils.

In the Norwood Report (1943) , *Report on Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools ,* an attempt was made to ease the transition between the various sectors . It suggested that there were three types of children , each type suited to a different type of secondary school, Grammar, Technical , and

9

Secondary modern school. On leaving the primary school a child should go to one of these schools, but rather than the transition being a 'clean break' it should instead be regarded as a process. The transfer should be eased by a curriculum which would be a continuation in some aspects of the curriculum in the primary school.

The Plowden Report, *Children and their Primary Schools* (1967), was the result of considerable attention to the development of primary education in England. It was a report which teachers either loved or hated. Writing about it recently on the thirtieth anniversary of its publication Diane Hofkins had this to say about it:

> "The power of the report (Plowden) , which promoted "child-centred" learning where 'finding out' proved better for children than 'being told', is that after so long it remains an icon for both disciples and opponents.....In its sparkling optimism, and touching belief in social engineering, Plowden was very much of its time. The Government-appointed committee thought the well-off suburbs should send their best teachers into the inner cities to help build a better future for the urban poor and that colleges of education should form special links with these needy schools . Its top priority was extra funding, teachers and support for deprived areas." (Hofkins, 1997).

To address the problems associated with transfer the idea of the middle school was proposed. It was proposed chiefly to overcome the organisational and curriculum problems associated with transition , and as a means to allow for the different rates of development towards sexual maturity in boys and girls. The recommendations of the Hadow report had not been implemented.

10

Baroness Plowden and her committee set in progress a number of research projects on which to base their findings . So it is not surprising that the mid sixties was a period rich in research into many aspects of transition between different types of schools, some very specific, others very general in nature.

Research was carried out to see if there was such a thing as a correct age for transfer , as had been suggested in the Hadow report. Nisbet and Entwistle (1966) took issue with its 'naive, and in certain respects erroneous, ideas of adolescence'. They concluded that 'the clean break' between primary and secondary education recommended in the Hadow Report may have been a means to ensure that secondary education would develop free from the influence of the old elementary school tradition, but it could not be justified in terms of psychological theories of adolescence. They found that there is no sudden change in children's behaviour with the onset of adolescence, and while it certainly may be a difficult period for some youngsters, this was hardly a good reason for commencing a different phase of education. They felt that anywhere between the ages of 10 and 13 should be suitable for a pupil to transfer from primary to post-primary.

In the first major study of the effects of transition on children Nisbet and Entwistle (1969) monitored the effects upon children of transfer from primary to secondary education. It consisted of a five year longitudinal study of the personality, attitudes and attainment of 3200 children from Aberdeen city and Fraserburg (a suburb of Aberdeen) at ages 11, 12 ,13, and 14, which included children from the latter years of primary school to the second year of secondary school . The investigation was designed to provide answers to the questions "What are the intellectual and non-intellectual correlates of academic

11

success during the transitional period, and are the correlates of success after transfer in any way different from those at other stages of education?"

They found that there was no reason to retain children in primary school in the hope that it would improve the accuracy of their verbal reasoning scores. Between the ages of 9 and 11 there was an improvement in the accuracy , but there was little increase after that. They found that socio-economic status was a factor in a child's future success in secondary school .

"In general, children from poorer homes have difficulty in adjusting to transfer. The results provide evidence that social and motivational factors become more important when the pupil moves into secondary school . Even within the age-group , older pupils have an advantage over younger pupils : and pupils who moved school twice in the transfer procedure are at a disadvantage compared with those who moved only once." (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969, p. 7)

They also found that pupils' academic motivation, attitude to work and the extent of parental encouragement most significantly distinguished between those who improved and those who deteriorated upon transfer. Stability and social maturity were important in the case of girls who improved. They also found that the levels of parental education , home literacy, home accommodation, and to a lesser extent parents' occupations were all distinguishing factors as well.

When they looked at the effects of age and movement between schools they found that the younger, less mature child was more likely to suffer a set-back

12

immediately after entering the secondary school (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969, p. 81).

By using essays they obtained the pupils' attitudes to transfer. Murdoch (1966) did the analysis of the essays and found that only about 11% of the boys and 8% of the girls had found the transfer a wholly enjoyable experience. As many as 57% of the boys and 64% of the girls had experienced identifiable problems in adjustment. However, after a term or more in the secondary school , about 80% of the children reported that they preferred their secondary to their primary schools. Regarding this Nisbet and Entwistle(1969) commented that while 'the feelings of insignificance and bewilderment wear off, our other research shows that the after-effects seem to leave their mark on children's academic performance throughout the first year at secondary school'. They concluded that a more smooth transition to secondary school would benefit children. Unnecessary sharp changes in organisation and teaching methods are likely to be harmful. "Close co-operation and understanding between primary and secondary teachers is perhaps the most effective way of helping children to adjust rapidly to the new environment of secondary school" (ibid, p.8)

In September 1972 the Educational Development Centre of the City of Birmingham Education Department initiated a survey of transfer provision in the nineteen major catchment areas under its control. Its final Report (Neal, 1975) *Continuity in Education (Junior to Secondary)* represents the most detailed study of the organisational, attitudinal and behavioural concomitants of transfer conducted in England. It looked at transfer procedures and

13

practices in the main, and dealt with six areas of enquiry. 81% of the schools in the area replied to the investigators.

The findings from the first area of enquiry, 'liaison between primary and secondary schools and comparison of curricula', indicated that while very few primary school staff visited their receiving secondary schools, rather more secondary staff visited their contributory primary schools. No form of curriculum liaison was apparent in half of the schools surveyed, and liaison in the remainder was haphazard and varied according to individual interest. In certain cases there was definite apathy on the part of teachers towards any kind of liaison.

The second area of enquiry was concerned with 'school records and methods of pupil assessment'. The majority of schools agreed that there should be transfer of records and that tests in Mathematics, Reading and General ability should be carried out in the primary and their results passed on to the secondary schools.

The third area of enquiry dealt with the nature and extent of relationships between home and school. While 40% of schools had parent associations their function had little relevance to continuity or transfer. As well , very few schools had specifically appointed counsellors who visited pupils' homes.

The fourth area of enquiry consisted of a comparative study of children's attitudes towards their secondary school, both prior and subsequent to transfer. The findings indicated that by far the greatest single factor in pupil/teacher relationships is the personality of the individual teacher. Some 33% still missed their primary school teachers some 12 months after transfer.

14

Yet the great majority indicated that they liked the challenge of their new environment .

In looking at the children's attitudes to subjects, the findings indicated that the response to a particular subject was , in fact, the response to the teacher of that subject.

It is interesting , also, to note that issues such as bullying , homework , school size, and organisation and discipline at secondary school did not seem to feature appreciably in the likes and dislikes of new entrants to secondary school in this study.

The fifth area of enquiry consisted of an investigation into the transition arrangements organised by schools. The enquiry revealed that teachers from nearly all secondary schools visited their main contributory primary schools , and that the purpose of these meetings was to meet and talk with prospective pupils and to obtain information on academic standards, medical details and personal background. Certain secondary schools organised attainment testing in their contributory primary schools.

Following transition, nearly all secondary schools made arrangements for parents of incoming pupils to visit the schools. Open days and nights were a feature of many schools, and parents were frequently given a written brochure or prospectus concerning the school.

A number of induction procedures are described. The first morning in a school tended to concentrate on the issuing of timetables and the introduction of new pupils to members of staff. Pupils often were in temporary groups for the first few weeks , as testing took place to decide the final structure of classes . Most

of the schools seemed to adopt subject specialisation with the majority of pupils as soon as possible.

The last area of enquiry looked at recommendations. It recommended:

- that if such testing was to take place it should take place in the primary school prior to transfer where the children feel more secure and the environment is familiar.

- that temporary groups in secondary school should be avoided if possible, and where necessary should be for as short a period as is possible.

- that first year children should spend a large proportion of their time being taught by their class teacher.

- that first year children should not be taught by probationary teachers or new teachers in a school.

- that procedures be established in secondary schools to monitor how children have adapted to their new schools and how they are progressing.

A number of studies have attempted to monitor the effects of schools' transition programmes upon pupil adaptation to secondary school. Dutch and McCall (1974) attempted to assess the impact of a self-contained pre-transition department providing for all the primary pupils intending to transfer to Banff Academy. The Banff Education Committee had been worried about the effects of transfer on pupils coming from small rural primary schools. As an experiment they decided to start a transition department in Macduff   The findings suggested 'a consistent though slight trend towards results that

suggest favourable effects' for those who had attended the transition department.(Dutch and McCall , 1974, p. 288)

Youngman and Lunzer (1977) in *Adjustment to Secondary Schooling* , another major study, followed up two large samples of pupils from a rural and an urban background through and beyond the transfer period, and they monitored concomitant developments. Tests were administered to 1500 pupils prior to and subsequent to transfer, in IQ, reading and mathematical ability. Pupils' attitudes to school were looked at in the period prior to and subsequent to transfer as well. Personal and academic self-concepts were assessed as well.

They found that 70% of the pupils liked their present secondary schools, 78% considered their lessons interesting, 94% considered their teachers to be at least 'all right', and approximately 60% were pleased to have left the primary school. However bullying was commented upon by 30%, schoolwork caused concern for 36%, and examinations were disliked by 60%. They concluded that 'the overall impression is that approximately 10% do find transfer, or more correctly the secondary school, a distressing experience, and that this is a feeling which persists for at least two terms'.

They also concluded that a major cause of apprehension among all types of pupils was the academic nature of secondary schooling.

They produced a typology of six profiles of pupil characteristics describing patterns of adjustment and maladjustment common to both types of secondary school , three relating to high ability pupils , three relating to pupils of low ability. Of the three 'high ability' types, pupils within the 'academic' type

17

consisted of highly motivated achievers who were non-anxious, favourably disposed to secondary school and less favourably disposed towards primary school. Pupils of the 'disenchanted' type were also highly intelligent, but their scores on all measures of academic involvement were low, and deteriorated after transfer. Pupils of the 'uncertain' type, while able and highly motivated, were also highly anxious and had low self-concepts, though their attitudes to school improved markedly on transfer. Of the three 'low ability' types, pupils of the 'contented' type scored slightly below average on both ability and attainment, but displayed some improvement upon transfer, and expressed general satisfaction with their secondary schools. Pupils of the 'non-academic' type obtained low scores in ability, attainment and motivation but with no concomitant anxiety, whereas pupils of the 'worried' type, in addition to being low achievers , also displayed low self-concepts, high anxiety, and , in the rural group, sustained a decrease in achievement levels after transfer. (Also described in Youngman (1978))

The proportions of pupils from urban and rural schools in the different typologies were approximately the same in the 'academic' (18%), 'disenchanted' (13%) and 'worried' (13%) categories, but rather more rural than urban pupils were classified as 'uncertain'(12%, 6%) and 'contented' (20%, 13%), whereas more urban than rural pupils were classified as 'non-academic' (17%, 13%). Moreover, a specific rural type, entitled 'despairing' and representing 5% of the rural pupils sampled, exhibited extremely negative attitudes to secondary school coupled with very high anxiety, low self-concept and motivation scores, and an extreme longing for primary school. Alternatively, a specific urban type, entitled 'disinterested' and representing 12% of the urban pupils sampled, exhibited low ability and motivation,

together with self-concept, anxiety and school attitude scores which were close to the mean. This type is disinterested in the sense that school is accepted without any feeling of commitment.

The findings of Youngman and Lunzer sound a note of caution concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of schemes designed to facilitate transfer. While the first school in their sample had no transition department or 'lower school unit', all the attitude and adjustment information suggests that effective transfer arrangements existed. However, pupils in the two remaining schools which had such units displayed low motivation at the end of their first secondary school year , a finding which prompted the authors to wonder whether there was a chance that the cushioning effect of a lower school unit produces a reaction against academic work?

Various studies (those above, and specialised studies such as those of Dale and Griffith (1965), into failure in Grammar schools, and Pumfrey and Ward (1977) into the progress of maladjusted children) have shown that younger, less mature children, those from working class backgrounds, and those of timid, anxious, withdrawing or non-academic dispositions may be most at risk; that difficulties in coming to terms with the physical and academic organisation of secondary schools , apprehension about the standard of schoolwork expected, disruptions in primary peer-group relationships and lack of stability in relationships with teachers are among the problems most commonly mentioned by pupils ; and that increased neuroticism together with a diminished self-concept and a decrease in motivation and attainment may be among the most likely consequences for those who fail to adjust. Alternatively, such studies have indicated that pupils who are academically

able , non-anxious, socially mature and ambitious, those who are given most encouragement by their parents, those who have 'naturally outgrown their primary school environments' 'and those who have favourable relationships with their teachers are among the most likely to make a successful adjustment to secondary school.

The extent to which problems of initial adjustment persist throughout the pupil's career at secondary school is also somewhat uncertain. Murdoch (1966) and the City of Birmingham Report (Neal, 1975) suggest that approximately 20% of pupils experience difficulties which persist throughout their first year. Young and Lunzer (1977) estimate approximately half that number.

Spelman (1979) in his study of 3050 pupils who transferred to 31 schools in Northern Ireland monitored the initial adaptation of pupils to different types of secondary schools in terms of their background and academic characteristics, their attitudes to transfer, their narrative accounts of the transitional difficulties which they encountered, and the effectiveness of the schools' transition programmes in alleviating such difficulties. The study also assessed pupils' reactions to their first year social and academic environments , examined their standards of literacy and use of language, and estimated the major determinants of both teachers' and pupils' own assessments of their progress in , and satisfaction with , their first year at secondary school. -

Because the study was in the North of Ireland in the middle of the 'troubles' he felt that "Undoubtedly, many of the problems encountered by pupils during transition are socio-cultural in origin." (Spelman, 1979, p. 324).

20

Among his findings were:

- Differences in intellectual capacity were also accompanied by equivalent differences in socio-economic, material, literary, cultural, and recreational characteristics of pupils entering the four school areas. (ibid, p. 326)

- Of particular importance to children's adjustment to secondary school were those aspects of their home backgrounds which were most relevant to their progress at school. (such as the education received by members of their families, reading practices, parental control over TV viewing and homework in the home, parents general interest.)

- Less than a quarter of the pupils sampled had felt positively about their new schools prior to going there. However, pupils' comments on their subsequent experience indicated that more than half of those who had expressed initial apprehension were reassured by their subsequent experiences and only a minority was disillusioned. (ibid, p. 327)

- Pupils had heard most often about their new school from friends or peers, and noticeably less often from the teachers in their primary schools . Pupils transferring to grammar schools were better informed about their new schools than others, and received their information most frequently from their peers, their relatives or visits to their new schools. (ibid, p. 327)

- An analysis of the major concerns expressed by pupils in their essays indicated that secondary school regulations and discipline, the organisation of the timetable, the duration of the school day and intervals, the nature of

21

the homework expected and retrospective references to the primary school curriculum ranked foremost among the topics mentioned. (ibid, p. 327)

- Pupils in all types of secondary schools most frequently evaluated their teachers in terms of their approachability, warmth and manifestations of personal interest. (ibid, p. 328)

- The study also showed that pupils of lower verbal reasoning ability, those from manual backgrounds, those whose parents, brothers or sisters had not attended grammar schools, those who themselves had not been selected for grammar schools and those who aspired to manual occupations on leaving school were most alienated in their attitudes to education. Alternatively, pupils of higher verbal reasoning ability , those who frequently read books , those who often discussed matters relating to school with their parents and those who aspired to non-manual occupations on leaving school were most favourably disposed towards their teachers and teaching at secondary school. (ibid, p. 328)

- He found that grammar and bilateral school pupils expressed the least antipathy towards their secondary education, and secondary (intermediate) and junior high pupils expressed the most. (ibid, p. 329)

- In looking at the initiatives taken by schools to facilitate transfer, he found that academic and pastoral liaison with their contributory primary schools was a feature reported by most of the schools included in the enquiry; that the use of primary school record cards or profiles, reciprocal visits between schools by primary and secondary teachers , and the holding of open days for prospective pupils and their parents were relatively frequent

22

practices in over half the schools represented; that provision of guidance and counselling during the first year was a feature of a third of the schools sampled, but that curriculum experimentation or integration, subject setting or banding and special provision for slow learners were typical of only a minority of all schools in the enquiry. (ibid, p. 329)

- An interesting result was that some elements of schools' transition programmes were significantly, if sometimes contradictorily, associated with pupils' attitudes. He feels this may be due to the "possibility , that such initiatives may sometimes have acted in ways contrary to those intended, by instituting self-fulfilling prophecies for the less able pupils, or by emphasising certain pupils' sense of separateness in their first year at secondary school". (ibid, p. 331)

- He concludes, "many of the difficulties experienced by children in their transition and adaptation to secondary education are a function of differences in their socio-cultural characteristics, whether linguistic, perceptual or aspirational, prior to entering secondary school". (ibid, p. 345)

- He also feels "that schools have a significant role to play in facilitating the adjustment of their pupils" . The differences in the ways in which schools organised their physical, transitional, social and academic environments were clearly apparent in the psychological dispositions of their pupils. Moreover, the quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils emerged from the separate analyses as a consistently significant

concomitant of successful pupil adjustment , irrespective of the types of secondary schools to which pupils had transferred. (ibid, p. 345)

In summary Spelman (1979) found that

- pupils in schools with carefully thought out transition programmes have smoother passages than those without.

- considerable anxiety is engendered at first over a number of items (teachers, work, size of school , etc.) but it modifies within a few weeks.

- the working class child is particularly adversely affected.

- type of school is more significant than transfer arrangements in explaining pupils' attitudes ; familiarity with new schools is best predicted by transfer proceedings , alienation by type of school.

In the same year Simmons (1979) and his colleagues in the United States of America researched the progress of 798 children as they moved from sixth grade to seventh grade in two different school systems. Among their findings they noticed that white adolescent girls seem to be at a disadvantage in comparison , both to boys in general and to girls who do not change schools. Among the girls, the ones with lowest self-esteem appear to be those who have recently experienced multiple changes, i.e., who have changed schools, have reached puberty, and who have started to 'date'. Among boys, in contrast, early puberty development was found to be an advantage for self-esteem. This data show how coping with a major role transition can be significantly affected by environmental context, level of biological development , and social behaviour. This work seemed to verify the work

24

carried out earlier by Simmons et al (1973) which was a detailed study of changes over time in pupil self-concept. Simmons, Rosenberg, and Rosenberg (1973) distinguished between changes relating to person-environment influences and changes relating to adolescent biology. They found that the transfer to high school was marked by increased 'self-image disturbance', defined by several measures of self-esteem, while 'ageing from 11 to 12 and 13 does not in itself appear stressful' (ibid. pp. 560-562).

Another American study by Cotterell (1982) examined new students' reactions to events in the first three weeks of high school, as recorded in diaries kept by the students. The experiences of 2 groups of 103 students were compared. He found that the students displayed continued anxiety concerning the organisational aspects of school and felt threatened by the presence and behaviour of older students. Anxiety concerning homework was lower at first, and increased subsequently: while student reports of interesting learning experiences declined across the three weeks. The level of interpersonal support from friends and teachers remained unchanged. "The data suggest the centrality of curriculum experiences and the key role of the teacher in assisting student adjustment n the transition from primary to secondary school". (Cotterell, 1982, p. 296)

Cotterell's findings are very relevant for the induction programmes that this researcher found in operation among the three schools studied. In Cotterell's study students were more sensitive to interesting curriculum experiences than to events from other sources, and the power of classroom activities to arouse interest was particularly strong in the first week of school . Information about

the school curriculum and procedures, on the other hand, had greater arousal potential after the first week. (ibid, p. 301)

A consequence of this is, according to Cotterell, that if school transition programmes are to mirror these changes in student perceptions towards promoting successful adaptation, the programmes should be designed in stages, using increasingly more specific information and working with larger groups at first and smaller groups later. (ibid, p. 301) This is very different to what is actually happening in schools .

The inability of new students to penetrate large and complex organisational structures, such as those existing in many high schools, and to gain access to support, whether it is guidance, acceptance , or information, is widely recognised in educational reports and among practising teachers. Cotterell suggest that a "reduction of the size of secondary school settings into smaller units comprised of 'helping networks' is a structural alternative to administrative hegemony and impersonal administration". (ibid, p. 301).

Blyth (1983) reports on a five year longitudinal study , carried out between 1974 and 1979, which looked at the effects of transfer on two groups of pupils in American schools. One group stayed in the junior school for eight years before transferring into a senior high school, while the other group , after six years in a junior school moved for three years into a junior high school and then into a senior high school for the rest of their secondary education. The study examined some of the immediate and longer term psychological , academic, and social adjustments of the pupils as they made the transitions at various points in their lives.

26

The study found that the pupils who remained longer in the junior schools suffered less trauma than those who made the transition early on. While all the pupils experienced a decline in their self-esteem , the decline was greatest among the pupils who left the junior school after six years compared to those who left it after eight years. The study also found evidence that the transition seemed to affect girls more than boys.

> "The girls in the junior high cohort have a more difficult time with school transitions than do boys and the transition into junior high school is more difficult and has a longer lasting effect than does the transition into a four year high school in ninth grade. ....Girls who attend junior high not only show a drop in self-esteem in grade seven, but they are the only group to show a substantial reduction as they move into senior high school ". (ibid, p. 111)

The study also found that the decline experienced by the pupils was something that persisted for the group that transferred early.

> "A transition which is made too early can have relatively long lasting negative effects while transitions made at a later developmental stage may be without serious negative consequences. Thus , the transition into junior high school in early adolescence has negative consequences for youth, particularly in terms of participation and girls' self-esteem. By contrast, the delaying of the transition into secondary schools until ninth grade, as occurred for the K-8 cohort, seems to reduce the magnitude of the disruptions which occur and the time it takes to recover." (ibid, p. 119)

In England the eighties was a period of much research into the effects of changing schools on young children (Smith, 1980; Youngman, 1980; Galton, 1983; Measor and Woods, 1984; Stillman, 1984; Stillman and Maychell, 1984; Beynon, 1985; Delamont and Galton, 1986; Gorwood , 1986; Youngman , 1986; Summerfield , 1986; Brown and Armstrong, 1986; Murdoch, 1986; Dowling, 1986; Shanks and Welsh, 1986; Knox, 1987; and Jones, 1989) , into the impact of the new middle schools which had developed as a result of the Plowden report (Galton, 1983; Gorwood , 1986; and Hargreaves, 1986), and on the issue of curricular continuity (Derricott, 1985; Galton , 1983; and Gorwood, 1986).

Smith (1980) , in a pilot study carried out in West Yorkshire, looked at the school environment to see if there were any particular features which were of concern to the children in the period following the transfer to a new school. Little evidence of alienation was found by Smith and the overall picture which emerged from the study " is one of quite general satisfaction within the schools concerned". (ibid, p. 181).

Galton (1983) was highly critical of teachers in the secondary schools . He felt that many of the problems that children experience at transfer are due to what teachers do to them , or more correctly , by what teachers fail to do for them . Despite the general agreement that there should be curricular continuity, there was very little of it happening in practice. He found that five themes dominated the letters he had obtained from children after transfer from primary to secondary school :

28

1. "Feelings:

    - sad about leaving primary school

    - nervous about the new school

2. Relations with other pupils ;

    - fears about older pupils

    - positive feelings about peers

    - negative feelings about peers

3. Physical environment;

    - large size of buildings and site

    - buildings were scruffy

    - toilets were locked

4. Relations with teachers;

    - teachers treated them as more grown up

    - large number of teachers

    - teachers were very different

5. Lessons;

    - children had more negative remarks to make than positive." (ibid, p.28)

29

He also found evidence to question whether a good induction programme has any great effect , especially as his findings showed that most children are settled after six weeks irrespective of the care taken by the teacher at transfer. (ibid, p. 28)

The study also showed that the problem of the 'late settlers' in the secondary school becomes apparent in the second term of the first year and manifests itself in many ways. It was felt that the most obvious signs of this 'late settling' were (i) not making friends , (ii) school refusal, and (iii) truanting. (ibid, p. 28)

Professor Galton added that it was important not to forget that some children derived benefit from the change; for these children it "provided a fresh start, a sudden impetus, and the new environment could release unsuspected energies." (ibid, p. 34).

Stillman and Maychell (1984), and Stillman (1984) describe a study of the methods used to ease the effects of transition in schools on the Isle of Wight, and in some schools on the mainland of England. It involved principals and teachers in 72 secondary school in 14 Local Education Authorities , and 164 middle schools. They found that two strategies were in use in most of the schools. One strategy involved pupils visiting their intended secondary schools in the Summer term prior to entry. The other strategy involved the

visitation of the feeder schools by the year-head teachers of the receiving secondary schools. The most beneficial results were achieved where the visits of the pupils were in small groups and where the pupils were able to participate rather than just observe in the new school.

Most new pupils were primarily concerned with establishing a framework of basic rules and principles, and getting to know the most fundamental strategies for coping with the first day, such as where to go, what to bring, what to do for lunch etc. "The lowest priorities were often timetabling details." (Stillman, and Maychell, 1984 , p. 9.)

As in Galton (1983) curriculum continuity proved to be a problem as many of the primary schools did not keep detailed day to day information on the topics being taught. As a result there was some repetition of teaching material in the secondary schools, with many bored pupils. Many of the schools were reluctant to change how they did things to overcome this . There was also a reluctance on the part of schools to be the initiator of any discussions on curriculum continuity.

There was also a certain negative attitude held by the teachers in once sector to the teachers in another, and this was noted especially at the middle/high school level.

There was also evidence of poor communication of data regarding pupils on their transfer from one school to another.

As in Galton (1983) the evidence shows that there is a huge gap between ideology and practice in the area of continuity of curricula. Many teachers felt it was necessary to have it , but did not actually make any attempt to do it in

31

practice. In the Isle of Wight many of the secondary schools did not use the data they received from the primary schools, or used it poorly. (Stillman and Maychell, 1984, p.73)

In a study of about 2000 twelve year old children transferring from a middle school to a comprehensive school Measor and Woods (1984) found that over half of the children had anxieties of one kind or another. They also found that the boys had a lot of myths about the new school, and these were perpetuated from year to year. E.g. myths about school uniform, homework. There were three broad categories of myth in the junior school:

1. Situations and activities making new demands of harshness and toughness in the new secondary school world in both formal and informal cultures.

2. Sexual development.

3. New forms of knowledge and work. (Measor and Woods, 1984, p.20)

A gender difference was noted in the myths among the pupils in that while the girls knew of the myths in the first two categories they did not believe that they referred to them.

In category one the myths were about such things as the various initiation rites in the new school, or the things that happen on your birthday, or the toughness of the sport teachers and other teachers .

In category two they were about the sexual leanings of the teachers in the new school, or about new pupils in their class.

32

In category three the myths were about the types of things that will go on in science class and the bloody dissections each pupil will have to do. While the boys took some delight in the possibilities, the girls were not so happy about it.

While all the students eventually discover that the myths are untrue they do pass them on , to show that in a sense they have survived to tell the tale !

They looked at the induction programmes for new pupils in 18 mixed comprehensive schools and they found that there were very similar in structure. They usually consisted of groups of students coming from a primary or middle school to the comprehensive for a day, where they were met by the first year head teachers and spoken to about the way things were done in the new school. Tours of the new school were given , but the day tended to concentrate on what Measor and Woods describe as "impression management' . They were critical of this as they found that a lot of the students came away unclear about homework, detention , and other punishments. Most of the work of the day gave intending pupils a look at the formal culture, but little or no look at the informal culture of the school. "In a sense the school's induction scheme was the teachers' myth about the new order. " (ibid, p.43)

They found that teachers were insensitive to the new pupils in three areas. Firstly pupils were apprehensive with new teachers and were not inclined to ask questions . Secondly in the area of discipline there were also problems , as it was not as strict in the middle school as it was to be in the senior school. Thirdly , students were used to finishing off tasks in the primary or middle school , but now found that they had to move onto something new every time

33

the bell went, even if a task was not completed by then. There was also a difference in the way the class teachers dealt with the students. They were not as caring, as the year heads or class monitors were.

> "We concluded , therefore , that pupil transfer should be neither wholly 'continuous progress" nor wholly ' sharp break', but a bit of each, the former applying mainly to the formal passage, the latter to the informal, and that , where they merge and conflict, they are best tackled through a 'middle ground' ethos , which takes the needs of both cultures, and of teachers and pupils (which can vary in some important respects), into consideration." (ibid, p. 171)

While Measor and Woods (1984) did some work on how the new pupil is socialised, Benyon (1985) examined the socialisation of pupils into secondary education in greater detail . The study was carried out in a 2000 pupil comprehensive school for 11-18 year old boys in south Wales. Benyon was surprised by the reactions of teachers in the school when he announced that he would like to observe the pupils over the first few weeks at the new school . Most of the teachers felt that little happened in this period and that it was a time when they were sorting out pupils and getting them used to the new school and its procedures.

Benyon found that the majority of pupils developed 'coping ' strategies rather than 'survival' strategies. By this he means that in the coping model they develop the pupils question the power of the teachers to define their classroom worlds. The pupils are 'sussing ' the teachers in the early days and developing strategies to cope with each teacher , so there is a lot more going on than the

34

teachers realised. They are also 'sussing' each other and also developing strategies to cope with each other.

Among the first years Benyon observed the emergence of a 'fraternity' of boys. (Benyon, 1985, p. 94). What distinguished the core membership of the 'fraternity' was that they were catalysts who took the initiative and sent out 'ripples', which could be taken up and amplified by others. Core members were 'attention seekers'. However, the fraternity did not reveal a consistent group culture.

> "The fraternity structure allowed boys to 'suss and muck'; 'enjoy' classrooms ; alleviate boredom; type teachers and peers; and impress fellow pupils ('bodybuild') through brief , dramatic shows of bravado. A notable feature was the speed with which the fraternity emerged, within days, at the start of term and reformed after the reshuffle." (ibid, p. 95)

The reshuffle mentioned above refers to the reorganisation of the classes in first year after the first month in the school when some of the fraternities were broken up. However, as Benyon says above the 'fraternities' reformed very rapidly.

Benyon , like Measor and Woods (1984) , found that myth was an important part of the initial encounters of pupils and teachers in the new school. Five 'families' of myths were discovered in the Lower School. Both teachers and pupils had their own versions of them. Where they differed (as in the case of definitions of what constituted fun and enjoyment in school) , then conflict resulted.

"The five 'families ' of myths were:

1. Valid curriculum content and teaching style

2. Purposes of schooling

3. The need for order and discipline

4. Sex and gender

5. Pupil and peer acceptability." (ibid, p. 227)

The myths were very powerful:

"Views and practices which were not in line with the messages they articulated were excluded and derided by the significant teacher and pupil reality definers alike. Whilst their origins lay far outside classrooms , these myths were sedimented in common-sense thinking and were translated through strategies into an uncompromising 'school for men' as Lower School vigorously re-established each September." (ibid, p. 229)

Delamont and Galton (1986) report on work done in six schools in three local authorities by researchers at the University of Leicester between 1975 and 1980. The project was know as the ORACLE project , and Delamont and Galton report on the ethnographic material discovered in the project. They found that schools used five different options in their induction programmes for new students :

Option 1: Teachers from the 'destination schools' come to the feeder school and give talks and answer questions. (They may bring a few pupils from their school on the visit.)

Option 2: Children go in parties from their feeder schools (with or without their class teacher) on a short visit to their destination school.

Option 3: Parents (with or without their children) visit the destination school for an open evening.

Option 4: Children come from the feeder schools to spend a whole working day in their destination school, having lessons, lunch, assembly and break. (Usually a whole year group in the school are sent on a trip to clear space for the visitors.)

Option 5: Teachers from the destination school actually teach at feeder schools on a regular basis, and get to know some of their future pupils over a long period.

They also found a lot of anxiety among the new pupils and they found that the anxieties could be broken into 4 groups:

1.   fellow pupils;

2.   school buildings and facilities;

3.   teachers;

4.   the curriculum.

Of the five options above the only one that was really successful in reducing anxiety was option 4. They found that the tours did not reduce anxiety because the pupils were cynical about them , realising that the teachers were putting on a show, and that the reality would be different. . They were also aware of the transitory nature of their visit.

They saw the demand for immobility of students in the secondary school as one of the biggest changes that children faced on transfer from primary to secondary school .

Similar to all of the other studies mentioned above they found that the majority of children made the transition successfully within a few weeks, and that "within a very few weeks the difficulties pupils are having are schooling problems, *not* transfer problems." (Delamont and Galton, 1986, p.240)

Gorwood (1986) looked at the issue of curricular continuity and school transfer. Leaving aside the work on curricular continuity , he did agree with Delamont and Galton (1986) that visits by secondary teachers to a primary school need to be planned carefully. Not a lot is achieved by the 'cosy chat'. "The most successful visits have been ones with a clear practical purpose in which pupils have been able to recognise what they understood by 'teacher'." (Gorwood, 1986, p. 206). The essentials to proceed in the first few days is what is required in any first meeting.

Gorwood made a number of recommendations for schools , so that the bad effects of transfer could be overcome. While he agreed that the larger schools should have a person specifically assigned to helping children make the transition, he advised that it is the duty of all teachers to ease the transition for

pupils. This inevitably involves the teachers in primary and secondary levels working together, and he saw no evidence in his work that this was likely to happen.

He also advised schools to involve the parents of the children more in the transfer arrangements between schools. He recognised the need for a mechanism in schools to enable parents and teachers to discover how well an individual is adapting to the transfer, but knew that such a mechanism would demand a lot of time on the part of teachers, and that a decision to set up such a mechanism would have to come from those who held the purse strings. He did see a role for the middle school in this context.

Hargreaves (1986) also looked at the middle schools in England. These had been set up in response to the Plowden Report as a zone of transition between primary and secondary education. In his study Hargreaves came to the conclusion that they had failed in this role, that instead of solving the problems encountered by a sudden transition to secondary from primary, they caused more problems.

> "In summary, the combination of teachers' cultures, careers, strategies and perspectives which followed from the meritocratic orientation of and administrative constraints upon the middle school meant that in its upper years, this school directed itself towards realising the assumptions and goals of a secondary inspired meritocratic vision for which it was never properly equipped. In many cases, then, in their upper years, middle schools ... operated like diluted secondary moderns." (Hargreaves, 1986, p. 208)

39

Youngman (1986) draws together a number of studies on the effects of transfer on children moving from primary to secondary school. In it Summerfield (1986) describes her research on the academic performance after transfer and notes that a child's ability to cope is challenged in the transfer process , and that unless there is a good transfer of information between the teachers of the schools on either side of the transition a child will not improve as a result of the transfer.

Work by Brown and Armstrong (1986) in the same series of studies found that problems encountered by some children remain with them into their second year in the secondary . They also found that girls seem to cope better than boys, a result which differed from the study by Simmons (1973). Similar to Gorwood (1986) they felt that a lot of the problems could be solved by better communication between the teachers on either side of the transition.

Murdoch (1986) , again in the same series of studies, found that two main issues surfaced in the research . Firstly, whilst most teachers felt that attempts should be made to ease the transfer , many added that most of the children adjusted well to their new learning environment. Secondly, the first term at upper school is a crucial transition stage when children have to adapt not only to their new school, but to a new peer group and new status. (Murdoch, 1986, p. 65).

Murdoch suggests that there are two main areas in which teachers can ease transfer for pupils, and good communication between the sectors is again seen as essential . Firstly, those in primary or middle schools might encourage much more realistic expectations of the new school and personally 'hand over' the children to their new school teachers . Secondly, there appears to be

40

much scope for curriculum planing over the transition period which requires regular and effective contact between feeder and receiving schools.

Cotterell (1986) looked at transition in schools in Australia. He found that children there also suffered a marked decline in school achievement , similar to that found by Summerfield (1986). He suggests that this may be due to the lack of cognitive maturity in students at the period when they transfer schools.

> "The cognitive demands of high school, which students foreshadowed would be greater than those of primary school , are generally not appreciated. Like tourists in a foreign country, the students lack the ability to discriminate the features of their new environment at sufficient depth and detail to appreciate the complexities to which they are being asked to respond." (Cotterell, 1986, p. 81)

Teachers also failed to understand this , he says, and they often expect their pupils to 'shape up or ship out' and they fail to realise that the problem may be that their teaching is failing to accommodate the new students. Once again the solution he suggests is better communication between the teachers in the schools involved in the transfer.

In the same series of studies reported in Youngman (1986) Shanks and Welsh (1986) describe a study they carried out in the rural areas of two Scottish regions, Highland and Tayside. They found no evidence to suggest that rural children faired any worse than their urban counterparts when transferring from primary to secondary school.

The child centred approach advocated by Plowden , and recommended in many of the studies mentioned above as a means of easing transition , was

41

not adopted by teachers in secondary schools . As far as this researcher can determine it was not accepted in any country in practice, and some idea of this is to be found in Gruber (1987) who looking at the schools in Germany and Austria and found that the teacher-centred and bureaucratically controlled systems of the sixties and seventies remained as the norm , not only in secondary schools but also in primary schools into the late eighties.

In 1987 a study was carried out in the North of Ireland by Knox (1987). She looked at 12 post-primary schools , with 896 pupils aged from 11 to 12. They were tested at intake and 4 months later on. She found that at intake pupils proceeding to grammar schools had higher self-concepts, better self-esteem and better time management scores, were more 'internally directed', presented fewer worries and depressive symptoms than their peers in secondary school . In the follow up study a similar result was found for self-concepts, self-esteem, and time management. Differences between 'types of school' for worries and depression were no longer apparent. Grammar school pupils presented higher anxiety scores than secondary school pupils.

In the first part of the study Knox had identified a risk group , and this group presented at intake, higher depression, and anxiety than the no risk group . In the follow up a similar result was obtained. The at-risk group in secondary school were also more 'externally directed' and presented more worries than the no risk group in secondary schools. As Knox found that this group is identifiable at intake it has implications for schools.

Differences were also found corresponding to the type of school studied. In the single sex schools , pupils , at intake, had significant higher self-esteem, self-concept, and time management scores than their peers in co-ed schools. In

the follow up differences in scores for the gender composition of schools were less clearly defined in terms of interaction effects.

For many pupils Knox felt that the transition from one sector to another caused feelings that are akin to those who have experienced a bereavement. Knox suggests that the grief stages described in studies on dying are experienced during the transition by children.

Knox also found evidence for the six reactions found by Youngman (1979).

In Jones (1989) a study of the management of pupil transition between schools in East Medshire was undertaken. It found that the schools involved varied greatly in the strategies they adopted to ensure the efficacy of their transfer preparations and that little progress had been made towards building upon children's learning experiences. (Jones, 1989, p. 204). Jones assumed that parents and pupils will have anxieties of a general nature as they tried to make the transition successfully. Jones was more interested in the management issues which these anxieties threw up for the schools involved .

Jones (1989) found that the measures most frequently used to ease transfer between schools were as follows: visits by children before transfer (72%), occasional visits by teachers (83%), visits by head-teachers (82%), information on subsequent progress (50%), and joint meetings of teachers for discussion about the curriculum (29%).

All of the Comprehensive schools arranged for intending pupils to visit the school with their classmates and twelve of the fourteen schools arranged an additional opportunity for pupils to visit with parents. All 14 schools indicated that when pupils visited , a guided tour took place. In all cases an address was

given by either the head-teacher, the head of lower school or by first year tutors. Other schemes highlighted were as follows: one school had established a policy of allowing a panel of first year pupils to answer questions posed by the new intake pupils , and it also organised a 'play-day' when the primary sector schools used secondary sector facilities - such as the swimming pool and the sports hall. Five schools offered the opportunity for their feeder primary schools to spend a full day with them , including having lunch ; two feeder primaries were invited per day in three cases and one per day in the remaining two cases. (ibid, p. 212)

Jones also found evidence that the problem highlighted in many of the studies above was still a problem , viz. that communication between the primary and post-primary sectors was poor. For example, only six primary sector head-teachers visited the Secondary sector schools for discussions, and there were no staff interchanges for teaching purposes. Coupled with this lack of communication Jones found that secondary teachers felt that they were in some way superior to primary sector teachers because of their 'specialism'. (ibid, p. 214).

Jones felt that "for the majority of pupils it is as if their previous experience is of no consequence and all of them must start their new schools at the same curricular pace without regard to the learning that has previously occurred." (ibid, p. 216)

Jones (1989) made three recommendations :

> 1. an attempt be made to build upon children 's areas of competence already acquired in the Primary sector school;

44

2. an attempt be made to lessen the mismatch of learning environments and pedagogies, a mismatch caused partly by different organisational structures of both primary and secondary sector schools;

3. an attempt be made to resolve the main constraints to effective liaison between the different sectors. (ibid, p. 218).

In the nineties a number of studies showed that really nothing had changed in the schools to ease the transfer for pupils. The problem of curricular continuity remained , to such an extent that Gorwood (1991) wondered if there was a need for legislation to force post-primary schools to adjust to primary schools, or vice-versa. The self-esteem of children was still being affected by poor transitions, and children were as anxious as ever about the transfer.

Wigfield, Eccles , Mac Iver, Reuman and Midgley (1991) in a study in the United States of America found that adolescents become more negative about school and themselves after the transition to junior high school . (Wigfield et al, 1991, p. 552). The blame for these changes were found to be due in part to the differences in the school environments of elementary and junior high schools. They also found a significant gender effect, in that boys reported significantly higher self-esteem than did the girls. Their results confirmed Simmons et al (1973, 1979) in that they showed that children' s self-esteem is lower immediately after the transition to junior high school.

The data confirm that there is a small group of children who are at risk , and that these children never regain their pre-transitional levels of self-confidence.

45

"We may see in these data the beginning of psychological processes that put these adolescents at risk for later school failure. Schools need to provide some means for young adolescents to develop more positive beliefs about the legitimate activities they can participate in at school." (Wigfield et al, 1991, p. 564).

Around the same time Pyatt (1992) looked at how American schools manage transition . Pyatt suggests the US system tends to neglect curriculum progression but emphasises pastoral continuity. (Pyatt, 1992, p. 231). Pyatt found that taken from the various perspectives of continuity , the consensus regarding primary-secondary transfer is that it can be a traumatic time for children and that staff should work in partnership to prepare and facilitate a smooth passage for their pupils . (ibid, p. 232).

Education is compulsory in the USA for 12 years of elementary and secondary school . To ease the transfer Pyatt mentions that a report in 1989 (The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989)) stated that middle schools were potentially society's most powerful force to recapture millions of youth adrift and help every young person thrive during early adolescence. However, it continued by stating that a volatile mismatch existed between the organisation and curriculum of middle schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents. (ibid, p. 232).

A task force was set up in Kentucky and it called for middle schools to create small communities for learning, to teach a core academic programme , to ensure success for all pupils, have middle schools staffed by specialist teachers for that age group and to aim to improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of the young people.

46

It was agreed by the task force that at transfer pupils need:

- help with personal organisation skills

- social skills of talking , listening, sharing with a peer group / class

- help to prepare and complete homework by deadlines

- encouragement to take responsibility for themselves

- fears allayed about older pupils bullying and myths of initiation. (ibid, p. 233)

A study by Berndt and Mekos (1995)   investigated the feelings of 101 adolescents before , just after , and half a year after they had moved from elementary school to junior high school in the US. Their findings were a little different to others, in that they found that at each of the times they interviewed the students they were found to make more positive statements than negative ones about the transfer. They felt that this suggested that the adolescents perceived the move as desirable rather than stressful .

They also found that there were differences in perceptions of the transfer. Where a student was more inclined to misconduct and where the student's level of achievement were low the perceptions tended to be less positive than those of other students.

A study by Lee , Harris and Dickson (1995) in six local education authorities in England between August 1992 and March 1994 found that curricular continuity was still more a pious thought than a reality. However, they did find that there was some progress made by schools in communicating with

each other, but that consultation "had nowhere reached the stage where an analysis of needs had led to the rationalisation of the transfer documentation." (Lee, Harris and Dickson, 1995, p. 51).

The problems encountered by children on transfer were very similar in their study to those in other studies mentioned above.

> "When children in transition were asked what they were looking forward to , answers describing what they had looked forward to fell broadly into three categories:
>
> - those which referred to the new and expanded environment of the receiving school
>
> - those which referred to curriculum and school work
>
> - those which identified other, non-curricular opportunities, available in the receiving school." (ibid, p. 60)

Many of the students interviewed talked of the bigger school, new friends, and new teachers. Their comments on school work showed that they had looked forward, not only to new aspects of curriculum, but also to changes in the way that the teaching was organised. They also had some worries and some of these were: would teachers be nice, would they find their way around, could they stay with friends, could they find their way to school, would lessons be harder, homework, and using new equipment, security, a secure environment. Fear of bullying and teasing featured. However, graphic

descriptions of the practice of bullying turned out in their subsequent experience to be grounded more in myth than in reality.

In nearly all cases, they felt that the things they had looked forward to had turned out to be positive features of their experience. This would confirm the findings of many of the other studies , that the majority of children settle into their new schools quickly.

Lee et al (1995) found that a factor which appeared to mitigate the alienation felt by pupils when entering the receiving school was the presence there of family, particularly siblings. (ibid, p. 62). This was not mentioned in any of the other work studied.

When pupils were asked in Lee's research what they wanted from the whole process of induction they most often mentioned particular experiences;

- "having a look round the receiving school

- meeting new teachers

- having sample lessons." (ibid, p. 63)

Lee and her colleagues felt that there would be no real progress in easing the problems of curriculum continuity and transition effects on pupils until teachers in the various sectors actually begin to really communicate with each other, and collaborate with each other, within the same school and within schools in different sectors in an area.

Collaboration between teachers was also seen as vital in a study by Frost (1996). Frost saw schools as places where children are " by the following

July sorted out into those who will succeed and those who will fail." (Frost, 1996, p. 177) . He is highly critical of the way schools tend to departmentalise the management of the transition . It is the concern of the whole educational community , and it should not be left to one sector or one group of teachers in a school to sort out.

Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) describe how the role of the school has changed . They assume in their study that "the main purpose of schooling for young adolescents ... is *not* to prepare students for senior high school but to help made education a continuous process addressing the personal , social , physical , and intellectual needs of young people at each particular stage in their development ." (Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan, 1996, p. 5). However, in their analysis of the secondary school today they criticise the schools for what they describe as the "three dominant and interrelated factors of their culture; *academic orientation, student polarisation* and *fragmented individualism.*" (ibid, p. 26). In their analysis they see these three factors as being responsible for isolation and alienation among students because they have led to a neglect of the students' personal and social-development needs . They have also led to the creation of large rates of failure , by embracing a very narrow view of achievement, viz. academic. By encouraging ability grouping the secondary school has restricted the access of many students to knowledge, and leads to polarisation between the groups with the more successful groups embracing the official values of the school , and the less successful ones inverting them. Much of the alienation and rejection of schools by pupils can be accounted for in this way. The 'disenchanted' and 'worried' reactions by pupils on transfer to secondary school depicted in Youngman (1978) are

50

attributable to these factors. Raven (1977) and Boldt (1994) found evidence of the effects of these factors in Ireland. Their work is discussed later.

While Hargreaves et al (1996) also saw need for continuity between the primary and post-primary sectors to ease the effects of transition on pupils , they also feel that "eliminating all vestiges of discontinuity between elementary or junior high school and high school may be a mistake; depriving students of their felt entitlement to a clear status passage that is substantial and significant ." (ibid, 1996, p. 37). They also feel "it is important to remember that there are also positive aspects to transfer, such as the great expectations that students have of their new school, sometimes heightened by well-orchestrated induction programmes. But at the heart of their promise may be the greatest danger of all - of expectations being unfulfilled and disenchantment setting in." (ibid, p. 38).

The long term effects of a poor transfer experience by students needed to be urgently addressed by schools. Hargreaves et al (1996) would say it is vital that

> " schools should concentrate on such things as reversing previous patterns of academic failure, building student confidence, improving guidance services, providing alternative programmes , establishing firm attendance policies, reducing course failure rates, and creating a positive school atmosphere that encourages students to feel a sense of belonging to the school." (ibid, p. 40).

Hargreaves et al (1996) go even further, in that they feel the time has come for schools to restructure themselves completely. To ease the effects of transition they suggest that the modern school has to become more of a community , and that this can only be achieved by schools reducing their size to create a more intimate, supportive environment, and by creating mini-communities within larger schools for the same reason. (ibid, p. 72). They make the point that many secondary schools fail to retain students precisely because they never really engaged them in the first place. (ibid, p. 80).

Hargreaves et al (1996) would see that more than curriculum continuity is required to engage the modern secondary school student , that what is really required on the level of the curriculum is curriculum reform. This would involve addressing the "most sacred norm of secondary schooling - its organisation around high-status school subjects". (ibid, p. 110).

At this point it could be argued that we have come full circle and have arrived back once again at the ideals of the Plowden Report. Its emphasis on a 'child-centred' approach rather than any other approach is what most of the research on easing the effects of transfer has suggested as well. Meeting the needs of the individual pupil , rather than treating all pupils in a similar fashion, is what is required to make children's' experience of school a good one.

2.3. Research in Ireland.

No study on the scale of that by Nisbet and Entwistle in Scotland , or Spelman in the north of Ireland has been carried out so far in the Republic of Ireland. A number of studies were carried out in 1977 (O'Flaherty (1977), Raven

(1977) and Sheehan (1977)) but only one of them was published, viz. Raven (1977).

O'Flaherty (1977) examined the procedures used by schools in the city of Galway to facilitate the transition between primary and secondary school . The most suitable age of transfer was investigated, as were the factors which cause set back or act as stimuli on transfer from primary to secondary school. Factors like a child's ambition, motivation , social maturity, socio-economic status, fear and insecurity due to lack of information , and feelings of isolation were found to have positive and negative effects on the children . The researcher found that communication was poor between the feeder schools and the receiving schools , with the exception where a feeder school was a junior school of a secondary school.

Sheehan (1977 and 1981) used questionnaires and essays to discover the effects of transfer on children moving from primary to post-primary . Children were found to feel anxiety when the school they were moving to was unknown and frightening to them as a result. When this anxiety was not dealt with the children were liable to develop school phobia. The 'clean break' seemed to be the approach used in the majority of schools .

It was clear to Sheehan that in the schools studied the child was being made to fit the school , rather than the reverse. A central issue which was the main cause of anxiety among the children was the replacing of the child-centred curriculum of the primary school by a subject-centred curriculum in the secondary school. In Sheehan (1981) the pastoral care programme suggested in Hamblin (1978) is highly recommended as an approach that all schools should adopt to ease the effects of transition . Also recommended is a

guidance scheme for children in their early years in the secondary school , one which would include

> "a system of regular testing, periodic checks and recording the judgements of teachers about the educational developments of children. It would also include advice on coping with the homework demands of a plurality of subject teachers together with their varied expectations of pupils . It would also embrace the teaching of study skills, note-taking, library use, memorising and so on." (Sheehan, 1981, p. 33).

Sheehan also felt that close contact between the feeder and receiving schools was vital. The children in the primary school should be encouraged to visit their neighbouring secondary school on occasions such as the sports days, concerts, open days and other occasions. Sheehan also saw a need for better communication between the secondary schools and the parents of the children in them.

A survey by Raven (1977) among 4000 Irish and English pupils , who had left school , showed that a third of all the pupils seemed to be disenchanted with school, and larger proportions were unhappy with certain school subjects and with schools' ability to achieve some of their main goals. (Raven, 1977, p. 3).

Raven found that due to a concentration on one single factor model of the intellect teachers do little to tackle the problem of disenchantment. But then Raven said that all of the blame could not be placed at the feet of teachers as researchers had failed to supply teachers with an alternative model of the

intellect, or with an examination system which gave teachers and students recognition for working towards the more important goals of education . Not a lot has changed in the twenty years since this research was carried out.

In the eighties in Ireland this researcher was able to find three studies relating to transfer. One was a government report (Department of Education , 1981), and the others were (Lyddy, 1981) and (Crooks and Mc Kernan, 1984).

The Report of the Pupil Transfer Committee (Department of Education, 1981) began by recognising that it was late on the scene but it saw this as an advantage :

> " It permits us to profit from the experience of other countries in their search for satisfactory solutions. The considerable amount of documentation available from, for instance, the United Kingdom and the United States has been of great service to us. From Switzerland there were the findings of Professor Piaget, who has long reigned as a world-renowned researcher in the very area of mental and intellectual growth to which the subject of our remit is immediately related."
> (Department of Education, 1981, p. 6).

The Report saw its function as providing clear guidelines to those in charge of schools to facilitate the transfer of pupils from one sector to another. The Report recognised that a significant number of pupils would make the transition without any severe interruption in their education. However, it did express concern for the timid and nervous or otherwise inhibited children and it recommended that these children should be the recipients of some pastoral attention on the part of the school. (Department of Education , 1981, p. 16).

It was not able to put any exact figure on the number of children who may need this special treatment, as there were no figures available from researchers in Ireland. The Report assumed the figures from English studies would be replicated here, viz., about one in six children at any time and up to one in five at some time during their school career will require some form of special educational provision. (ibid, p. 17).

The report divided the children who would need special help when transferring from primary to post-primary into seven main types:

1. Slow learners

2. Deprived background

3. Emotional difficulties

4. Specific learning difficulties

5. Handicapped

6. Sensory or physical disabilities

7. uninterested and poorly motivated children (ibid, p. 18).

The Report felt that common to all of them is that they will have experienced failure in one form or another. "Now , with the prospect of transfer to a school in which for a time they will be strangers , and to a more demanding academic situation, they may well feel beaten before they start". (ibid, p. 18).

While the Report called for pastoral care teams in schools it also called for close liaison between primary and post-primary schools for these children, and for the appointment of more remedial teachers , and the appointment of a transfer advisor to ease the transfer for children of all types. (This last proposal was objected to by the ASTI and the TUI in addenda , and by one other member of the committee). The unions felt it was not possible for a teacher to take on such a role with the other duties of a teacher, and the committee member felt it was likely to be used as an excuse by the other teachers in a staff to ignore the problems caused by transfer.

The Report was aware that this selection of children who needed help had within it the danger that any sense of isolation on the part of a child with special needs "may lead to a withdrawal on the pupil's part from the school influence, with a consequent rejection by him or her of the new organisation in toto." (ibid, p. 21).

Once again greater communication between the schools on either side of the transfer divide was stressed by the Report. It also asked that parents and public and private agencies be involved as well in easing the transfer. It suggested that the record card system that existed at the time be improved , so that teachers would actually use it. The report also saw the Intermediate Certificate examination as a terminal examination for many children , and so it recommended that pupils would benefit by a four year run up to it, rather than the three year run up which existed then. (ibid, p. 40).

Curriculum continuity was seen as something to be desired , and the committee recommended that changes should be made to all of the Syllabi

Committees which looked after the interests of the subject teachers. It recommended

> "That it be a fixed principle of future Department of Education policy that any and every Syllabus Committee appointed for a subject at second level which is taught also at primary level contain representation from the primary sector; and that the converse likewise hold. In general, the articulation of the primary and second level syllabi in each subject should be such that the continuity between that for primary school Class VI and post-primary Class 1 be in the same measure as between , say, Classes V and VI of the primary or as between Classes I and II of the post-primary school." (ibid, p. 69).

The Committee recognised that there was a division between the primary teachers and the post-primary teachers, and it recommended that the training courses for teachers be amended so that "within each year of training (the programmes for either level should) include at the very least a week's teaching practice in a school of the other level than that to which the trainee is destined". (ibid, p. 74).

In the same year Lyddy (1981) looked at the transition from primary to secondary in a study covering 7 boys and 8 girls primary schools in which 918 students were about to make the transfer. Lyddy followed up on these students when they had transferred and managed to contact 586 of them. They were spread over 5 boys , 4 girls and 4 mixed post-primary schools.

Lyddy (1981) found that there were significant gender differences . For example, boys who repeated the sixth class in the primary and then transferred

to secondary school were better motivated than girls who did the same. However , in general , Lyddy found that boys were not as motivated as girls after the transfer . This result disagreed with the findings of Simmons (1979) mentioned above. Lyddy also differed with Dale and Griffith (1965) in that there was no evidence in her study that the less able are particularly at risk.

As part of their study Crooks and Mc Kernan (1984) looked at the communication between schools on either side of the transfer divide. They obtained the opinions of principals as well. They found that 58% of the schools in the survey did not have any arrangement with their feeder schools. Interestingly 67% of comprehensive and 72% of community schools did have contact. The larger a school was the more likely it was to have contacts with its feeder schools. (15% -small, 35% - medium, 72% - large.) The figures are even more telling when the rural schools are singled out. It was found that 74% of rural schools do not have any arrangements , whereas 57% of urban schools do. (Crooks and Mc Kernan, 1984 , p. 84). Probably their most alarming finding was that *"There are no transfer arrangements in a majority of schools, and yet only a significant minority of schools is dissatisfied with this situation."* (ibid, p. 133).

In the nineties there were a few studies in Ireland which are relevant for this study. (O'Dalaigh and Aherne, 1990), (Boldt, 1994), (Martin , 1997) and (Naughton, 1997).

O'Dalaigh and Aherne (1990) give a description of how two schools have tried to alleviate the problems experienced by pupils on transfer from primary to post-primary school. The work of a local Transition Committee is described. The committee consisted of people from schools on either side of

the transfer divide. So this is one of the few examples of an attempt made to improve communication between the two sectors.

The committee introduced a new subject into the primary school for the third term in sixth class. The new subject was called "The Post-primary School " and it was designed to give the pupils who were transferring all of the information they would require on their first days in the new school. A new 'transition information card ' was designed for use by all of the primary schools in the area. A special induction programme was designed for the new pupils and it was intended that this programme would take a few days at the very least in the new school.

The need for such initiatives between schools was highlighted by Boldt (1994). Boldt (1994) investigated the reasons why pupils from the inner city of Dublin decided to leave school without any formal qualifications . Boldt interviewed 22 early school leavers, together with people who had been in contact with them over their years while in school and just after leaving it ; people like the principals of their schools, teachers in their schools , juvenile liaison and school attendance officers, members of community groups and their parents.

Boldt found that people in schools tended to blame the parents of the children when the children left school early.(Boldt, 1994, p. 25). Boldt found no evidence that the people in the schools were accurate in their assumptions. While the background of the children did have a small influence on the children , the main reasons seem to be school-related. Students who left early said that the main reason they left school early was the nature of the pupil-teacher relationship which had existed between them and their teachers.

Problems are generated by the schools themselves , by their systems which alienate teachers and pupils by their structures and curricula. (ibid, p. 7).

Schools are not meeting the needs of their students , schools are too academic, and schools are out of touch with what is happening outside of them . These were just some of the comments about schools made to Boldt by parents and community members . (ibid, p. 30). The interviews with the early school-leavers seemed to bear this out, as they found that in the schools the teachers could not relate to them , did not respect them , were out of touch , and did not take time to get to know them . (ibid, p. 38). It was not just one incident that they were describing, in fact their decisions to leave school were the result of an ongoing process of their experience with school. (ibid, p. 42).

Boldt (1994) felt that it was only the teacher who could address the problems of the early school-leaver . What matters to a pupil is not whether a school is lacking resources, but how she or he is treated in that school. ...It is the opinion of most members of the sample that teachers are more responsible for this relationship, as they are the ones who establish and direct it." (ibid, p. 55). From the point of view of this thesis it is important to remember that these relationships begin on the day the pupil enters the door of the school for the first time, and unless good induction programmes are in operation in a school much damage can be done to a child's self-esteem and confidence , to the extent that the child eventually leaves the school early rather than continue to endure school.

In Martin (1997) the two main reasons why young people are disenchanted by school are said to be that they do not have a sense of belonging, and that they perceive the curriculum to be irrelevant and boring. (Martin, 1997, p. 23). It

61

is as if nothing has changed in the schools since the work of Plowden in England and the Transfer Committee in Ireland. Besides recommending better liaison between primary and secondary schools , and a greater involvement of parents, it also recommends the establishment of a central database to monitor and record details of school attendance. It would be used to locate the children of school-going age who are 'lost' in the system. (ibid, p. 55).

The most recent study in Ireland is that of Naughton (1997). 101 pupils in four primary schools were interviewed about their attitudes towards their pending transfer to local second-level schools. Pupils were asked to state their worries , and the researcher found that only 7% of respondents said that they were 'very worried', 47% had an equal mix of worry and expectation, and the remaining 46% declared themselves to be 'quite happy' or 'very happy' about the prospect.

Unlike other researchers Naughton found no gender differences . There was a slight difference in what worried each sex, the boys tended to worry about academic performance , whereas the girls worried about rules and regulations in the school.

Naughton also looked at the help the pupils had received in easing the transfer, and found that while 61% of respondents stated that they learned most of what they knew about the transfer school from their friends or siblings, only 17% claimed either the primary or secondary school as the main source of their information. So it would appear that the majority of schools in the study were failing to put in place structures which would ease the transfer for their pupils . However, Naughton did find that the data confirmed the view that adolescents face transfer with a mixture of hope and fears. The inevitable

disengagement from the familiar is made easier by the appeal of opportunities presented by the change. A sense of 'growing up' makes the transition attractive, as autonomy is seen to increase, with greater independence of choice and decision-making.

Naughton (1997) makes a number of recommendations to schools . Pastoral care programmes need to be designed which would not be over protective , but would accompany the pupil in the early days in the new school. Schools on both sides of the transfer divide would need to restructure their pedagogical and assessment practices to lessen the discontinuities experienced by students. Better communication between teachers in both sectors is again called for by Naughton.

2.4 Summary

There is general agreement in the literature that the age of 12 appears to be a suitable age for children to transfer from primary to post-primary school. The older a child is on transfer the better is the self-esteem of the child , and the greater is the likelihood that the transfer will be made without any adverse effects.

All of the literature agrees that there is a great need for more and better communication between teachers in the primary and post-primary sectors. This communication has to improve in the nature of the data transferring with the students . It is seen as vital that not only the results of tests be transferred , but also all information that would be relevant to the future development of the child. Work also needs to be done in breaking down professional barriers between teachers in the two sectors, and between teachers in the same school.

Information on the programmes taught in the various sectors needs to be disseminated between the teachers as well. The literature would seem to feel that there is a need for some legislation in this regard , as teachers seem to be reluctant to do anything about it themselves.

All of the literature agrees that students are affected by the transfer process, and that for the majority of children the effects are short term. However , the literature also agrees that there is a small group , ranging from 6% to 20% , who suffer long lasting and potentially catastrophic effects as a result of their transfer experiences. These children are recognisable , and schools need to care for them, or they become early school-leavers, or maladjusted teenagers for the rest of their lives.

There is also general agreement that girls and boys are affected differently, but the literature differs in which sex suffers the most at transfer. Students whose parents are positively supportive of their educational progress seem to make the transfer with more confidence than those whose parents , while not being negative, are not positive either. There is also general agreement that there is no difference in the effects felt by urban or rural children, and one group does not fair any worse than the other.

While all of the literature agrees that there should be specific induction programmes in post-primary schools to help pupils make the transfer with the minimum of disturbance to themselves, they also say that the pupils get a lot of their information from their peers , through myths, fraternities (or sisterhoods) , and other mechanisms which the new pupils develop to cope with the change. Schools are advised to have lengthy induction programmes ,

and to concentrate on the first day with the basic information the children need immediately.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

A combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures were adopted by the researcher to determine the techniques used by the schools receiving new students . to discover what effects the transfer was having on the pupils involved, and to ascertain if the schools were achieving what they had set out to do .

The procedures used consisted of a student questionnaire, student essays , semi-structured interviews with the principals of the post-primary schools , an analysis of the timetables in each school, and an analysis of the attendance and detention records of the first year students in the schools. These procedures are described in more detail below.

3.2 Student questionnaires

A copy of the questionnaire is to be found in appendix A. As presented to the students it consisted of five pages, with a total of 104 questions. It was piloted among a group of second year pupils in one of the schools towards the end of their first month in second year. A few changes were made to it and it was then shown to the principals of the three schools participating in the study.

The questionnaire set out to elicit from the students how they felt about the transition to their new school , and how well they were settling in. The students were asked about

66

- their feelings about the primary school they had left,

- how they had come to hear of the school they were now in,

- what they would have liked to have known before they came to it,

- the worries they had before coming , and now have,

- how they settled in ,

- problems with timetable , with subjects , with books, with other students, with school rules ,

- and how their parents were involved.

There were also some ethnographic questions, to enable the researcher to build a profile of the students.

A decision was made to delay the actual survey until after the mid-term break in October, and the survey was carried out in November and December in the 1996-1997 academic year in the three schools. This decision was taken as it was felt that some of the questions would require the students to be in the school for at least a few months if the questions were to be answered well. For example , it was felt that signs of disaffection might be hard to find before a few months had elapsed in the new school.

There were seven classes involved in the study, two in Woodview school , one in Riverview school, and four in Bellview school . The names of the schools are changed to provide anonymity. There were on average 25 pupils

in each class. Each class was met on its own by the researcher and taken for a double period (80 minutes) with the permission of their teachers.

The nature of the questionnaire was explained to the students and they were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. While personal details were required in the survey , the names of those participating were not on the questionnaires. The students filled out the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher , who answered any questions they had as they progressed through it.

Each page of the survey was numbered by the researcher when the students had finished answering it. This was to prevent one pupil's answers being confused with those of another. The data from each school was kept separate from the other schools to enable any differences between the schools to be detected.

The different sizes of the first year cohorts in each school , as well as the amount of data gathered in the survey, forced the researcher to take a sample from two of the schools for analysis, to make the project manageable. A sample of twenty was taken from each of first year cohorts in Woodview and Bellview, and the 20 questionnaires returned from Riverview were all used. The samples were chosen at random .

The data were entered into a spreadsheet and database software package (Microsoft Excel) for analysis.

3.3 Student essays

As a follow up, and a back up, to the questionnaires each student was asked by their English teacher to write a short essay on "What I miss most from my Primary School". These essays were assigned to the students shortly after they returned from their Christmas holidays and they were collected by the teachers in early February.

Each essay was read by the researcher and common themes from them were noted. The same software package was used to collate these data as above. It was the hope of the researcher that these essays would give an indication of how many of the children were looking back, maybe with regret, to what they had left, and that they might identify children who were finding the transition difficult.

3.4 Interviews with the principals

In the initial talks with each principal regarding this research project it was agreed that time would be given for a semi-structured interview with each of the principals. Each principal was supplied with the list of questions that would be asked in the interview. In appendix B is a copy of these questions. There were 103 questions in each interview.

The interviews took place in the second term , a time which the principals suggested as being more suitable than any other. Each interview took between two and three hours and were recorded on a tape-recorder. Later they were transcribed for analysis.

The overall intention of these interviews was to hear the various transition procedures in each school described by each principal , and to hear their views on how successful these procedures were. Each interview dealt with

- how first contacts with pupils are made,

- how the new pupil is 'catered for' on the first day in the new school,

- what happens to the pupils in the first few weeks ,

- what structures are in place in the school to facilitate the transition,

- the nature and quality of communications with the feeder primary schools,

- the 'concessions' given to first year pupils to ease the effects of the transition,

- the allocation of subjects and teachers to first years.

The three principals could not have co-operated more than they did. Each of them was very concerned that they should be understood clearly and they spared no detail in their answers.

3.5 Timetable analysis

The three schools in this study produce their timetables in the same way. They all use a computer programme designed for schools in Ireland , called Facility Timetabler. Each principal supplied a copy of their timetable on a computer disc which this researcher was able to analyse using the programme mentioned above.

The purpose of this analysis of the timetables was to discover if there was any difference between the timetables of the first years and that of the other years. From this researcher's own experience as a timetabler it is generally the case that all other years in a school are timetabled before the first years. The usual practice is to leave the timetabling of first years to the last, for the simple reason that they are usually the easiest to timetable. This has the inevitable consequence that the first years get whatever, and whoever , is left after the other years have been taken care of.

This often means that they have not the choice of subjects they would desire, or they may not have the use of specialist rooms that they require, or they may not have the teachers who are perceived to be the most competent. This researcher felt that the priorities of a school could be detected in the timetable it used , and for this reason the timetables of each of the schools were examined.

In Johnson (1980) a number of formulae are given which can be used to analyse a timetable. The analysis consisted of applying formulae to the timetables and comparing the figures arrived at in this way. Some of the units, and the formulae are described below.

A **curriculum unit** is one ninth of the number of periods in a week. It is a unit used for timetable analysis by the Inspectorate in the Department of Education and Science in England.

The **basic provision of curriculum units** is calculated by dividing the number of pupils by three. It is just a convenient datum-line , first put forward by Davies (1969). The **actual provision of curriculum units** is obtained

71

by dividing the number of lessons by the number of curriculum units in a school. A comparison of these gives an idea of how efficient a school is running.

The **bonus** is the difference between the actual and basic provision of curriculum units. The bigger this number is the smaller on average is the class size in the school and the greater is the number of teachers applied to each class. If first years were to be given positive discrimination in a school then there should be a 'bonus' in the first year timetable.

The **staffing ratio** is the ratio of the number of teachers to the number of pupils in the school. It is the inverse to the pupil-teacher ratio . A comparison of this ratio between the various years in a school gives an idea of where the resources of the school are being placed.

The **average teaching load** is the number of periods a teacher is usually timetabled for in the school. This figure is determined by agreement with the unions in Ireland.

The **average class size** is obtained by dividing the number of pupils by the product of the average teaching load and the contact ratio. It would be expected that this would be lowest in first year if a school is trying to minimise any trauma due to transition.

The **contact ratio** is the ratio of the average teaching load and the number of periods in the week. It gives a measure of the average fraction of a staff that are teaching classes at any instant and it is used to show how efficient a timetable is.

The **relative bonus** is the percentage of the total bonus curriculum units compared to the total basic curriculum units. In England the H M Inspectorate suggest that relative bonuses below 10% restrict a school's curriculum considerably (Johnson, 1980, p. 44).

The **curricular flexibility** (ibid. p. 147) is obtained by multiplying the pupil-teacher ratio by 0.0407 and subtracting the contact ratio from this product. If the resulting number is negative there is flexibility. The more negative the number is the better is the flexibility. Where there is flexibility a timetable can be changed relatively easily if the need arises.

3.6 Detention records of first years

One of the schools , Bellview, has kept all of its disciplinary reports in a computer database for a number of years. These records give information about the pupils in each class that have moved sufficiently along the disciplinary procedures to warrant a detention after school as a punishment.

While this kind of data was not available for the other schools , it was considered worthwhile to analyse these data to discover at what stage in the school year first years began to misbehave to the extent that they merited detention. The records were to be examined as well to see how first years of a few years ago have faired since then. This researcher is of the opinion that the data would give some indication of the degree of disenchantment that is occurring in the new pupils .

3.7 Attendance records of first years

The attendance data for the first years in each of the schools was collected at the end of the school year . These data were analysed to see if there were any patterns developing in them. The researcher felt that they would also give an indication of disenchantment with school on the part of some of the first years.

The work by Boldt (1994) found that many of the early school-leavers became truants long before they eventually left the school for good. While one would not expect truanting to be a major problem with first year pupils it was still considered worthwhile to analyse the data for signs of it.

3.8 Conclusion

A variety of methods has been chosen by the researcher to discover if there are any effects of transition , and what the effects of transition are , on pupils who have made the transfer from primary to post-primary in the schools in the study. This was done in the hope that signs of these effects which might be missed in one approach would appear in another approach.

This researcher was keen to discover if there were any pupils who might be classed as 'disenchanted' or 'worried' in the sense that these words are used by Youngman (1978). It is these categories of children who are likely to become the early school-leavers , or troubled pupils in our schools, and their early identification is vital , for all out sakes, but especially for the sake of the worried or disenchanted child in our schools.

Chapter 4.

Findings of the research

4.1. Introduction

177 pupils transferred from primary to post-primary in the town which is the locus of this piece of research last September. They moved from up to 18 primary schools to the three post-primary schools in the town. Some of them moved from 20-pupil schools to a 650-pupil school, from a two teacher school to one with up to 45 teachers, if all part-time teachers are included. All of the children were in co-educational primary schools, and their secondary school may or may not have been so. The majority of them moved from very small classes to classes containing at least 24 pupils.

A huge amount of change is therefore experienced by the children in the transition from primary to secondary. At the same time a lot of organising is required on the part of the receiving schools to facilitate the transition and to make sure it is not too traumatic for any of the students. The researcher investigated the procedures used by each secondary school, and surveyed the transferred students to see if there were signs that some of them were failing to make the transition successfully.

The results of these investigations are given below. Each instrument used in the research is taken in turn, beginning with the student questionnaire and essay, followed by the interviews with the principals, the timetables of the schools, the detention records of the first years in one school, and the attendance records of the first years in each school.

75

4.2. Student questionnaires

From the ethnographic data in the survey a profile of the schools and the pupils was drawn up, and it is shown in the following table:

Table 1. A profile of the schools and pupils in the sample

Profile of the schools in the sample					
	Woodview	Bellview	Riverview	Totals	%
Sample size	20	20	20	60	100
Boys	0	20	11	31	52
Girls	20	0	9	29	48
Rural	13	10	7	30	50
Town	3	2	12	17	28
Suburbs	4	5	1	10	17
Boarding	0	3	0	3	5
Parents separated	1	2	2	5	8
One parent deceased	0	0	1	1	2
Parents unemployed	1	0	5	6	10
One parent working	7	6	7	20	33
Both parents working	12	14	8	34	57
Walk to school	2	3	9	14	23
Bus to school	12	7	5	24	40
Cycle to school	1	3	2	6	10
Lift to school by car	5	7	4	16	27
Eldest in family	6	5	5	16	27
Youngest in family	6	4	6	16	27
Had no breakfast	3	4	5	12	20
Both parents working , no breakfast	2	2	3	7	12
One working and no breakfast	1	2	1	4	7
Unemployed , and no breakfast	0	0	0	0	0
Worried before transition	9	2	5	16	27
Worried still	4	3	2	9	15
Enjoy reading	18	11	17	46	77
Not happy with choice of school	3	4	3	10	17

.The sample was almost evenly divided between boys and girls. (52%, 48%). The majority of the pupils (50%) came from rural areas around the town , and the title 'rural' referred to students who came from outside a three mile radius of the schools. 45% of the pupils came from the town or its suburbs, and the remaining 5% consisted of boarders from Bellview.

10% of the sample belonged to one-parent homes, the parents either being separated or one parent deceased. 10% of the sampled pupils belong to homes where both parents were unemployed. Over half of the sample were in homes where both parents were working. (57%). The majority of the sample took the bus to school (40%) and just under a quarter of the first years (23%) walked to school. Two of the schools are located in the town , and Bellview is located 3 kilometres from the town centre in one of the suburbs of the town.

20% of the students in the sample came to school on the day of the sample without eating any breakfast. The majority of these children came from homes where both parents were working (60%). On the other hand , none of these children came from homes where both parents were unemployed. This finding is alarming , as it must be very difficult for a student to settle down to a school day without a good start to the day. Furthermore, with both parents working there is a strong likelihood that these children did not receive any main meal at home until the parents returned from work , in the evening. One of the schools has a canteen , but the others do not. The canteen is not open before eleven o'clock on any day, and the first year pupils find it difficult to get to the top of the queue before the time for the next class is upon them.

Just over three-quarters of the sample said that they enjoyed reading (77%) and this would be a great help to them in coping with the academic side of life in the secondary school.

The survey dealt with a number of areas of the life of first year, and these are dealt with below.

(i) Their feelings about the primary school they had left:

22% of the sample said that they would have liked to stay another year in their primary school . The reasons they gave for this were varied. They mentioned the loss of friends (11%), the teachers they missed (16%), the 'crack' they had in their primary school (16%), the easier time they had in the primary (35%), the co-educational nature of the primary (23%) , and the responsibilities they had as senior students in the primary (2%). Some of these reasons also appeared in their essays , which are analysed later.

The remainder were delighted to have made the transfer from primary to secondary school . 47% of these were 'glad to get out of the school' . 15% of them felt that they had made more friends in the new school than they had in the primary school .

When they were questioned about their contact with the primary school since they had left it , 58% had not returned to it at all. Yet 88% of them said that they would like to return to the primary school and tell of their experiences. When asked what sort of advice they would give to the students in the primary school , the main advice they would give is 'not to worry'. After that the advice ranged from ' obey the teachers' , 'make lots of friends', 'enjoy it', to 'be sure you choose the right school'.

(ii) How they had come to hear of the school they were now in?

The majority of the sample (52%) heard about their secondary school from their siblings or cousins who had been , or were at present , in the school. Despite the fact that all of the principals had visited all of the primary schools,

only 20% of the pupils said that they had heard about their present school from the principal. 85% of the sample had received a communication of some kind from the principal or had attended the open day or open night at the school. Despite this 62% of the sample said that this communication or visit had no influence on their decision to attend the school.

When asked who actually made the decision about the school they were going to attend, 60% said that they made the decision , while the remainder said it was made by their parents.

Only 8% of the pupils said that they had asked their primary teachers for advice about their choice of secondary school. The same amount said that their parents had also sought advice from their primary teachers . It seems that the majority of students had their minds made up for a long time, as 75% of them only considered one school as an option .

(iii) What they would have liked to have known before they came to their new school?

43% of the sample wished to know what the school was actually like. This included wishing to know about the physical layout of the school, the teachers (especially how cross they were), and the daily routine. 20% of the sample wished to know about the subjects being taught in the school.

28% of the sample did not reply to this question .

(iv) The worries they had before coming , and now have:

23% of the sample said that they had no worries before coming to the school. Those with worries , worried about things like bullying (23%), being lonely (22%), what the teachers would be like ((10%), and getting lost (7%)

On the other hand, 72% of the sample said that they were not frightened about going to their new schools. It would seem that despite the worries mentioned above the majority of the students felt they would be able to cope with them.

When those who said that they were frightened about the transfer were asked about their fears, they listed things such as , being bullied (23%), being left out of things (17%), being unable to do what they were asked by the teacher (17%), and cross or strict teachers (8%).

18% of the sample said that they were still worried about these fears. This is their reply after being nearly three months in their new school. The others said that they were no longer afraid. This researcher feels that these children are some of the worried and disenchanted children of Youngman.

(v) How they settled in:

As evidence of their settling in , or failure to do so , in their respective secondary schools , the researcher looked for signs of difficulty being experienced by the pupils in getting on with their teachers, and with their peers, and signs of a failure to cope with the systems in the new school.

At entry to their new school 51% of the sample said that they were overawed by the large number of pupils in the new school, 47% were overawed by the size of the school, 53% said that they were lost on the first day , and 33% of

80

them said that they wished they were back in the primary that day. However, despite these high numbers expressing some anxiety on the first day , 92% of them felt that they were settled in at the time of the survey.

When asked how long it took them to settle in , 33% said that it took them one week, and another 40% said that it took them up to a month to settle in. 8% felt they had not settled in when the survey was taken, towards the end of the first term.

The majority of pupils (42%) felt that they had received the greatest help to settle in from their friends, the next source of help was their parents (17%). 12% felt they had been helped by the principal, and 12% felt they had been helped by their teachers.

To ascertain if the pupils liked the new ways of doing things in their secondary schools compared to their primary schools , 93% of them said that they preferred to have a number of teachers than just one. 87% of the pupils surveyed preferred to move around from one class to the next , rather than stay in one room as they had done in the primary school.

60% of the sample had joined a club of one kind or another in the schools. 88% of the pupils said that they were involved in sports in their schools. 98% of the sample said that they had made new friends in their new school. 78% of them said that they had found it easy to make these new friends.

83% of the sample said that they were able to make sense of what was happening in their school . 92% felt that their principal was fair to them . Slightly less (73%) felt that their teachers were fair to them .When asked

about the fairness of their peers 90% said that they were fair or very fair to them.

It can be seen from these figures that the majority of the pupils were coping very well with the transfer, and were beginning to settle in to the new routine of the secondary school.

(vi) Problems with timetable , with subjects , with books, with school rules :

58% of the sample had some trouble in understanding their timetable . The time taken to understand it took from up to one day for 25% of the pupils, up to one week for 47% of the pupils, up to two weeks for 10% of them , and up to one month for 3% of the sample. 44% of those who had difficulty with their timetable received help from their friends, and 20% of them received help from their teachers.

When questioned about their subjects , 45% of the sample said that they had not received all the subjects they wished for. The subjects which were sought, and not obtained , were Woodwork (by 48%) , Technical Graphics (by 22%) and French (by 15%).

48% of the sample felt that they had too many subjects, and 43% felt that they had just enough subjects. When asked what subjects they would like to drop, 42% said that they would like to drop a language subject , 43% said they would like to drop another academic subject, and the remainder said that they would like to drop a practical subject . As will be seen from the analysis of the principals' interviews the dropping of a subject was not an option for the pupils .

The reasons they gave for wishing to drop a subject varied . Some of the reasons given were, "I hate the subject" (25%), "I am poor at the subject" (22%), "It is too tough" (20%), "It is boring" (12%), and "The teacher is a bad teacher" (7%).

The majority of the sample (58%) said that they were receiving too much homework. 20% felt that they were just getting enough homework. 10% said that there were not getting enough homework !

70% said that they required assistance with their homework , and that they got this help from their brothers and sisters (31%), and from their parents (69%).

When asked about the number of books (including jotters) that they had carried to school on the day of the survey the numbers ranged from 4 to 22. 12% carried up to 10 books, 72% carried between 11 and 20 books, the remainder carrying over twenty books . However, 92% of them did have a locker of their own in the school, or shared a locker with a friend. The students in Riverview rented their books from the school , for £20 per annum. In the other schools the students were given up to two weeks to buy the books they required for the year. The students pointed out that they also carry sports gear, and instruments for drawing , on certain days.

Each school had written rules which all students knew about. However, 23% of the sample had not read the rules. 22% said that their parents had not read the rules. Those pupils who read them said that they understood them , but 48% of them did not agree with some of the rules. The rules that were disapproved of were those covering the wearing of a uniform (55%), the

smoking of cigarettes (14%), the use of free time in the school (10%), and the punishments used by the school (7%).

(vii) How their parents were involved:

77% of the sampled pupils said that they would not like their parents to drop into the school to see them, or to see the school. On being asked why , the students said that it would be seen by the other pupils as a sign that they were in some kind of bother, and that their parents had been summoned to the school by the authorities. It was not seen as 'normal' for a parent to drop in to see how they were doing.

Each school did send out a news letter , at least one per year. There was also a school annual published by each of the schools. 95% of the sample said that they would contribute an article to the newsletter or annual.

4.3. Student essays

As a follow up, and a back up, to the questionnaires each student was asked by their English teacher to write a short essay on "What I miss most from my Primary School". These essays were assigned to the students shortly after they returned from their Christmas holidays and they were collected by the teachers in early February. In the following table is listed the main concerns of the pupils :

Table 2: The frequency of themes in the student essays.

Theme No.	I miss most	Essay Themes-what I miss most								
		Bellview 1	Bellview 2	Bellview 3	Bellview 4	Riverview	Woodview 1	Woodview 2	Totals	%
	No. of Essays	25	13	18	21	18	19	21	135	
	I miss most									
1	Easier time in primary, less homework	32	54	13	23	21	28	14	185	45
2	Friends of primary and coed	3	4	3	7	8	16	13	54	13
3	Being a big fish in a little pond	12	7	3	10		5	9	46	11
4	Not having to get up early	9	7	1	2		7	10	36	9
5	Primary teachers				4	8	9	10	31	8
6	Not being bullied	9	14	3					26	6
	Glad to have left primary because									
1	Harder time in primary	3	3	4			1		11	3
2	Feel more responsible now, more mature	11	3	2	1		2	1	20	5

Also included in the table are two of the reasons some of the pupils were delighted to have made the transfer from primary to secondary school.

The figures in the table do not agree exactly with those obtained in the survey, but the order of the themes is much the same in both the surveys and the essays. The easier time experienced by the majority of them in the primary school is the thing that is missed most of all.

Mentioned in the essays , but not explicitly in the surveys, is the problem of bullying. 6% of the things missed most from the primary was the absence of bullying behaviour in the primary school. As the essays were written a month

or two after the survey was carried out , it would appear that the problem of bullying was being experienced by some of the sample in the meantime.

4.4. Interviews with the principals

(i) How first contacts with pupils are made:

Each of the schools begin their approaches to the various primary schools early in January, by seeking permission from the schools to visit them and talk to their 6th classes. To date they have never been refused permission by any of the primary school principals.

The principals of Woodview and Bellview visits the school together from the end of January and it usually takes them up to the end of February in any one year to complete the rounds of all the primary schools. The principal of Riverview prefers to visit the schools separately as "some principals do not regard our school in the same regard as other schools". He is accompanied by his vice-principal on these visits, which also occur in the months of January , February and March.

The visits vary in length from 20 to 30 minutes in each school. Each principal describes their school and brochures are handed out to each member of the 6th class in the schools. Details of any open days or open nights , and of scholarships which are offered in the case of one school , are given on these occasions. Although 5th year pupils may have been present they are not given any literature. A form is also given to the 6th class pupils in which they fill out their name and address and the school they intend to attend for their post-primary education. This form is collected by the principals before they finish their visit.

The principals , while admitting that they are in direct competition with each other, and with schools adjacent to their catchment areas, see the visit as more than just a recruitment exercise. "The fact that I visit them and they know there is a face attached to the school , the more often they can actually have contact with the school before they come into it certainly eases down a lot of the difficulties they would have." It is seen as a vital contact , and in some cases it was the only contact with a student before they arrived in the school in September. The visits also gave the principals some idea of the number of first year students they could expect in the coming year.

One of the principals revisited the schools about two or three weeks after the first visit, and this visit was shorter than the first visit. The other principals did not do this. All of the principals made further contact with any pupils who had indicated on the returned forms that they were undecided about their choice of post-primary school , by either writing to them , phoning them , or visiting their homes over the Summer holidays . This happened especially in the case of children who had attended an open day or night and had indicated that they were still undecided about their next school.

There was no other contact between the primary schools and the post-primary schools. There was no contact between teachers of either sector and no information was exchanged between the schools up to the time the pupils began school in the post-primary schools.

Open nights , and an open day in the case of one of the schools , were the main source of contact between the schools and the parents of the prospective students. These took place towards the end of second term in the post-primary schools. The primary with the two open 'days' felt that it was "very

important, as it allows people who can't come in on the Friday night to be in on Saturday, or vice versa".

The format of these open days was very similar in all of the schools. The parents, with their children , and often the aunts and uncles as well , assembled in one hall in the school , and were welcomed and addressed by the principal. The ideals of the school , and all of its good points were described to the audience. Each of the principals described how they stressed the instilling of Christian values , such as respect for each other, decency, honesty and fair-play. Another speaker , a counsellor or a year head, described the life of a first year in the school , and in one school , a sample timetable is described to give a feel for the school day in that school. All were given an idea of what they will need , in the line of sports gear, school equipment, commitment to study, if they are going to come to the school.

A tour of the school then takes place in all of the schools. Some have teachers show the people around , and some have pupils to do it. In all of the schools most of the teachers and some present pupils would be present to answer any questions the people had as they walked around the school. Each school had an exhibition of their achievements for all to see.

The parents , on their return from the tour of the school, would then be given a registration form , which they were asked to fill in , regardless of whether they were sending the child or not, and forms are also handed out so that parents could register their children for bus transport. Refreshments were then served to all the visitors and people left as they pleased after that. Any parents who indicated that they were undecided were followed up by each

school , either by writing , or by phone call , or in the case of one principal ,
a visit during the Summer holiday.

The best side of each school was put forward at these meetings. The pupils in
the returns from their survey mention that they realised this , and felt it was all
a little bit unreal.

In one of the schools there was one other contact between prospective students
and the school. This occurred on a Sports day, held in the third term, for all of
the primary schools in the area. The events were run by the secondary school ,
and it gave the primary children another chance to see this school in action. It
was also an occasion when they met a lot of the teachers of the school.

Two of the schools , during the Summer months, sends out a book list, and
details of the school uniform and a date for the first day of school.

(ii) How the new pupil is catered for on the first day in the new school:

The first day at school in each of the schools is a half-day. The new pupils
arrive around 9.30 in the morning and they are received by the principal, vice-
principal, and the year head for first years. In Riverview the first year head is
also the vice-principal .   They are the only pupils present in each of the
schools on that day. They are all received together in one large room or hall.

The principal welcomes them all and introduces them to the vice-principal and
year head. At this stage each school proceeds in a different manner.

In Woodview the primary gives each student a booklet , and in that booklet the
pupil is given a map of the school , their class-mates names, and their
timetable. The classes have already been decided by the primary and the year

head during the Summer. The year head then gives them a 'pep talk' while the principal gathers the rest of the staff (who are present for a staff meeting on that day as well). The staff are introduced to the pupils and each teacher introduces themselves and describe what they teach. Then the students are broken into small groups and brought around the school for tour by the teachers.

The new pupils are then given a snack , and then they are introduced to their class tutors. The pupils are taken by their class tutor to a room and there their timetable is explained to them. Each pupil is also asked at this stage to introduce herself to the other members of her class. They are shown the classroom where their first class will be when they begin their first full day in the school. They leave the school around 12.30.pm.

In Riverview , after being welcomed by the principal, the new pupils are given forms to fill out, which include personal details for the schools records. They are divided into temporary classes. The basic rules that they need to obey are outlined to them They are then given a general knowledge test for one hour, which is used to give some idea of their ability , and to see if they are able to write. They are given a book list , although they do not have to buy any books, beyond jotters, as there is a book-rental scheme in the school. They remain in the school until 12.30 when they leave for the day.

In Bellview , after being welcomed by the principal, they are divided into temporary classes , and each pupils is given a booklet which contains a map of the school, a list of class-mates, a timetable , a list of teachers, and the school rules. Other documents are handed to them at this stage. Each pupils is given details of the insurance scheme they will be covered by when in the

school, and given a form which they can fill up if they require more cover. They are also given a declaration form , to be signed by their parents, which acknowledges that they understand and will obey the school rules. A book grant form is also given to the students and they are asked to submit it to the school if they have trouble meeting the costs of their books. Each pupils is also given an envelope , within which they are asked to return a supplementary fee to the school , when and if they can.

The principal then hands them over to their year head who gives them an idea of what the role of a year head is , and what they will need in the line of sports equipment and other equipment for the days ahead in the school. The year head introduces them to the 6th year students who have been assigned to take particular care of them in the first few weeks in the school. These 6th years are the only other pupils in the school on this day. Each of them is assigned between 5 and 8 first years , and usually they are from the same area as the pupils and already know most of them. They take the new pupils on a tour of the school , and then they have refreshments in the school canteen.

After this they are met by the teachers who produced the timetable for the school . The timetable is explained to them , and they are told and shown what they will need for their first full day in the school. After this they are free to go home , and by now it is usually 12.30.

From the replies of the students to the survey it would appear that too much is happening on this first day in school. There is too much information coming at them from all sides , and they can become very anxious and fearful that they will never be able to cope . The evidence is that some do get lost quickly. In all of the schools the principals did have other things on their minds on the

first day back at school, as each of them had a staff meeting on that day as well.

(iii) What happens to the pupils in the first few weeks :

In each of the schools the first weeks were periods when a certain amount of sorting went on. In two of the schools this meant that the pupils could well find themselves changing class and having to make new friends after being in their temporary class for a few weeks. Otherwise, the first years were expected to get into the routine of the school quickly.

In Bellview each pupil , in the first week , underwent an aptitude test in English and Mathematics, and another test in Art . This latter test was used to decide who would take Art as a subject in first year, and the other test was used to divide the first year students into ability bands. On the basis of the results of the aptitude tests in English and Mathematics the first years were divided into five ability bands. Then new classes were constructed so that each class had the same number of individuals within each band. The principal was quick to point out that this was not a method of streaming, that , on the contrary, it was a way of ensuring mixed ability classes. It also gave an indication of children who may be in need of remedial teaching.

In Woodview and Riverside the pupils also have an aptitude test, but it has no effect on the classes . Its results are used only to determine which children may need remedial help.

For £20 the children in Riverview rented their school books for the year. In Bellview the children were given between two weeks and a month to get their books, it depended on the teacher they had for a subject. The books could be

acquired in a bookshop in the school, or wherever the pupil wanted to buy them. In Woodview the pupils had to buy the books wherever they could get them..

(iv)   What structures are in place in the school to facilitate the transition:

Each of the schools had a year head whose responsibility it was to take a particular interest in the first years. Woodview also had a class tutor for each of the first year classes.

In two of the schools a person enrolling for the first time would have had some bother finding the principal's office, as they were located in 'out of the way' locations. One was in an up-stairs room, and the other was in an administration area at the end of a long corridor. However, both of these schools did give the new pupils a map on their first day in the school. The principals all said that they felt there could be better sign-posting in their schools.

Two of the schools had a system whereby senior students were given responsibility for the first years. In one school this was on a one-to-one basis, and in the other it was on a one-many basis. These senior students met the new pupils at times during the school day to help them prepare for the rest of the day . They also helped the new pupils in planning how they would tackle their homework.

The principals supervised the playground areas at different times, and used this as a time to talk to the new pupils and discover how they were settling in. One of the schools had a 'buddy' system in operation in the first year group. Each first year was asked to look out for one other first year. This system was

93

used during fire-drills and roll-calls to discover quickly the whereabouts of a pupils who seemed to be missing.

In two of the schools the year head actually taught the first years, and this class was used for a 'how is it going' session every so often. The pupils were very happy with this , with the exception of one class which did not get on with its class tutor at all.

The principals felt that the initial contacts with the schools and their chat with the pupils in their primary schools, together with the half-day in the school on their own at the start of the year , were the most important things in easing the transition for most of their new pupils.

Each principal depended on their teachers to discover a child who was having difficulty making the transition. When such a child was discovered there were system in each school to help that child.

Each school permitted a pupil to change class if they wanted to be with a brother or sister , or a friend from their primary school , provided it was beneficial to both parties.

As mentioned earlier , each school ran tests in the first week to discover the ability ranges of their new students. The results of these tests always detected students who were in need of remedial teaching , and each of the schools had at least one remedial teacher . The support services in each school are listed in the following table:

Table 3: A list of the services offered in each school.

	Woodview	Bellview	Riverview
Remedial Teachers			
Full-time	0	0	0
Part-time	1	2	3
Hours each teacher teaches remedial classes	6	10	2
Counsellors			
Full-time	1	1	0
Part-time	1	1	0
Career Guidance			
Full-time	1	1	0
Part-time	0	1	1
Home-school liaison	Part-time	None	None
Pastoral Care team	Yes	Yes	None

None of the schools have been given permission by the Department of Education to appoint a remedial teacher , so all of them were bearing the costs of these teachers themselves. All of the principals were pressing the Department to grant them at least one full-time remedial teacher in their respective schools. The remedial teachers work in each school by withdrawing the children in need from some of their classes , and the help goes on for the whole school year. These pupils are given the option of dropping a language in two of the schools, in the other they are expected to continue with all of the subjects on their timetable. One of the principals said that there is a difficulty

95

in allowing a pupil to drop a subject early , as "Their parents would not probably want them to" , and it has consequences for the options the child can take from then on in the school.

Despite having these part-time remedial teachers none of the principals were able to say whether any of the first years were under achieving. It maybe that their year heads did have this information , but this researcher was not able to investigate this.

The two schools with counsellors allowed free access by students to them , and the counsellors sought out students whom teachers were worried about , for one reason or another.

The pastoral care teams in the two schools with them consisted of the year heads and class tutors or monitors, the counsellor(s) , and the school chaplain. The school chaplains were part-time in all of the schools , and very often were only there for the start of the year ceremonies, or graduations.

Two of the schools had a student council, and the first years were represented on them. Despite this the students in their survey felt that they had not say in what happened to them , and the majority felt that they could not influence what happened in the school or in their class.

With the exception of the 'buddy system' and the 'mentors' from the senior classes it would appear that the first year students in each school were receiving no more and no less than any of the students from other years in the schools.

(v) The nature and quality of communications with the feeder primary schools:

The three schools were fed by up to 18 primary schools located in the catchment area of the schools. The communications between the schools and these primary schools consisted mainly of seeking permission to visit the schools early in the second term of each year.

The primary schools did not send report cards to the schools on each student . It had been done in the past , but it had been discontinued. There were no contacts between teachers in the various sectors with a view to exchanging curricular or progress information. In fact , each principal felt it was better to adopt the approach of the Hadow committee of 1926, and regard the transition as a 'clean break'. This also seemed to be the mind of some of the primary school principals as well. One of the principals interviewed said that "I was told in one school by a principal, a large school, that the parents had asked him not to give any reports to the post-primary schools in case they were influenced (by these reports)."

However, all of the principals said that if they wanted any information on a student, they were never refused it when they approached the principal of the primary school the child came from. Any information gathered in this way was oral , and it was only passed on by the secondary principals to teachers who needed to know it.

The lack of formal information passed on by the primary schools in the catchment area contrasted greatly with the amount of information sent to some of the principals by primary schools in other countries. As one principal said,

"I have an application from a child in Galway who attended an American school, and they must have spent hours writing it up. We got some cards in from an Australian school, unbelievable the documentation and the time it must have taken."

The general feeling this researcher found was that the principals would like to give each child a fresh start as they began secondary school , and that they did not want to be influenced by what they might hear from the primary schools. However, when a problem child was noted they then sought information from the primary school to ascertain if the problem existed when the child was in the primary.

(vi) The 'concessions' given to first year pupils to ease the effects of the transition:

The first years were treated the same as other students in each school . The only differences were in the severity of a sanction that would be imposed on the pupil for an infringement of the rules in the first few weeks. After the mid-term break in late October the schools gave no concessions to first years when they broke the school rules.

The only other concession that this researcher could discover was in Bellview. It was the only school with a canteen, and it served light meals at 11 o'clock in the morning and at lunch-time. It was found that the first years were not able to overcome all the strategies used by the older pupils to get along the queue quickly "and were being mobbed" , so a separate queue was formed for first years. This continued for the year.

All of the principals wished the new students to fit in to their new school as quickly as possible. There was never any question that the school might change any of the things it was doing to meet their needs. The new pupils had to adapt to the school instead.

(vii) The allocation of subjects and teachers to first years:

Each post-primary school tried to give its first year pupils the chance to take every subject they could offer. This meant that in one of the schools first years had 18 subjects. In the students replies above it was found that the majority of them felt that they had too many subjects , and yet when they were asked what subjects they would like to drop the majority of them would only like to drop one subject.

There is no doubt that each school offered its first year pupils a wide range of subjects , and each school had a good balance between languages, commercial subjects, practical subjects, the arts and the sciences. Each teacher wished that his or her subject was offered in first year for obvious reasons. However, with declining school populations facing the area it is unlikely that the schools will be able to continue to offer such a wide range of subjects in the future.

At the end of their first year the pupils are allowed to drop some subjects , with a view to picking a good balance of subjects for their Junior Certificate courses and examination. This is not to suggest that they were not already following a Junior Certificate syllabus in their first year. In the three schools all teachers followed the Junior Certificate syllabi from the first day in class. It

did not seem to matter that the pupils would have been coming to the schools with very different foundations.

There were no choices of subjects in Bellview and Woodview. In Riverview the first years had a choice between Metalwork and Home Economics. The boys tended to take Metalwork , and the girls Home Economics, but there was total freedom to take either subject.

Woodview and Riverview did not permit students to drop any subjects over their first year. The students who were very weak in Bellview were , as a last resort, permitted to drop one subject, and during the time for those classes the pupil was expected to be with the remedial teacher, and not on the loose.

The principals all felt that the first years get the same mix of teachers as any other year. That said, in each of the schools the timetables were produced by starting with the examination classes and the last to be timetabled would be the first years.

This researcher feels that the choice of teacher for first years is crucial , in so far as the relationship that forms with a teacher can make or break a student. (cf. Boldt, 1994). So it is important that the teachers selected by the principals to teach in first year should be the most approachable , the most kind and caring teachers in the school. The replies by the students to their survey suggests that they have already encountered the 'shape up or get out' , the no nonsense, the strict authoritarian types of teachers. Whereas the majority of pupils can cope with any type of teacher they meet, a child who is not coping with the transfer will be damaged all the more by an encounter with such a teacher.

4.5. Timetable analysis

The three schools in this study produce their timetables in the same way. They all use a computer programme designed for schools in Ireland , called Facility Timetabler. Each principal supplied a copy of their timetable on a computer disc which this researcher was able to analyse using the programme mentioned above.

The purpose of this analysis of the timetables was to discover if there was any difference between the timetables of the first years and that of the other years. In the following tables the timetables of the three schools are compared using the formulae described in the previous chapter.

Woodview School

Table 4: Analysis of Woodview timetable.

School	Woodview						
Year	Yr 1	Yr2	Yr3	TY	Yr5	Yr6	Overall
No. of pupils	50	96	83	39	116	73	457
No. of staff	20	26	25	22	30	29	30
No. of periods per week	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Curriculum unit	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
No. of lessons per week	90	180	180	90	225	180	945
Basic provision of curriculum units	16.67	32.00	27.67	13.00	38.67	24.33	152.33
Actual provision of curriculum units	18.00	36.00	36.00	18.00	45.00	36.00	189.00
Bonus	1.33	4.00	8.33	5.00	6.33	11.67	36.67
Staffing ratio	0.40	0.27	0.30	0.57	0.26	0.40	0.07
Average teaching load	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00
Average class size	2.07	3.97	3.43	1.61	4.79	3.02	18.88
Contact ratio	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73
Relative bonus	8.00	12.50	30.12	38.46	16.38	47.95	24.07
Average no. of staff teaching at any time	14.81	19.29	18.33	16.35	22.00	21.27	21.85
Average no. of classes at any time	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56
Curricular flexibility	-0.63	-0.58	-0.60	-0.66	-0.58	-0.63	-0.11

Riverview School

Table 5: Analysis of Riverview timetable.

School	Riverview					
Year	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr5	Yr6	Overall
No. of pupils	23	24	24	50	23	144
No. of staff	8	9	10	12	12	12
No. of periods per week	45	45	45	45	45	45
Curriculum unit	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
No. of lessons per week	45	45	45	90	135	360
Basic provision of curriculum units	7.67	8.00	8.00	16.67	7.67	48.00
Actual provision of curriculum units	9.00	9.00	9.00	18.00	27.00	72.00
Bonus	1.33	1.00	1.00	1.33	19.33	24.00
Staffing ratio	0.35	0.36	0.40	0.23	0.52	0.08
Average teaching load	37.00	37.00	37.00	37.00	37.00	37.00
Average class size	0.76	0.79	0.79	1.64	0.76	4.73
Contact ratio	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82
Relative bonus	17.39	12.50	12.50	8.00	252.17	50.00
Average no. of staff teaching at any time	6.58	7.07	7.89	9.54	9.87	9.87
Average no. of classes at any time	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56
Curricular flexibility	-0.71	-0.71	-0.72	-0.65	-0.74	-0.33

Bellview School

Table 6: Analysis of Bellview timetable

School	Bellview						
Year	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	TY	Yr5	Yr6	Overall
No. of pupils	110	120	124	62	128	141	685
No. of staff	31	38	39	25	39	37	39
No. of periods per week	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
Curriculum unit	4.89	4.89	4.89	4.89	4.89	4.89	4.89
No. of lessons per week	176	220	220	132	220	264	1232
Basic provision of curriculum units	36.67	40.00	41.33	20.67	42.67	47.00	228.33
Actual provision of curriculum units	36.00	45.00	45.00	27.00	45.00	54.00	252.00
Bonus	-0.67	5.00	3.67	6.33	2.33	7.00	23.67
Staffing ratio	0.28	0.32	0.31	0.41	0.30	0.26	0.06
Average teaching load	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	33.00
Average class size	4.44	4.85	5.01	2.51	5.17	5.70	27.68
Contact ratio	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Relative bonus	-1.82	12.50	8.87	30.65	5.47	14.89	10.36
Average no. of staff teaching at any time	23.48	28.50	29.25	19.05	28.95	27.75	29.33
Average no. of classes at any time	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54
Curricular flexibility	-0.61	-0.62	-0.62	-0.65	-0.62	-0.59	-0.04

Looking at the bonus in each school and each year , in Woodview and Bellview the bonus of the first year classes is lower than that of any other year, and in Riverview it is low at 1.33. Where this number is low on a timetable it shows that the class sizes are higher than average , and the numbers of teachers applied to that year are lower than average. This would indicate that the first year classes in all of the schools are not getting more resources or attention than the other years in the schools.

The figures indicate that it is the 6th year in each school which is getting the best provision of resources. This would be borne out in the interviews with the principals , where they indicated that they try to give the examination years the best of everything.

The staffing ratio figures , to some extent, bear this out as well, as they are highest for the transition year and leaving certificate pupils . Both of these years demand a lot of resources. , and yet if the problems encountered by first years are to be solved the schools will have to put more resources into the first year groups. In Woodview the staffing ratio for the leaving certificate year and the first years is the same, and is only exceeded by the staffing ratio for the transition year programme.

The figures for the relative bonus show that in two schools (Woodview and Bellview) the curriculum is restricted among the first year classes , compared to other classes in the schools. This is really to be expected as there is no choice of subjects for first year pupils in any of the schools.

The overall figures for curricular flexibility are negative and are in the expected direction , but they are only just so. Bellview has barely any flexibility at all , with the result that it would be very difficult with its timetable to make any changes if they were required. A complete new timetable would have to be devised if Bellview wanted to make any changes to its timetable that year.

Overall, it is the opinion of this researcher that the pupils who are transferring from the primary are receiving little, if any , extra provisions in their timetables , when compared with the other years in the school. Inevitably this

means that some children will not be happy with their timetable and there is nothing that can be done for them , as the extra help they may need has been allocated to some other year in the school.

4.6. Detention records of first years

The detention records of one school , Bellview, were made available to the researcher, and in the table below are shown the results of an analysis of these records. The records analysed cover a span of four school years.

Table 7: Number of detentions per year in Bellview.

Bellview		Detentions	per	year.
School year	9 3 - 9 4	9 4 - 9 5	9 5 - 9 6	9 6 - 9 7
First Years	3 2	3 4	2 4	1 8
Second Years	6 8	9 3	8 0	9 2
Third Years	1 2 9	1 0 0	1 4 1	7 0
Fourth Years	2 4	4 8	5 0	2 5
Fifth Years	8 3	1 2 0	1 3 3	9 2
Sixth Years	6 8	8 1	1 3 0	4 4

There is an increase in detentions from first year upwards, in each of the school years examined, until they complete their Junior Certificate examination. It is as if a new transition occurs here , and a new process of adjustment begins , as the pupils become senior students in the school. The large numbers on detentions in fifth year is a matter for concern in the school, but that is not our concern here.

First year pupils began to be detained from the middle of October in each year. This indicates to this researcher that some of the first years were beginning to show the signs of disaffection , or disinterest from October of their first term in the new school.

The number of detentions in the table refer to the total handed out to individuals in a year, and some students received more than one detention. For example, in the 24 detentions handed out to first years in the school year 95-96 one of the first years received 4 of these detentions. The table gives a picture of the number of incidents which occurred in each year group in the school.

There is a decrease in the overall detention figures for first years in the most recent group to join the school. While there is one class less in this first year group compared to previous school years (from 5 to 4) the decrease in detentions is noteworthy. The school feels it is due to the year heads and class tutors working better together in the last two years, and to a change in role of the year heads in the school. Up to two years ago the year heads did not deal with any disciplinary issues, and concentrated on the academic progress of the children in their group. Since 1995 the year heads have included disciplinary matters in their brief, and this could be one reason for the decline in some of the detention figures since then. More matters are being dealt with by the year heads and are solved before they need the full 'rigour' of the discipline system to come to bear on a student.

The figures do show that there is a group of students who are getting into trouble a lot. On analysis it was found that the students who were in most trouble in their second years were those who had received two or more detentions in their first year. For example, the student mentioned above who had received 4 detentions in his first year was suspended a number of times in his second year, after being detained at least four more times in his second year.

4.7. Attendance records of first years

In the following table is a summary of the attendance figures for the first year students in each school in the survey.

Table 8: Attendance figures for first years in the school year 1996-1997

School	Class	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter	Av/pu
Woodview	1	41	56	80	89	11.1
	2	58	63	112	152	14.8
	Total	99	119	192	241	13.02
Riverview	1	120	104	157	195	25
	Total	120	104	157	195	25
Woodview	1	52	86	118	120	13.4
	2	25	54	86	54	8
	3	19	54	85	54	7.6
	4	52	40	123	100	11.3
	Total	148	234	412	328	10.2

The pattern of absences is easier to observe in graphical format :
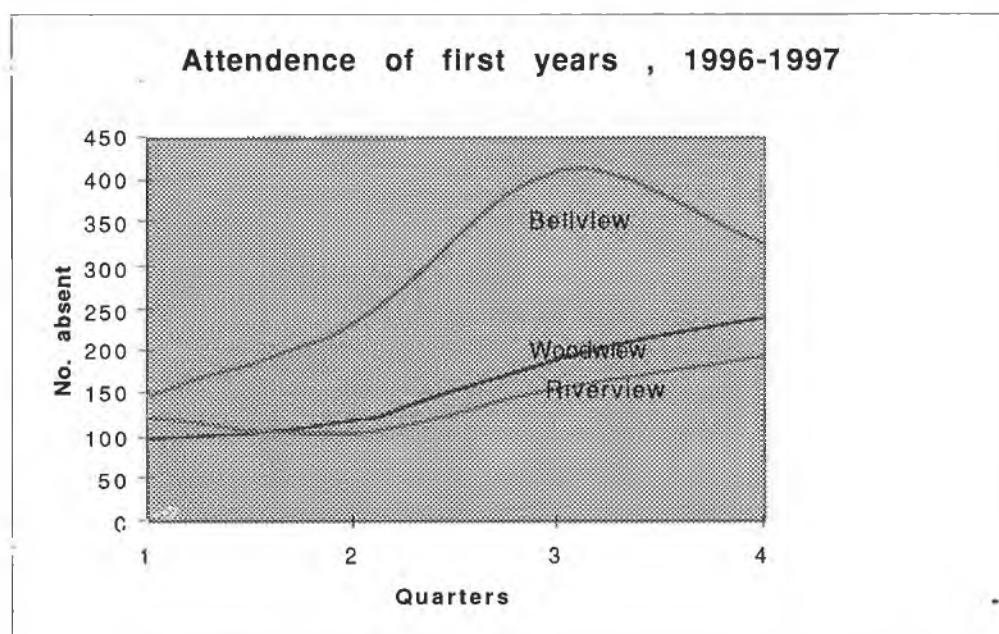
Figure 1: Pattern of absences of first years in the schools.

From this graph it is clear that the absence rate increases as the school year progresses in two of the schools. In Bellview the number of absences peaked in the latter part of the third quarter, just after the Easter break. The only explanation for this that could be discovered was the fact that in Bellview the first year pupils spend a lot of the third term deciding on the subjects they will choose for the next two years in the school . It is also a time when the class that they will be in for the next two years is assembled. For these reasons it was felt that first year students in Bellview were less likely to be absent in the last term , although a lot of them were absent anyway.

The absence rate per pupil was different in the three schools. It ranged from 10.02 days in Bellview, to 25 days in the year for pupils of Riverview. The percentage of days absent for each pupil in the three schools is shown in the next table.

Table 9: Student absences in first years in the schools for one year.

Woodview			Riverview	Bellview			
Class	1	2	1	1	2	3	4
Pupil 1	5.36	18.45	6.55	5.36	8.33	7.74	5.36
Pupil 2	0.60	13.69	2.98	7.14	7.74	2.38	10.12
Pupil 3	20.24	1.79	11.31	8.93	8.93	11.31	6.55
Pupil 4	16.67	0.60	16.67	27.98	6.55	2.38	2.38
Pupil 5	2.98	9.52	12.50	3.57	11.31	5.36	2.98
Pupil 6	17.86	11.90	24.40	5.36	7.14	5.36	9.52
Pupil 7	1.79	5.36	13.10	8.93	2.98	4.17	17.86
Pupil 8	7.14	3.57	11.90	11.31	4.76	2.98	8.33
Pupil 9	4.17	7.14	12.50	5.95	7.14	2.98	4.17
Pupil 10	7.14	0.60	14.88	0.60	7.74	5.36	12.50
Pupil 11	4.76	1.79	11.31	4.17	3.57	8.93	3.57
Pupil 12	11.31	7.74	33.93	3.57	1.79	13.10	8.33
Pupil 13	1.19	1.19	23.21	2.98	1.79	3.57	5.95
Pupil 14	4.17	10.12	5.95	19.64	5.36	2.98	4.76
Pupil 15	9.52	13.69	12.50	1.19	0.60	2.38	3.57
Pupil 16	2.98	5.36	1.19	5.36	10.12	7.74	1.79
Pupil 17	2.38	2.98	4.76	4.76	4.17	1.19	16.67
Pupil 18	5.95	0.60	17.26	4.76	1.19	8.33	12.50
Pupil 19	4.76	1.19	3.57	20.24	1.19	2.38	1.19
Pupil 20	10.12	1.19	17.26	8.93	5.36	8.93	4.76
Pupil 21	7.14	2.38	6.55	10.71	8.33	1.79	5.95
Pupil 22	7.14	33.93	23.81	9.52	2.38	7.74	4.76
Pupil 23	1.19	52.38	54.76	3.57	11.31	7.14	1.19
Pupil 24	1.79	2.98		4.17	0.60	0.00	16.07
Pupil 25		7.14		9.52	0.00	0.00	16.67
Pupil 26		11.90		20.83	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pupil 27				4.76	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pupil 28				0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Av/pu %	6.61	8.81	14.82	7.98	4.83	4.52	6.73

From this table it can be seen that 11 pupils were absent for over 20% (6 school weeks) of the school year, and 47 were absent for greater than 10% of the school year , i.e. greater than three school weeks. 16 of the 23 pupils in the first year class in Riverview were absent for greater than 10% of the school year, and 5 of the 23 were absent for over 20% of the time. The principals all said in their interviews that they were aware that there was some

truancy in their schools , but they would have put it at no more than two or three pupils in the first year classes.

As there were no other reasons for the high levels of absenteeism among some of the pupils , this researcher is of the opinion that some of them can be attributed to disillusionment on the part of some of the pupils with their secondary schools.

Chapter 5.

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter a concise account of the findings of the research is provided. Each of the research questions is revisited , and the findings relevant to it are described. The conclusions formed as a result of this research are presented , along with the recommendations of the researcher.

5.2. Research question 1. Are first year pupils who may later present with difficulties identifiable in their year of intake in post-primary school?

The findings show that the majority of the pupils make the transfer between the two sectors successfully. While a majority experience a little anxiety , it is something which passes in the first few weeks in the new school. By the time (i.e. October-November following their enrolment in September 1996) the survey was completed 92% of the students said that they had settled in.

The 8% who were still having some difficulty in settling into their new schools, together with the 18% who said that they still had some of the fears they had on their arrival in the new school, are the group who are most likely to become disenchanted with school , or to be found in the 'worried' group described by Youngman (1978). The truants described by Boldt (1994) are likely to come from this group as well.

The figure of 8% , or up to 18% , describing the pupils who had not yet settled in their new schools, is very similar to the figures found by the

111

researchers whose work was reviewed in the literature overview. This number represents between 14 and 32 students in the three schools taken together, and it would seem be very important to identify them as early as possible to give them all the help they need to make the transfer successfully.

Each of the schools in the project had some form of assistance available for the pupils who were identified as having problems. Each school depended on the teachers of each class to identify the children with problems. The year-head in each school was given the responsibility of locating these children. This researcher is of the opinion that this system is not sensitive enough to detect all of the vulnerable children, and is only successful at detecting the extremely disruptive children. There are also pupils who may be experiencing great personal difficulties , but are not disruptive in their school. These pupils are equally difficult to detect using the structures that are in the schools in this study.

By using the data that are gathered in each school in the study at present it is possible to identify some of the pupils who may be unable to cope with the transition from primary school to post-primary school. At present each school is recording a lot of data on the pupils, such as :

1. disruptive behaviour and detention data;

2. attendance data, including records of pupils who arrive late to school;

3. data regarding the excuses given for unpunctuality;

4. records of pupils who arrive late for classes , or fail to attend a class, despite being in the school on time;

5. and records of students who fail to produce homework on a regular basis.

For example, the detention data and the absenteeism data show that the disruptive behaviour and the incidents of absence increase as the year goes by, in the case of the absences, and as years go by in the case of the detention data. The information can be examined at any time in the schools as they all keep records of this nature. There is a lot of data being gathered in the schools already and this researcher is of the opinion that the individual students , who are beginning to 'opt out' for one reason or another , could be identified clearly if this information was gathered weekly and monitored weekly in each school. This is not done in any of the schools at the moment , and a recommendation of this researcher would be that **closer monitoring of attendances and school punishments be carried out in each school.**

All of the schools ignored the wealth of information gathered by the primary schools, when the transferring pupils were attending there. The principals of the secondary schools did say that they wanted to give the children a 'fresh start' , a 'clean slate' , as they began life in their new school. Reference was made to the primary school only when a problem with a pupil surfaced, and then only when the problem was of a very serious nature. It is recommended by this researcher that **the records of a primary school on a pupil be given to that student's parents or guardians as he or she leaves the primary school and that a copy of these records go to the pupil's new school.** Some primary school teachers may be unhappy with this , especially if the record is likely to be negative, but the future development of the pupil can only be achieved if the records are accurate. To

ensure that there were no misunderstandings , an agreed coding system should be devised by the primary and secondary teachers in an area.

This researcher believes that it is a waste of valuable time on the part of the secondary schools when they ignore the data that has been gathered on each pupil in their previous schools. There is a danger , of course, that a child will be labelled , and placed in a category which is unfair to the child. Being aware that this can occur could go a long way to preventing it. Anything that helps to identify early on the pupils who are going to find the transition very difficult is important.

5.3. Research question 2. What provisions are made for first year pupils ?

Each of the schools in the project saw it as important that the first year pupils should become part of the school very quickly. The resources of the schools were on offer to the first year pupils as much as they were to the other years. Little extra was allocated to the new pupils to facilitate their transition .

Two of the schools (Woodview and Riverview) offered 6 hours of remedial teaching to their pupils , and first years had to be accommodated with other students in this time. Bellview offered 20 hours of remedial teaching to its pupils, and again this time was allocated to all students in the school. All of the principals said that they needed much more help in this area, but funding was not forthcoming from any agency.

Each of the schools withdrew children who needed remedial teaching from their normal classes and the remedial teachers took them when they could. As students in other years were also receiving remedial help , and this was a continuation of help from previous years , it means that the real amount of

114

remedial time given to first years in each school is less than that available in theory in each school. An obvious recommendation from this is that the schools will have to **bring more pressure on the Department of Education to supply them with full-time remedial teachers who are ex-quota.**

The system in the schools whereby a senior student takes care of a first year, or a group of first years, for their first few weeks in the school is to be commended. However, it is regrettable that these 'buddies' or mentors do not meet on a regular basis with the year-head or class tutor of the first years. This would provide another source of information for the identification early on of a student who was having problems coping with the transfer from the primary school. It is recommended that **frequent meetings be organised between the first year 'buddies' and the year-head or class tutors of the first year students.**

The induction programmes in each school is designed to familiarise the students with their new school in as rapid a fashion as is possible. They are not succeeding in this objective. 40% of the students said it took them up to a month to adjust to their new school. An induction programme which extended over the first month or so in the school would produce better results . At the very least it would not lead to an information 'overload' on the first day in the school. This researcher recommends **that induction programmes in the schools be spread over a few weeks , and consist of shorter sessions than they have at present.** There is a very good example of such a programme described in the work of Hamblin (1978), *The Teacher and Pastoral Care.*

115

None of the schools in the project set out deliberately to construct a timetable that would give the best of the resources to the first years. In all of the schools the timetables took as their priority the examination classes , and the transition year students (fourth years) , where they existed. To counteract the large number of subjects which the students have , this researcher would recommend **that modules of subjects be given to first years so that they can get a taste of a subject in their first year.**

This would have the advantage that pupils are not 'stuck' with a subject which they do not like or want for a whole year, or that they are with a teacher they do not get on with for too long. It has the advantage of exposing the new students to all of the subjects the school has to offer as well. Some teachers may not like this as it may mean that less would be taught in their subject in the first year. It may mean a change in the second year and third year programmes as a result. Added advantages might be that it could also lead to a greater use of class notes or hand-outs , and a diminution in the number of books the pupils would have to buy in their first year in the school.

It is recommended by this researcher **that the principals of the schools should consider changing their timetabling strategies, by considering the needs of the first years , before those of the examination classes.** There has to be a balance between the problems that arise as a result of the transition for some students , who soon become disenchanted with the school , and the needs of the other pupils . If the disenchanted or worried children could be helped to cope with the trauma they experience in first year , it should minimise the care that they will need later on in the school. In turn this should lead to better results for them , and their

peers , through their interactions with them. There could be less disruptive behaviour by students   and more happy children in the schools.

The pastoral care and home-school liaison services in the schools which participated in this piece of research need to be developed to help their pupils more. It is a question of resources , and the schools have had to provide these services themselves, and are to be praised for what they have done. However, the numbers involved in each of these services are unable to   stretch themselves much further. All of the schools need a person to co-ordinate their pastoral care teams , and to develop a home-school liaison programme in each school. **It is recommended that the principals make a case for such a person(s) with the Department of Education as soon as possible.**

5.4. Research question 3. Is there any difference between the rhetoric of the principals and their implementation of the rhetoric?

The findings show that there are few if any differences to be found. The reason for this is that the principals are all aware of what they would like to offer their new pupils , but they all feel that it is not within their resources to offer all they would wish to do. Despite this , none of the principals seemed to feel that extra attention to the first years in the secondary school would be beneficial to the students , or the school .

Furthermore, the principals all feel that their new students have to find their 'own way' in the school , if they are to survive. "It is all part of growing up, it is one of the rites of passage a child has to go through," was how one of the principals put it. However, this researcher feels that the principals must look at

the systems in their schools which may be causing some of the problems that the new students encounter. Some of the following recommendations would enable the schools to look closely at what they are doing.

- **The induction programmes need to be re-examined.**

- **The construction of the timetable in each school needs to be evaluated.**

- **The teachers deployed to the first years need to be carefully chosen.**

The pupils felt that they had no say in what happened in their schools (72%), and that they were not able to even influence what happened in their class. There were no structures in the schools to hear the voices of these new pupils . In one school (Woodview) the pupils of one class were quite frustrated , as they did not get on with their class tutor and could tell no one about it, or about any other problems they had.

This researcher would recommend that **the pastoral care and/or home-school liaison teachers in the schools look at the development of a structure in the schools which would allow the new students to have a voice in the school.**

The students who are having problems with adjusting to the transition between the primary and the secondary school should be identified earlier than they are at present if some of the recommendations were implemented. The students who are having no problems , or short term problems , would also benefit from the recommendations , as they would find the schools to be

more caring than they are at present, and they would feel that they get a hearing when they speak.

5.5. Areas for further research

The analysis of the detention figures in Bellview would suggest that there is more than one transition in the life of post-primary students in the schools . There would appear to be at least two other significant transitions , besides the one they experience as they transfer from the primary to the secondary school. As students move from their third year to fourth year , which in two of the schools is the year in which they are offered the Transition Programme, they experience some anxiety as they move from a traditional type of course to a more informal programme. As they move from the Transition year to their first year in the senior cycle in each school they begin their first year studies for their Leaving Certificates , and the thought of the importance of the senior years for their future gives rise to further anxiety.

These transitions have not been researched , as far as this researcher knows. With so many more students deciding to stay in the secondary school until they have sat for their Leaving Certificate examination (95% of the sample in this project) , and with the rising legal age for leaving school , there will be more and more pupils remaining in school who may not really want to be in school. These students will be 'problems' for the schools in which they decide to remain. How schools cope, and how the pupils cope would be a valuable area of research. This researcher would recommend that **a study be made of the effect of transition on students as they move from Junior Certificate to Transition Year , from Junior Certificate to first year of the Leaving Certificate, and from transition Year to**

first year of the Leaving Certificate , in their post-primary schools.

This researcher feels that it would be valuable as well to do a longitudinal study of a group of students in an Irish secondary school , as they progress from first year to their final year in the school. It would appear from the data on detentions and absenteeism that students become unhappy with their schools in years other than in first year. Some of the children who were very happy in first year become very unhappy in other years. It would be important to know the reasons for such a change in the school-life of these pupils.

The benefits of such a research programme for the managements, staff, and students of post-primary schools in Ireland could be enormous. If the research was successful in discovering the reasons why some pupils find it so difficult to settle into their post-primary schools strategies could be developed to identify the pupils in need of support , and structures could be set in place to help them make the various transitions successfully. With less disenchanted and worried pupils in our schools , the schools would be happier places in which to work , and to learn .

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Student Questionnaire.

Prior to entry to Secondary:

1. What Primary school were you at ? _____

2. Would you have liked to stay another year in the primary ? Why ?

   _____

3. How did you come to hear of your present school? _____

4. Did the principal of this school meet you before you came here, and

   where? _____

5. Did any teacher of this school meet you before you came here , and when?

   _____

6. Were there any communications from this school to you or your parents

   by writing, meetings, other ? _____

7. Did the contact influence you in coming here? (A lot, ___not at all_____)

8. Have you any brothers/sisters already here ? How many ? _____

9. What would you have liked to have known about before you came here ?

   _____

10. What worries had you about coming here ? _____

   _____

11. Who made the final decision about your coming here ? _____

12. Had you ever been in the school before the first day of term ? When ? __

13. Did you ask your primary teacher for advice on what school to go to ? __

14. Did your parents talk to your primary teacher about what school to go to ?

15. Did your Mom/Dad attend this school ?_____

16. How many schools did you look at before making the decision to come

    here ? _____

17. Did your best friend come here as well? _____

18. What stories had you heard about the school before you came ?

    _____

    _____

19. Were you frightened about coming here ? _____

20. What was your worse fear ? _____

    _____

21. Do you still worry about this ? _____

After Entry

Early days:

1. How did you feel on the first day here ? (Delighted, frightened, a little anxious, very frightened , no particular feeling.)

2. On the first day were you   Yes   No

- overawed by the size of the school   _____

- overawed by the large number of pupils _____

- lost   _____

- wished you were back in primary   _____

3. Are you settled down now?   _____

4. Who helped you the most to settle down ? (Principle, Other teacher, parents, counsellor, chaplain, friends .)

5. How long did it take you to settle down? _____

6. What tests did you do on coming here ? _____

7. How many books did you bring to school today?_____

8. Do you have to bring them to school every day?_____

9. How long were you given to buy your books?   _____

10. Have you a locker of your own in the school?_____

Classes and Subjects:

11. How many subjects are you studying now ? _____

12. Do you think you have too many or too few or just enough ?   _____

13. Had you a choice of subjects ?   _____

14. Did you get all the subjects you wanted ? _____

15. What subject did you not get that you would have liked to get ? _____

16. What subjects do you like best ? _____

17. What subjects are you best at ? _____

18. Would you like to drop any subject now , name it , and give a reason ? _

_____

19. Did you have any problem with reading your timetable when you first

arrived? _____

20. How long did it take you to understand your timetable ? _____

21. Did anyone help you with your timetable ? Whom ? _____

22. Has your class got its own classroom ? _____

23. Would you prefer to remain in one classroom for most of your subjects or

would you prefer to move around   ? _____

24. Are some of your friends from primary with you in this class ? _____

Ways of Working:

25. Do you enjoy reading? _____ _____

26. How much would you do during the holidays ? _____

27. Do you like project work ? _____

28. Do you like to work on projects with others, or do you prefer to work on

your own ? _____

29. Do you use the library in town ? _____ _____

30. Or in school ? _____ _____

31. Do you prefer a lesson from a teacher, or do you prefer to find things out

on your own? _____ _____

32. Do you use a computer at home ? _____ _____

33. Do you belong to any club in the school? _____

34. Do you take part in sport in the school ? _____ ____

35. What is your favourite game ? _____ _____

36. Do you get help with homework at home ? _____From_____

37. Re homework , is it enough, too much . too little . too often ?

Student details:

38. How long do you intend to stay in school ? _____

39. What age are you ? _____

40. Are you are boy or a girl ? _____

41. What religion are you? _____

42. Where is your home (town, country, suburbs, boarding) ?

43. Are both of your parents alive?_____

44. Are your parents separated?_____

45. Are both of your parents working, or one of them, or neither of them?__

46. Where do you come in your family ? _____ out of _____

47. How did you get to school today ? Bus, bicycle, lift, walk ? _____

48. Did you bring a lunch with you today?_____

49. Did you eat your breakfast this morning ?_____

50. What are your worries now that you are in this school ?. _____

_____

Teachers, other staff:

51. Do you have a class tutor or monitor or head ? _____

52. Does this person teach you ? _____

53. When can you meet this person ? _____

54. How many teachers have you ? _____

55. Do you like having a number of teachers ? _____

56. Would you prefer to have 1 or 2 whom you like teaching you all the time ?

57. To whom would you go if you felt ill ?   _____

Present feelings:

58. Do you regret your choice of secondary school ? If so , give a reason. __

_____

59. In general how do you find the older pupils in the school ? bossy, helpful, friendly.

60. Have you made new friends in this school ? _____

61. Do you find it easy to make new friends here ? _____

62. If you had problems other than homework , is there anyone in the school you would   look to for advice or help ? Whom ? _____

63. Are you able to make sense of what happens in this school ? _____

64. How fair is the principal ? _____

65. How fair are your teachers ? _____

66. How fair are your class mates, and other pupils ? _____

67. Can you influence what happens in the school, and how ? _____

_____

68. Can you influence what happens in your class ? How ? _____

_____

School rules:

69. Do you have written school rules ? _____

70. Have you read them?_____

71. Do you understand them ? _____

72. Have your parents read them ? _____

73. Is there any rule of which you disapprove? Which one ? _____

_____

Contacts with old school:

74. Have you ever returned to your past primary school to meet your past
teachers ? _____

75. Do you think it would be a good idea for some of the first years to return
to their   national schools to talk to 6th class about the problems /worries
of transfer to secondary and to answer their questions about it ? _____

76. If so , would you like to be one of those selected to do it ? _____

What advice would you give them ? _____

_____

Contacts with parents:

77. Is there any newsletter for students or parents ? Students _____ Parents_

_____

78. Would you read one ? _____

79. Would you contribute to a school newsletter or bulletin ? _____

80. Would you like your parents to drop in to see you or the school ? _____

81. How often have your parents visited the school ? _____

82. What did you have in the primary that you miss most of all now in the
secondary ? _____

_____

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APPENDIX B. Questions to ask of the principals.

Prior to a new pupils arrival:

1. Who makes the first contact between your school and a prospective pupil ?

2. Do you visit prospective pupils, and if so , where do you visit them ?

3. Are the pupils invited to see the school ?

4. Do you send brochures to the prospective students ? (by post, by hand, to specific children , or blanket coverage ?)

5. What follow up is there after a first contact ? (e.g. book lists, names of teachers, details of uniform sellers etc..)

6. Do you have an open day/evening ?

7. What structure does your open day/evening take ? Who can attend ?

The first day in school of a new pupil .

1. What is the structure of the day ?

2. Who comes with the pupil ?

3. Who stays with the pupil ?

4. Are other years at school on this day ?

5. Who meets the pupils, and what is "done " to them ?

6. What are they given on the first day for themselves , or to take home ?

7. Are they given any help with books, getting around, reading of rules, counselling on the first day in school ?

During the first weeks at school.

1. Are any concessions made for new pupils in the first few weeks ? What are they ?

2. Do you have a buddy system in the school ? What type ?

3. Can a pupil change class , and if so , for what reasons is it permitted ?

Organisation of the school, and about the school.

1. Have you any pupils repeating first year?

2. What number of pupils are Boys /Girls /Country /Town /Boarders/ Bus/ Walker/ Bicycles ?

3. Is your school well sign posted internally ?

4. Do you have many bulletin boards for students and parents ? How many ?

5. Do you have a newsletter ? How often ?

6. What are the values the school tries to instil ?

7. What is emphasised by you in your opening speech ? Is a copy available ?

8. In the canteen , lunch room , are there any privileges for first years ?

9. Do you have a library ? Can first years use it , and when ? Are they given any training in its use ?

10. Can first years go to town when they are free at breaks ?

11. Are they supervised at breaks , and by whom ?

12. What extra curricular activities does the school provide for first years ?

13. How do you overcome the myths the first years have about the school and its customs ?

14. Are the best teachers assigned to first years ?

15. Do you actively compete with the other schools for pupils ?

16. How large is the area canvassed by your school for new pupils ?

17. Is there one teacher with overall responsibility for first years?

18. What is the role of this person ?

19. Do the pupils have a place for keeping their books, sports gear, or bicycles safe ?

20. What do you think of the present age of entry of primary pupils to your school ?

21. What would you do to ease the transition of pupils from primary to secondary?

22. If there was one thing you could do for new students coming to your school what would it be ?

Parents:

1. Are parents visited before they send a child to your school?

2. Are parents invited to the school before they send their child to your school ?

3. Can parents drop in , to where , to whom ?

4. Do you have a Parent's association ? Is there any input from them regarding subjects in first year, uniform, rules ?

5. How often do you send reports on their children's progress to parents ?

6. When are parents of an individual pupil called to the school ?

Primary Schools:

1. How many Primary schools do your first years come from ?

2. Who contacts the Primary school a pupil is coming from ?

3. Is there any contact between you and teachers of 6th class in the primary schools ?

4. Is there contact between your first year teachers and teachers of 6th class in the primary schools ?

5. What would you consider to be productive contact ?

6. When is the primary school visited , how often , and for how long ?

7. Who is spoken to on such visits ?

8. How many primary schools are actually visited before new pupils arrive at your school

9. How many primary schools are actually visited after new pupils arrive at your school ?

Pastoral Care/ Guidance/ Home-school liaison / Remedial teaching :

1. Do you have a pastoral care team ? Who are the members of that team ?

2. Do your first years get guidance at any stage , when ?

3. Do you provide any help to new pupils to develop study habits , and what kind of help do you give ?

4. Do you provide any help for first years with homework ?

5. Among the first years have you any procedure for identifying and helping the needy student, needy financially, or with special educational needs ?

6. What structures have you to enable consultation/referral of problem pupils who are new to your school ?

7. What system have you for the early detection of new pupils with problems which are (i) social/personal, (ii) academic ?

8. Do you have a remedial teacher / Guidance teacher ?

144

9. Are they full time ? How many hours per week do they teach ?

10. Have you any special arrangements for special needs children ?

11. How is the remedial teacher used ?

12. Do weaker pupils follow a restricted curriculum ?

13. Have you a full time or part time home school liaison person ?

14. If so, what do they do ?

15. What happens to truants when they are discovered by you ?

16. How many truants in first year ?

17. How many pupils are under functioning in first year ?

18. How many pupils have opted out in first year ?

19. What is your policy on bullying in the first years ?

20. If a child is sick to whom do they go , and what happens then ?

21. What manner of discipline is applied to new pupils ? Does it differ from that applied to others ?

Records from Primary schools:

1. Do you receive record cards from any of the schools your pupils come from ? How many schools supply them ?

2. Do you have to look for the record cards or are they given as a matter of course ?

3. Are you ever refused a record card from a Primary school ?

4. What data do you get from a child's previous school ?

5. What do you do with this data, and who has access to it ?

Tests:

1. What tests are given to first years ?

2. When are they given ?

3. What type of tests are they , written, oral , attainment or IQ?

4. If attainment tests, what subjects are they tested in ?

5. Who sets the tests ?

6. What is the purpose of the tests ?

Subjects:

1. Who makes the decisions about the choice of subjects ?

2. Is the official syllabus for Junior Certificate subjects followed in first year?

3. How many subjects in first year ?

4. How many subjects in second year ?

5. Do you have a core curriculum for first years , and what is it ?

6. What subjects are offered as choices in first year ?

7. Are the subjects given in modules or are they available for the year ?

Classes:

1. When putting a timetable together what classes get first consideration ?

2. How many first years do you have ?

3. How many pupils in the school altogether ?

4. How many first year classes ? Overall ?

5. Are all classes in first year the same size ? What is the size of a class in first year ?

6. What is the length of a class period for first years ? For others ?

7. What factors influence the formation of a class ?

8. How many teachers allotted to first year ?

9. Do you stream, band , set your first years ? Reasons for doing so .

10. If a pupil wants to change or drop a subject what happens ? (after a week, 1 month, 1 term ?)