

Factors Influencing the Recruitment of Primary and Intermediate Aged Boy Boarders

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Declaration

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This Dissertation entitled '**Factors Influencing the Recruitment of Primary and Intermediate Aged Boy Boarders**' is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Unitec Degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

- I confirm that this Dissertation represents my own work.
- The contribution of supervisors and others in this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set out for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee. Research Ethics Committee Approval Number 2009-1043.

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Abstract

The research project explored trends in three areas of primary/intermediate school boarding that may have an effect on the recruitment of boy boarders. The areas of; leadership, curriculum/programmes and parental/family expectations in a boarding context were chosen, as they were recurring themes in data gathered from an interview with an expert on boarding, completed as part of an earlier study by the researcher. These themes were also evident when reviewing literature most relevant to the research topic.

A multi-method qualitative methodology was employed for this research using a questionnaire and focus group as the main research tools to gather data. Once data gathered from the questionnaire was collated and analysed, issues identified as needing further exploration were discussed in a focus group situation. Twenty one boarding families responded to the questionnaire and twelve boarding parents participated in the semi structured focus group session.

The key findings of the research revealed that the modern day boarding house leader needs to be; manager/administrator, instructional leader, pastorally adept and aware, communication savvy and focused, and an innovative visionary – effectiveness as a communicator appears to be essential. The quality of the school's programmes and the quality of staff involved in these programmes, appear to be the two key reasons why modern day families chose a particular school – these aspects seem to be more important than where the school is located or what type of school it is. Finally the reasons families send their sons

boarding does not appear to have changed much over recent years, what seems to have changed are parental attitudes, particularly with regard to being separated from their primary/intermediate aged son.

The findings led to the recommendations that boarding school leaders and governors review aspects of current leadership practice, the quality of programmes and staffing, and the attitudes and expectations of prospective parents toward boarding at the primary/intermediate level.

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I wish to sincerely thank the many people who in one way or another supported this research project.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

This research project was the result of my concern, as the Headmaster of a full primary day/boarding school for boys, about the future of the boarding aspect of my school, due a consistent decrease in boarding numbers over recent years. This concern was supported by colleagues in similar schools throughout New Zealand who were facing a similar experience. This chapter outlines the rationale for the research undertaken and outlines the research aims and questions devised to focus the research process. The context and scope of the research are also outlined and the chapter concludes with an overview of how this dissertation is organised.

Rationale for Research

The rationale for this research is that the number of boy boarders applying to enrol in independent primary/intermediate schools in New Zealand is dropping in a majority of schools. This is supported by data from the Independent Schools of New Zealand (ISNZ) office (James, 2009), which showed from 1998 until 2009, the number of primary/intermediate aged boarders had dropped from 689 to 558. Although this data was inclusive of primary aged boys and girls boarding in ISNZ schools, it is significant that the overall number of boy boarders (both secondary and primary) dropped by 262 over this twelve year period, while the overall number of girl boarders stayed the same.

Having spoken to the Headmasters of these schools, it was evident that the decrease in the number of boarders was having an effect on a number of aspects of school life, especially in areas of school culture and finance. Although there have been a number of research studies done on the issues relating to boarder recruitment in England and America in particular (Boarding Schools' Association, 2002; Hicks, 1996; Independent Schools Information Service & Boarding Schools Association, 1993; Recker, Goldsby, & Neck, 2002), I found very limited data or evidence relating to such research studies being done in this area, in a New Zealand context.

The only piece of recent New Zealand research with a boarding perspective was carried out at Hereworth School, an independent/private day and boarding preparatory school for boys, located in Hawke's Bay (Lowry, 2007). Approximately half of this extensive research project was focused on how families valued aspects of boarding and the boarding programme. Although not intended to look specifically at issues related to recruiting boarders, a number of the results and recommendations from this research indicated concerns/issues that may indeed affect families willingness to send their sons boarding (e.g. 'the realities of life aren't transferred to boarders' and 'a lack of communication is a recurring theme'), such issues beckon further investigation - in particular notions indicating the realities of everyday life may not be reflected in aspects of the boarding programme, and that aspects of leadership in the boarding area may need to be more reflective of perceptions of boarding in the 21st century. This research project allowed the researcher to explore these notions.

Although there are a number of state, or state integrated, intermediate school boarding facilities (all attached to secondary schools), all primary school, or full primary school boarding schools, are independent/private schools. These independent boarding schools are all part of the ISNZ organisation. Boarding has therefore been an important part of these schools' culture and history. As headmaster of an independent/private boys' day and boarding school, and also active member of ISNZ, determining issues relating to the ongoing recruitment of young boy boarders in New Zealand is very important to my school and also a number of the schools led by my colleagues.

Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this research project is to explore trends in primary/intermediate school boarding that may affect the recruitment of boy boarders.

In order to investigate this aim the following research questions were devised about aspects of primary/intermediate boys' education in a context of boarding.

1. What can we discover from trends in school leadership that will help ensure effective leadership of boarding schools?
2. What can we learn from curriculum developments/trends that will help inform the ongoing implementation of relevant and appropriate programmes in boarding?
3. What can we discover from parent/family expectations of boarding schools that will help us best meet the needs of the modern parent/family of a boarder at the primary/intermediate level?

Research Context

The intent of this research was to gain a better understanding of issues that may be affecting the enrolment of younger boys in boarding schools. The choice of this research context was due to the researcher's interest in and commitment to boarding education at the primary/intermediate level. A multi-method qualitative research methodology was selected because it enabled the focus to directly stay with the participants and sought to comprehend how they viewed and interpreted aspect boarding within their context of the world.

Scope of study

This was a relatively small scale, multi-method qualitative research study. A group of parents from one school took part in a questionnaire and a smaller group (from the same school) were involved in a focus group to gather the data that underpins this research. The sample was drawn from a group of parents whose son was currently boarding at the school or had done so within the past three years. Data also used to shape this study was from an interview done with an expert in boarding as part of another recent study completed by the researcher (Scrymgeour, 2009).

Dissertation Organisation

This dissertation is set out in six chapters and the chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter One

This first chapter provided a rationale for the research project. The remainder of this chapter outlined the context of the research and research aims and

questions and concluded with a brief outline of how this dissertation was organised.

Chapter Two

This chapter is the review of literature. The first part explores literature about the history of boarding schools in New Zealand and then under the three themes of; the role of the school leader, curriculum changes, and parental/family expectation in the context of their effect on primary/intermediate aged boarders. In the second part of this chapter key findings from each theme are critiqued.

Chapter Three

The choice of a methodological framework and the method of data collection, collation and analysis is explained in Chapter Three. Issues relating to the reliability and validity of the research project and the ethical considerations complete the chapter.

Chapter Four

This chapter presents the key findings from, and analysis of data, gathered through the questionnaire and focus group session. These findings are presented under the following headings; questionnaire participant background/demographic data, communication, family/parental expectation, curriculum/programme, leadership, and data from questions requiring comments that covered all four themes.

Chapter Five

This chapter discusses the findings presented in chapter four and considers issues that the data highlights. It also employs the relevant literature from Chapter Two, the literature review, to further critique these findings.

Chapter Six

This final chapter summarises the key findings of the research, under four headings; respondent background and demographic, and the three research questions. The chapter goes on to provide recommendations for future practice and addresses the limitations of the research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter focuses on a discussion of national and international literature in relation to trends in primary/intermediate aged boys boarding schools, in relation to the change and expansion over time of; the role of the school leader, school curriculum/programmes and parental/family expectations.

The Chapter begins with a brief overview, from available literature, of the history of boarding in New Zealand, to enhance understanding of the context of this study. The chapter continues with an exploration of the three themes identified from an initial review of the literature; the role of the school leader, curriculum changes, and parental/family expectation in the context of their effect on the recruitment of primary/intermediate aged boarders. In the second part of this chapter key findings from each theme are critiqued and a basis for this study is provided.

Overview of Historical Context

The purpose of boarding schools, as is the purpose of schools in general, is to teach and educate – to influence their students in a certain direction, or to generate change in them. The common characteristic making boarding schools different is the prevalence of the residential unit (Kashti, 1998), commonly referred to as a boarding house or hostel in New Zealand.

In this section a brief history of boys' boarding schools in New Zealand will be explored. Although there has been very little if any research done in this area, from material available on the history of various New Zealand Independent Schools, it becomes evident that in the period between 1850 and 1900 a majority of the schools were started on a small scale. At this time generally the Headmaster owned 'the business' (either outright or in partnership with other stakeholders). The schools generally consisted of not more than ten to twenty boys, who lived and studied in a residential type dwelling that was often located in a rural area (Rickard, 1989).

The New Zealand Education Act of 1877 had provided for free, secular and compulsory education at the primary school level. Even though this education was provided there were quite a number of children needing additional individual tuition. This alerted individuals such as Charles Mather to the need for what he termed, properly organised schools (Harcourt, 1996).

Many of the original boarding schools in New Zealand were based on the great grammar schools of England. There were nine of these (great grammar schools) and they were set up between 1300 and 1600 AD, originally to teach poor boy scholars from the local areas surrounding the schools (D. Hamilton, 1996) . Over time however, these school rose in prestige and began to attract boys from outside the local area and gradually become national schools, and by default boarding schools as the 'out of towners' needed accommodation whilst studying.

The virtues of hardihood, patriotism, military training and corporate spirit were promoted to mould boys into men. Boys tested themselves physically in games, learned leadership through the house and prefectorial systems. Hamilton (1996) suggests tradition was revered, authority unquestioned and the classics, the basis of learning. They were grammar schools because they taught Latin and Greek (with religion). Up until the early 19th century it was 'illegal' to teach outside of this seemingly narrow curriculum (D. Hamilton, 1996).

At this time (early 1800's) and immediately prior to this the Public Schools were being referred to as 'ancient nurseries of all vice and immorality!' Obviously efforts were made to improve this image, as The Clarendon Commission Report completed in England in 1861 confirmed that things had improved in the Public School.

During this time also there was a differentiation between Public (incorporated) and Private (privately owned) school. A prescribed narrow curriculum in the state schools allowed private schools to offer a wider curriculum. In 1850 it was announced that one of the first Independent School in New Zealand, Christ's College (Christchurch), would offer a curriculum including Classics, Religion, French, mathematics, geography and it also promised lectures in science and instruction in drawing and singing (D. Hamilton, 1996).

The Establishment of Christ's College and soon after Wanganui Collegiate in 1855 began the establishment of major Church of England Boarding Schools in the 19th century. By 1926 these two boarding schools were joined by Kings

College (Auckland), Nelson College and Waitaki Boys High School and become known as 'national' schools.

In the early days of these schools the boarders lived with the Headmaster (and his family). Boarding was seen during this time to develop the virtues of hardihood and patriotism. Military type training and corporate spirit moulded boys into men. Boys tested themselves physically in games, learned leadership through boarding house chores/competition and prefectorial systems. Tradition was revered; authority unquestioned and the classics were the basis of learning.

For in excess of 200 years boarding schools served what Smith (2001) termed the old 'Establishment'. During this time schools generally catered for students who were male, white, well born and rich with only a smaller number of schools catering for female equivalents. As the old 'Establishment' in the mid 20th century started to disintegrate as schools struggled to adjust to a global swing towards sexual equality, diversity and achievement earned by merit, not birth (Burggraaf, 1997; Kashti, 1998; Smith, 2001). This together with nationwide educational movement towards more parental/community involvement in schools through policies such as the Tomorrows Schools project in New Zealand in the 1970's and 1980's (Wylie, 1991), sparked something of an identity crisis in boarding schools – prompting commentators to urge boarding schools to maintain their focus on their overt goals to help ensure their survival (Hicks, 1996; Recker et al., 2002). This would probably have led to boarding schools

needing to be very clear on the direction of the school and more importantly keep families informed about this direction.

As well as the above however, boarding schools needed to change their traditional 'full time' boarder enrolment preference to meet the changing needs of families. These needs could result from; the changing make-up of the family unit, both partners in a relationship working, advances in vehicular and roading technologies, changes in parenting philosophies amongst other possible reasons. Globally, pure boarding schools are now rare; combination boarding-day and day-boarding set ups are now the more likely to be found, with a large range of combinations available to day/boarding students (Wickenden, 2009). In New Zealand there are currently no boarding only schools, although there is a full range of boarding options in a range of different school set-up (boys/girls only, coeducational, secular, religious etc.).

Currently there are 102 schools with boarding facilities in New Zealand. 37 girls only (31 state and six independent), 37 boys (25 state and 11 independent) only 24 (22 state and two independent) are coeducational and four (all independent secondary schools) offer boarding for boys only up to the end of Year 11 and for boys and girls in Year 12 and 13. Only eight of these schools offer boarding for primary aged students (one state integrated and seven independent) (E.R.O, 1997). For the purposes of this study it is relevant to note that four of these primary schools provide boarding for boys only (i.e. they are all boys schools) as recruitment of boys into boarding school at this level was the focus of this study.

The Role of the School Leader

At the heart of the definition of leadership over time is the act of providing direction and leadership to achieve schools and individuals goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Schein, 2004). In broad terms however, Fullan (1996) has identified four major shifts in school leadership over time. In the early days boarding school heads were principally charged with running a tight ship, then the head as an administrator, the head as an instructional leader and in more recent times, the broader and more fundamental notion of the head as a change agent (M. Fullan, 1996).

The ‘running a tight ship’, or traditional Headmaster school leadership model, was dominant until the mid twentieth century. This model of leadership was characterised by the Headmaster’s personal charisma, moral and frequently religious authority, focus on impressive scholarship and a sense of mission or vocational in the role (Kashti, 1998; McKeith, 2007; Recker et al., 2002).

A significant factor here for leaders of boarding schools to take into account, is that most of the grandparents, and a number of the parents of today’s students, personally experienced this model of leadership either as a student, a parent, or both. It could follow therefore, that many of these people may perceive that boarding schools are still led in this way (whether they are or not). Given the rapid change in educational pedagogy and leadership observed by McKeith (McKeith, 2007) and others during the past 30 years or so, it is possible that

perceptions based on school leadership practices during the primary educational experiences of the former (current parents and grandparents of today's students) may be outdated. This could perhaps lead one to believe that there is likely to be a relatively strong perception by many families that boarding schools are still led under this 'tight ship' model and if so this may need addressing.

The 'Administrator' leadership model appeared, as educational evaluation emerged as a distinct realm of professional specialisation and school focus (Razik & Swanson, 2001). The focus resulted in increased paper work and the general expectation of the school community that the principal's role was that of a manager (Flath, 1989; M. Fullan, 1991).

Strong (1988) discovered among the tasks performed by principals during the late 1970's and early 1980's, only one-tenth of the time was devoted towards providing instructional leadership (Strong, 1988). Aspects of school leadership including teaching and learning, overall school direction and ongoing staff professional development were not being given sufficient time and/or focus.

The role of the principal as an instructional leader appears to have emerged in the early 1980's. This change of role called for a change of emphasis from principals being managers or administrators to instructional or academic leaders. Brewer (2001, p.30) has outlined this shift as "one that requires focusing on instruction; building a community of learners; sharing decision making; sustaining the basics; leveraging time; supporting ongoing professional

development for all staff members; redirecting resources to support a multifaceted school plan; and creating a climate of integrity, inquiry, and continuous improvement” (Brewer, 2001).

One of the most important aspects of a principal’s personal characteristics moving forward in this time of a constantly changing educational landscape is their capacity to innovate (Neumann & Finaly-Neumann, 1994). In this researchers own boarding school, the makeup of his boarding house community is never the same from year to year – with differing mix of cultures, ages and home geographical locations in particular, there is an ongoing necessity to innovate to help cater for the differing needs of the boarders and their families.

Given the above and the more recent literature suggesting a shared and transformational leadership approach maybe more effective in coping with the varied aspects of leadership, while still maintaining a focus on honing an effective vision of the organisation and innovating accordingly. Transformational leaders shape and elevate the motives of others – thus sharing the load. They are more concerned with the concept of ‘power to’ rather than ‘power over’ (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). With the multifaceted nature of boarding school leadership, one could conclude that this transformational approach to leadership is almost essential, to help ensure all aspects of the school/boarding programme are being given effective time and focus.

Increasingly senior staff within schools are taking on tasks previously seen as the domain of principals, providing new opportunities for senior staff to develop responsibility and management skills in particular, leaving principals to rethink their priorities, develop/maintain the school vision and collaborate between schools and with a range of stakeholders (Chapman et al., 2009). Research carried out by Chapman et al. (2009), McKeith (2007), Hoff et al. (2006) and others, suggested that the pace of leadership development is so rapid that many of the available studies are being overtaken by events. This may suggest that there is a greater need than ever for leadership team members to keep communicating with each other and clarify from time to time that they are all working within an agreed leadership framework.

Researchers have noted the changes in the principals role in terms of both scope and complexity (Heck, 1991). Successful leadership in the 21st century has been defined by Rost (1991) as 'an influenced relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes' (Rost, 1991, p. 102). This he sees in contrast to management which he defined as an authoritative relationship. This relationship also needs to extend beyond the local/national educational scene, with school leaders engaging in research focused on what works to connect the local to the global (Hoff, Yoder, & Hoff, 2006). As has been demonstrated above, this theme is important to the shaping of this study, as leadership roles within boarding appear to be changing - becoming more expansive and complex in nature. Leaders perhaps need to

consider new leadership models (or a selection of models) and techniques to cater for this apparent change in the role of a boarding leader.

Curriculum Changes

In 1850 it was announced that one of the New Zealand's first private schools Christ's College (Christchurch), would offer a curriculum including; Classics, Religion, French, Mathematics, Geography and it also promised lectures in science and instruction in drawing and singing (D. Hamilton, 1996). Such virtues as manhood, patriotism, military training and corporate spirit were promoted to mould boys into men. Boys tested themselves physically in games, and learned leadership through the house and prefectorial systems. Tradition was revered, authority unquestioned and the classics, the basis of learning (B. Hamilton, 1995).

All schools established from this time until soon after the second world war appear to have adopted a standard type of core curriculum (literacy, numeracy, science, geography and games) with a number opting to add subjects involving performing and visual arts.

The 1950's and 1960's were probably the times of greatest curriculum change in the educational history of New Zealand, following a similar trend in America. "New maths" replaced arithmetic, "new" science and "new" social studies also evolved. It is believed the new maths and science curricula came into being

because of Cold War based concerns in America about the nation's scientific and technological capabilities (Lazerson, McLaughlin, McPherson, & Bailey, 1985).

This 'new' curriculum was specified through more than a dozen syllabuses and guidelines. These were provided for subjects and in some cases aspects of subjects, such as handwriting. The documents were of different vintages (spanning 1961–1986), covered different year levels (form 1–4, junior classes to form 2 etc), and were written in different forms.

In the mid 1980s the (then) Department of Education began work on an overall framework for a revised school curriculum and was effectively put into a bit of an hiatus by the reform of the administration of education in 1989 and by a change of government in 1990 (Ipurangi, 2009). The total revision of the New Zealand school curriculum, begun in 1991 in both English and Māori. Significantly, this was the first overall attempt at a curriculum document that addressed the seamless education of new children from the beginning of their school experience through until the end of Year 13 (the final year of compulsory education in New Zealand).

In 1996 the development and implementation of new statements was paused in response to widespread concern across the school sector about the pace and scale of change. This led to an announcement in July 1997, introducing a transition period of at least two years between the publication of a final statement and its mandatory application.

What has followed since has been the redefining/recrafting of the above document to allow schools to develop the New Zealand curriculum framework to more suit/fit the needs of individual schools. This has led to more of a focus on 'school-based curriculum development' (Bolstad, 2004).

A number of schools researched, appear to have a boarding programme outlined on their website or in their prospectus and although there are a number of similarities in content, they are significantly different in approach. Probably due to among other drivers, boarding schools awareness of the financial commitment and acts of 'pastoral faith' (entrusting the care of their son) made by boarding families, developing boarding programmes to effectively engage students in the after and before 'regular school' hours. Over recent years boarding schools have responded with an astonishing proliferation of academic and extra-curricular programmes (Cookson & Persell, 1985). The difference in the type and extent of programmes offered in New Zealand schools is probably due in many to the role played by the national curriculum. This recently updated curriculum specifies the 'outcomes' that students should gain from learning, with the means to attaining those ends determined by individual schools (Bolstad, 2004). This in essence could give boarding schools the freedom to develop programmes specific to the needs of their students both in and out of normal school hours as a point of difference from day only and other boarding schools.

In a very recent study undertaken by the International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) (Reichert & Hawley, 2009), it was significant that boys were able to talk

largely unprompted about how relationships with their teachers were foundational to their optimal learning, more so than the curriculum areas or programmes themselves. Although not stated in this research, it certainly could follow that if a good relationship with teachers is a necessary condition for boys successful learning, a good relationship with boarding staff could equally be a necessary condition for a successful boarding experience.

There currently appears to be little formal study in the area of boarding curriculum/programme content or effectiveness and this is why this theme was important to this research project.

Parental/Family Expectations

From the mid 19th century through until the early 20th century a number of New Zealand's first major boarding schools grew in reputation and soon became known as 'national schools'. Due to the perceived academic success, tradition and unquestioned discipline approach of Christ's College, Waitaki Boys High School and Nelson College in the South Island and Wanganui Collegiate and King's College in the North Island, parents were prepared to send their sons some distance to attend these schools (D. Hamilton, 1996). It seems to have been generally regarded during this time that sending boys away to boarding schools fulfilled social, religious and romantic expectations of mainly upper and middle class parents. In fact Kashti (1998) states that youths being separated from their parents at a fairly young age during this period of time was perceived by parents and others as normative behaviour, carrying a positive social reward for the

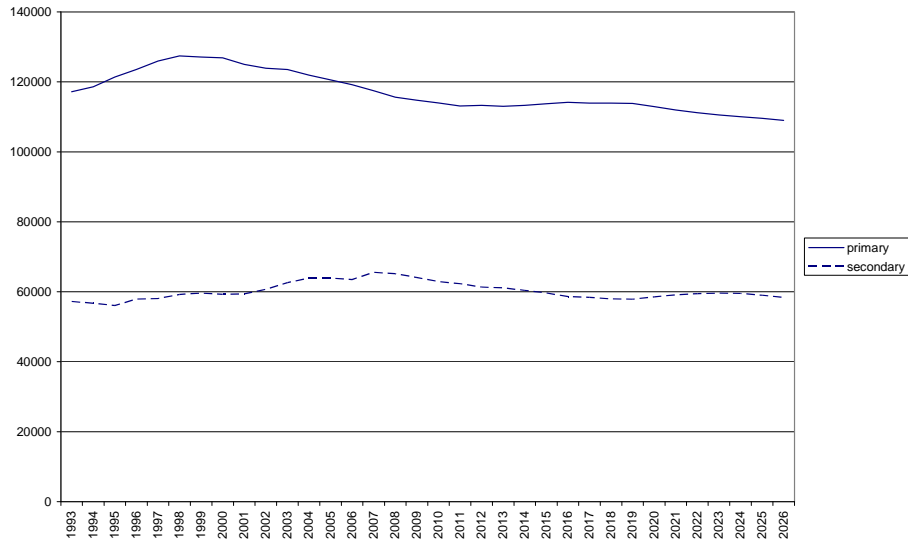
future. The expectation that youth would behave according to the schools norms at this time was usually very strong (Aries, 1965).

This generally positive feeling towards boarding schools by many middle and upper class families appears to have been relatively consistent through until the early 1960's. In line with the 'freedom' and 'flower power' movements of the time, there followed a rise in anti-residential sentiment. Boarding schools along with other residential establishments were associated with 'unfashionable' lack of freedom, limitations and discipline (Burggraaf, 1997). This coupled with improved infrastructure, increased mobility within society and raised standard of living, may have caused some tension amongst families, who may have traditionally followed the boarding school path.

A number of studies completed in Australia in the late 1980's and early 1990's, showed the most important reasons families had for sending their children to (rural) boarding schools included; perceived quality of teaching and academic standards together with high behaviour and moral standards (Baker & Andrews, 1991; Morrison, 1985; Partington, 1989). In 2007 a research project conducted through Hereworth School (Lowry, 2007), a primary/intermediate boys day/boarding school in New Zealand, established the main reasons that parents sent their sons boarding was (in order of preference); smaller class sizes, to provide their sons with essential social skills, to build strong values, for passionate and inspirational teaching, to teach organisational skills and for high academic standards. Looking back to the beginning of this section, the overall

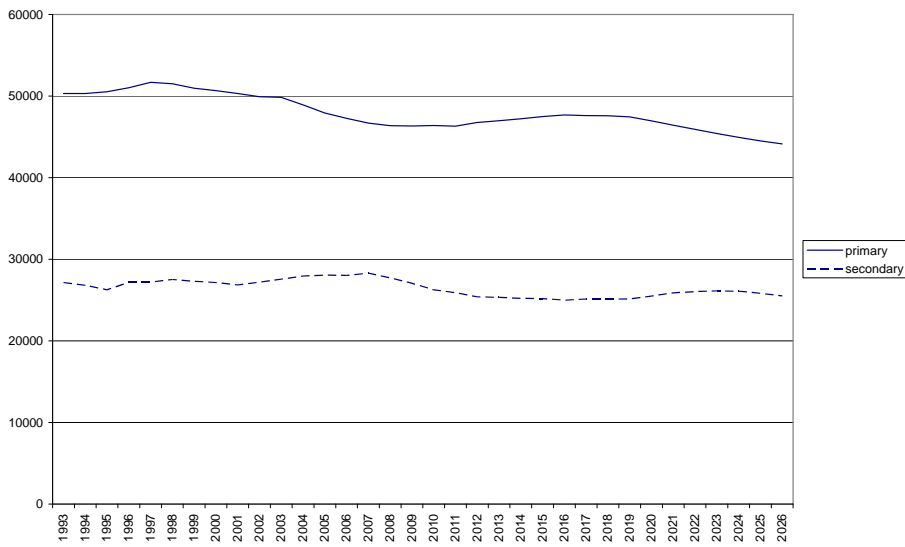
reasons that families send their sons to boarding schools has perhaps with the exception of smaller class sizes, not changed much in the past 150 years.

Stewart (2010) commented that in Australia, boarding schools are currently facing a 'triple whammy' of rural downturn, new parenting philosophies and bad press associated with bullying and scandals in a small number of well known boarding schools (Stewart, 2010). These same trends may be impacting on New Zealand boarding schools. As is portrayed in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below recent research undertaken by Castalia (2008) in New Zealand indicates that independent schools here are forecasted to have a downturn in overall roll numbers over the next couple of decades. However the Castalia research does not take into account the current financial global recession, which one would expect would negatively impact on the above findings in the immediate short term anyway (or until we climb out of recession). Interesting enough though, a trend for continuing increasing rolls in independent schools has been forecast in the major city areas as outlined in the case of Auckland (Figure 2.3) (Castalia, 2008). A similar study on roll trends for boarders could not be found, however given that a large number of boarders come from rural or semi-rural areas, the Castalia research does indicate that a downturn in boarding numbers in primary/intermediate schools is probable over the next decade or so.



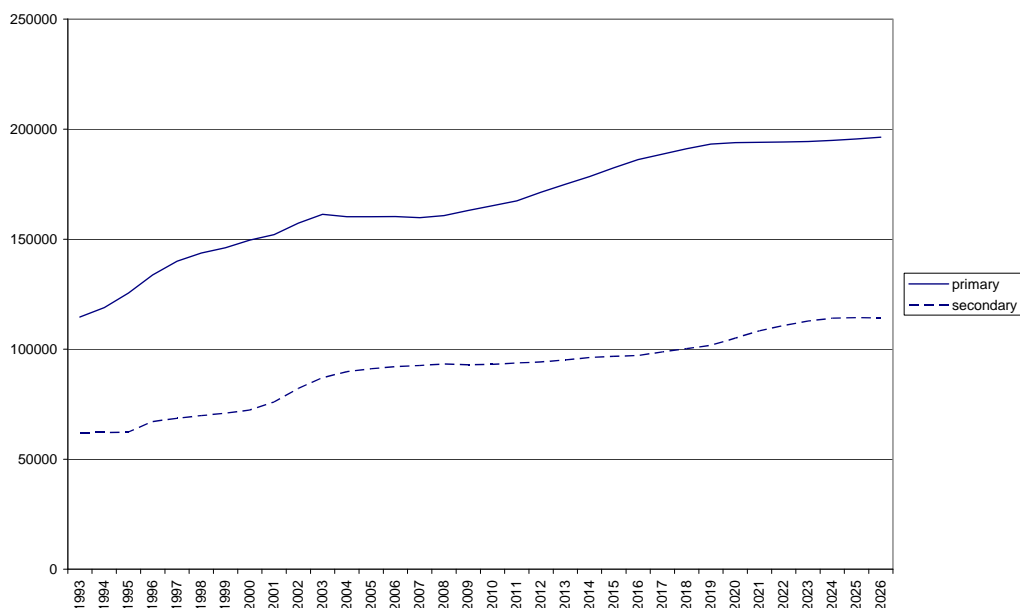
Source: Ministry of Education, as adjusted by Castalia (Castalia, 2008)

Figure 2.1 : Past and Projected Rolls for North Island Rural



Source: Ministry of Education, as adjusted by Castalia, (Castlia, 2008)

Figure 2.2 : Past and Projected Rolls for South Island Rural



Source: Ministry of Education, as adjusted by Castalia

Figure 2.3: Past and Projected Rolls for Auckland

There also appears to have been quite a major shift in parental attitudes towards being separated from children, especially when the children are younger, compared to previous generations. Many of today's parents, who attended boarding schools, did not see their parents often and have realised (and had it impressed on them) how important it is to be involved with their children when possible. In a fairly recent study done by the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), 86% of parents surveyed had at some time to defend their decision to choose boarding for their primary/intermediate aged child (Boarding Schools' Association, 2002). The report alluded to a strong negative feeling in public perception towards primary/intermediate school boarding. In conjunction with this Sloane (1996) noted modern parents prefer to watch their son growing up at home and consequently many families who sent their boys boarding tended to wait until they turn 13 years of age or older (Sloan, 1996).

Recker et al. (2002) observed that because students have a greater voice than they did in the past, school choice no longer lies with the sole discretion of their parents. Modern day family units may be more inclusive when it comes to overall decision making. Children's opinions are more regularly sought and appear to hold increasing kudos in the decision making process. A recent study by the BSA (2002) found that 58% of primary/intermediate boarders have some input into the decision for them to board.

Given the above and that modern parents appear to be more sensitive to the complaints of their children, children tend to complain more 'intensely' if they are unhappy (Hanson, 2008). It has followed that a number of inappropriate practices and acts in boarding schools are now being voiced by students and subsequently, where appropriate, investigated and/or acted upon. Parents too, have realised the inappropriateness of some experienced behaviours (e.g. bullying, fagging and over vigorous physical punishment) when they were in schools, that may have been accepted as being part of school 'culture' at the time they attended boarding schools. The uncovering of and dealing with inappropriate behaviour (both past and present) is critical for the ongoing safety and wellbeing of students, however the coverage of these stories in the media tends to tar all boarding schools with the same (or similar) brush. A good example of this was a well documented incident at Sydney's, Trinity Grammar in 2001. The following introduction to an ABC News programme gives the flavour of an incident that had people talking on both sides of the Tasman.

“The proud image of one of Australia's more exclusive boarding schools lies in tatters in the aftermath of a deeply embarrassing bullying scandal involving serious sexual abuse.” (Stewart, 2010)

On a more positive note, throughout most of history however, one of the (if not ‘the’) unique features of boarding school education is it has always been a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week proposition providing a total life experience for kids’ (Smith, 2001). This must be appealing to a number of modern families where perhaps; both parents are working longish hours or travel a lot, or a family is living apart and some stability is needed for the child, or an only child would benefit from an education that encompasses learning to live with others of the same or similar age.

According to an recent international business report (James, 2010), New Zealand business people are frugal and conservatism compared to business people living in other countries. This, the report goes on to say, is due in part to decades as a subsistence economy and having lived for a number of years under a socialist, welfare government where many personal decisions were left for the government to make for them and where high taxes left little discretionary income for enterprise. If this international perspective is true perhaps the number of families in New Zealand with enough discretionary income to afford a boarding education is limited.

It was questions like this, that prompted the investigation of this theme of the possible changing attitudes or perceptions of families to their sons being a boarder at the primary/intermediate level.

Critique of Major Themes

As previously discussed all educational leadership is in a period of dynamic change (Hoff et al., 2006). From the review findings it is evident that to perform their roles effectively, the modern day principal needs to be manager/administrator, school instructional leader and an innovative visionary – an array of tasks not easily achieved without the support of others. This distributed leadership model requires concerted action among people with (often) different areas of expertise and a mutual respect that stems from an appreciation of the knowledge and skills of the different roles (Elmore, 2000). From my observations and research, many New Zealand boarding schools adopt innovative frameworks for governance and leadership but often in combination with more traditional approaches and philosophies to help retain much revered ‘traditional culture’ in some aspects of leadership and management. I have been unable to source information to help determine the advantages, disadvantages or neutral value of the combination of the innovative and the traditional approaches to leadership. One would imagine that a number of the traditional aspects of boarding school leadership (i.e. valuing a number of leadership traditions that still hold true with most families) would be advantageous, however at what point does too much of a focus on the traditional limit necessary innovation?

Due to the fact that all stakeholders have attended school at one time or another, they will all have their own perceptions of how school leadership operated - most probably based on the leadership style they experienced while at school. Often we take it for granted that stakeholders share similar perspectives on how a school is being led. School leaders need to ensure the common values, ideals and standards of leadership are shared as an ongoing foundation for a shared vision and that this vision acknowledges a range of stakeholder perspectives (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000).

A number of projects have been done in recent history to explore the contexts of curriculum and teaching and to link context factors to classroom practices (Bailey, 1985). It has been difficult however to find any such studies exploring the link to boarding practices. Despite searching the websites of numerous boarding schools throughout New Zealand, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Boarding schools Association, Independent Schools of New Zealand and the Ministry of Education, I have been unable to find a boarding component in curriculum documents/outlines. Boarding is often identified and documented as a cornerstone of school life in many boarding schools, and the boarding aspects of the school are often described in terms of pastoral care considerations, safety issues and ad hoc programmes or a series of 'extra-curricular' options.

From the data available from the 1950's until 2007 (see earlier in this chapter) the key reasons for families sending their sons to boarding schools has not

changed much at all. What does appear to have changed quite markedly however are parenting attitudes, particularly with regard to parents being separated from primary aged children, parents worried about their child being unhappy or homesick (Boarding Schools' Association, 2002) and parents being more sensitive/responsive to their child's needs/opinions (Hanson, 2008). This coupled with the increased participatory role of parents in school life and life in general over the past 20 years or so, appears to have been the major contributors to current attitudes and perceptions of boarding.

The recent proliferation of extra-curricular programs designed to appeal to the various desires of the market place (Cookson & Persell, 1985), appears to be in response to the modern parents desire to keep their son 'gainfully' employed most of hours he is awake during the day. This is quite a major shift from not-so-long-ago, where boys both at school and home were often left to their own devices during their 'down' (unstructured) times of the day. This appears to be somewhat at odds with an equally strong desire from parents for their sons to develop attributes such as; initiative, independence and self-responsibility (Independent Schools Information Service & Boarding Schools Association, 1995).

Summary

This chapter has provided a brief literature background to the history of boarding in New Zealand and a literature background and critique of each of the research questions, examined in this dissertation. These questions were explored under the themes of; school leadership, curriculum and programmes, and

parental/family expectations - in relation to boarding for boys at the primary/intermediate level of schooling. The focus of the next chapter will be to outline and critique a research methodology suited to this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodology employed in this research study. The chapter begins with an explanation, and justification for the selection of a multi-method qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm as the methodological approach of choice. The chapter also provides justification for the use of an on-line questionnaire and focus group session as the methods. Justification of data collection and the data analysis methods used in this research are also discussed. The chapter concludes by discussing issues of reliability and validity as well as the key ethical issues that were considered.

Selection of Research Approach

A smaller component of this research study dealt with 'hard' data – data that could be counted (measured) - where the researcher knew in advance what was going to be counted in regard to boarding issues and participant background and associated demographic information. A larger part of this research focused on boarding family's perceptions and knowledge about the quality of various aspects of the primary/intermediate boarding programme. Rather than how many times something happened – this study mainly looked at how it felt and what it meant to board or be a boarding family (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Therefore a multi-method qualitative research approach was chosen as the most appropriate for this research project.

Multi-method qualitative research has been defined as the class of research where the researcher uses two or more research methods, each conducted rigorously and complete in itself, in one project. The results are then triangulated to form a complete whole (Morse, 2003). In this study the two research methods used were a questionnaire and a focus group.

Green and his colleagues (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) have highlighted five research approaches devised for a mixed methods study that the researcher has adapted for this multi-methods approach, to enhance the effectiveness of the outcomes of this research as follows:

Triangulation – testing the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments. In this project, triangulation increased chances to control, or at least assess, some of the opportunities or threats influencing our results. Data from the questionnaire, focus group, an expert interview and the literature review were used to compare the accuracy/consistency of data.

Complementarity - clarifying and illustrating results from one method, with the use of another method. In this project, a focus group discussion added information about the views of key stakeholders to boys' boarding issues that have help qualify data from the questionnaire.

Development - results from one method shape subsequent methods or steps in the research process. In this project, partial results from the questionnaire suggested that a number of issues raised needed to be addressed in a focus group to mine more or deeper information.

Initiation – stimulating new research questions or challenges results obtained through one method. In this project, the questionnaire to boarding stakeholders (and a previously completed interview with a boarding expert) provided new insights into how the focus group session was approached and constructed.

Expansion - providing richness and detail to the study exploring specific features of each method. In our case, integration of procedures mentioned above expanded the breadth of the study and helped enlighten the more general debate on issues relating to primary/intermediate aged boarders.

In summary, these research methods provided a research strategy integrating different methods that produced better results in terms of quality and scope (Sydenstricker-Neto, 1997).

The Research Process

Sampling

Questionnaire:

Parents/Caregivers of boys boarding at School X during 2010 and also parents/caregivers of boarders who left the school in 2009 and 2008 were invited to complete the questionnaire. This was a possible sample group of fifty. This gave a good mixture of families with a variety of recent boarding experience. All fifty potential participants were invited to complete the questionnaire and twenty-one did so. This was a disappointing response rate considering many more of the invited participants had indicated verbally that they were keen to complete the questionnaire.

Focus Group:

The focus group was comprised of twelve participants which was the maximum number preferred (see below). All twenty one respondents who had completed the questionnaire were asked if they would be available for a focus group session and twelve responded affirmatively, so no selection process was required. Participants were a balanced mixture of parents/caregivers of both five day and full-time boarders who currently attended the school. The sample size for the focus group was based on the suggestion by Morgan (1988) that groups should be between four and twelve members (Morgan, 1988).

In the case of the parent/caregiver participants the relationship between the researcher and them was a Headmaster-stakeholder relationship. In order to address any possible issues around participant's rights and imbalance of power due to the researcher's position, a number of measures were put into place. All documentation sent to and received from participants was through a third person (the researchers Executive Assistant). Participants chosen for the focus group were the first twelve to send their consents to the third person. The same third person also conducted the focus group interview, following guidelines set down by the researcher.

Recruit Participants

Questionnaire:

All parents/caregivers of boys boarding at School X during 2010, 2009 and 2008, were emailed an invitation to participate in the research by completing an online

questionnaire (Appendix B). A letter of explanation and a consent form accompanied the emailed invitation to participate. A second email containing a URL link to the questionnaire on Survey Monkey (an online site hosting the questionnaire) was sent to those families who consented to completing the questionnaire. Those families invited to complete the questionnaire were given two weeks to complete and submit the questionnaire online. During this two week period invited participants were remind on two occasions via emails that the closing date for completed questionnaires was approaching.

Focus Group:

All boarding parents/caregivers and full boarding parents/caregivers who completed the questionnaire boys and had boys currently boarding at the primary/intermediate level were invited to participate in the focus group. The invitation was made through email. Once parents agreed to participate they were sent an information letter and consent form to complete and return.

Participants were offered a copy of the findings of the research if so desired. Documentation involved in the recruitment (of participants) process for both the questionnaire and the focus group was devised by the researcher, however distribution, collection and processing of this documentation was undertaken by a third person (the researchers Executive Assistant) to help ensure the confidentiality and rights of the participants are upheld.

Data Collection

The main form of instrumentation used to gather data was an on-line questionnaire. One of the major advantages of using an online questionnaire, was that a greater number of respondents were able to be given the same material, in a shorter period of time (and all at the same time). Given the latter and the varied location, and limited accessibility (in a number of cases), of the homes of potential respondents, this form of instrumentation was the most appropriate option. The questionnaire was created and hosted on the ‘Survey Monkey’ website (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). Respondents completed the survey and submitted it on-line.

Following a brief evaluation of questionnaire data a number of issues were identified for further exploration in a focus group. The intimate, but dynamic and interactive nature of this data collection instrument, gave valuable feedback on a number of the issues identified as key issues in the questionnaire and presented some new information for consideration in the analysis process. Data from the focus group session was recorded on a digital voice recorder. This recorded information was then transcribed by a neutral person.

The protocol used for the focus group was informed by the work of Cresswell (2003). The protocol included a relevant ice breaker question that was followed by 4-5 questions based around a qualitative research plan and concluded with a question or statement that provided further possible scopes of inquiry (Cresswell, 2003). Linked to these questions were probes designed to ask the

participants to explain their ideas in greater detail or to elaborate further on particular issues. The focus questions can be viewed in Appendix A.

The data collection process was carried out in the Hawke's Bay area, however data was collected from boarding families living in neighbouring provinces as well.

Data Coding and Analysis

The analysis of data was a separate step that followed the data collection processes (questionnaire and focus group). This strategy for the timing of the data analysis was chosen as the most appropriate because it allowed me to focus on the complete set of data for each process. By reading and rereading the whole data set before starting the formal analysis process, I was able to get a better 'sense' of the information contained in the data (Annells & Whitehead, 2007).

The "fracturing, grouping and gluing" style of qualitative data analysis (Annells & Whitehead, 2007) was chosen. This appeared to be the most commonly used and straight forward style of qualitative data analysis. In the first stage of analysis, each paragraph of the data was reviewed for information relevant to the research question. This information was then 'fractured' out and given an appropriate descriptive term (code). I used labels (key words) from information, identified as relevant to the research question (e.g. staffing, traditions, socialisation, leadership etc), to code the data fractured out. I chose to code paragraph by paragraph, rather than line by line, due to the conversational

nature of the data. The next stage was to review the fractured out information and put this into some form of logical/meaningful 'groupings'. This was done initially by grouping similar coded units of meaning together. These groupings changed slightly as I worked through the interview data. The final stage was establishing any relationships between the grouped pieces of relevant information and 'gluing' them into categories (i.e. putting elements of the relevant information into like are more inclusive groups).

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was automatically collated into tables and graphs through the 'Survey Monkey' software at the completion of the data gathering process.

Issues of Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the extent to which a question or variable accurately reflects the concept the researcher is actually looking for. The best way to ensure validity is through pretesting the concepts and questions (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). In this study the questionnaire and focus group questions were tested on a smaller group of colleagues not participating in the research to test that they were 'fit for purpose' thus helping to maximise the validity of these instruments. At each stage of the research study, the researcher communicated his actions with his supervisor to help maximise its validity.

Whilst the intention of qualitative research is to inform a unique interpretation of events, some limited generalisation may be possible for the categories and

themes that emerge from the data analysis. In the future another researcher could for example;

- a) repeat this research in a different context (e.g. different type of school)
- b) repeat this research using a different collection process.

Reliability refers to consistency. In qualitative research it is not the numbers that make the data valid but rather the logical integration of data from different sources and different methods of analysis into a single, consistent interpretation (Bryan, 1984). As explained earlier in this section this study has satisfied Green et al (1989) purposes for this method of research - triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion – to help ensure the effective reliability of this study. Triangulation is a key factor in the overall reliability of a research study and in this study method triangulation has been used.

Ethical Considerations

“The point of research is to improve the situation of human beings also research needs to be conducted in accordance with ethical norms”

(Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

Informed and voluntary consent was obtained from the school and individuals participating. Letters outlining the purpose and scope of the research were sent to all participants. No participants were included without a signed consent form.

The letters also informed participants that confidentiality and privacy was to be respected by ensuring that they were not identified in any reports and that all materials will be kept in secure cabinet by the researcher. Participants were also advised that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time up until the interview process has been completed. Anonymity was assured by not using real names of people or the school, in any reports. The file names for recordings and transcripts of interviews were coded so they could not be directly linked to specific participants. A list of codes was kept on a separate file.

The research minimised harm to participants not only by maintaining privacy and confidentiality but also by consideration of the time required to complete the research. Focus group times and duration were kept manageable and the questions were clear and relevant to the research. Participants were informed that they may withdraw if the time associated with participation caused stress or difficulty.

While there were no specific cultural issues identified by either the participants or the researcher during this research, ongoing sensitivity to the differing needs of participants was maintained throughout the study.

Deception was avoided by ensuring voluntary and informed consent and disclosing the purpose and the nature of the research at the start. Participants had the opportunity to seek clarification of issues before agreeing to participate in the data collection process and at any stage after this.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed by the researcher and why it was multi-method qualitative in nature. It considered the sampling and justified the case study approach. It showed why and how the specific tools of a questionnaire and focus group were used and explained how the data collected was coded. It considered measures employed to help ensure the reliability and viability of the study and outlined ethical considerations. The following chapter analyses the data collected from the questionnaire and focus group session involving the sample groups of parents of primary and intermediate aged boarders.

Chapter Four

Research Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of key findings from the data gathered from a questionnaire completed by a range of boarding families whose boys were currently boarding at a primary/intermediate school, or had finished boarding at this level within the past two years, and a focus group made up of twelve participants who were parents of boys currently boarding at a primary/intermediate school. Data relevant to the research question from a semi-structured interview with a recently retired school headmaster, who is an expert on the subject of boarding, has also been added to help support, or challenge, themes that developed through the analysis process.

After reading through data gathered from the questionnaire a number of times, a number of strong or reoccurring themes became evident – these are presented in the below.

Themes from Questionnaire Data:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Programme
- Family/Parental Expectations
- Perceptions (of boarding)
- Socialisation
- Quality
- Frequency
- Flexibility
- Cost
- Culture/tradition
- Staffing
- Decision Making

Once the data was grouped around the themes it was a preference to see if it would fit into the three categories (themes) that were the focus of a recent literature review and semi-structured interview with an expert, as outlined previously in this report. As displayed below with the addition of another category ‘communication’, there was enough similarity between a number of grouped data sets to be able to regroup these into the four categories of; leadership, programmes and parental expectations and communication. Due to the nature and repetition of some of the content of the grouped data, it was necessary to list a number of these in more than one category.

<i>Grouped Data in Categories:</i>	
A. Leadership	Perception Culture/Tradition Cost Communication Staffing Flexibility Decision Making
B. Programmes	Culture/Tradition Flexibility Decision Making Staffing
C. Parental Expectations	Communication Socialisation Flexibility Cost Perception Decision Making Staffing

D. Communication	Quality, flexibility and flexibility – evident in other themes
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In order to summarise the analysis of the results of the questionnaire comment data, the key information is presented in the four categories described above. A selection of direct quotes has been chosen from the interview, relating to the issue being outlined – these quotes are recorded in parenthesis following what has been extracted as key information under each category. The first section on the data analysis gives some demographic and background information on the participants of the questionnaire – the main data gathering tool.

Questionnaire participant background/demographic data:

The questionnaire was completed by 21 of the 50 families it was distributed to – this was a 42% return rate. A majority of the questionnaires (67%) were completed by mother’s alone. 24% of the questionnaires were completed by both parents together and 5% by fathers alone.

As indicated in figure 4.1 below, 57% of respondents had combined gross incomes of between \$50,000 and \$150,000. 19% of respondents had a combined income of over \$150,000, with 14 % of respondents preferring not to reveal their combined incomes. Significantly, from a fee affordability point of view, nearly 40% of respondents had combined gross incomes of under \$100,000. The possible implications of this are explored in the next chapter.

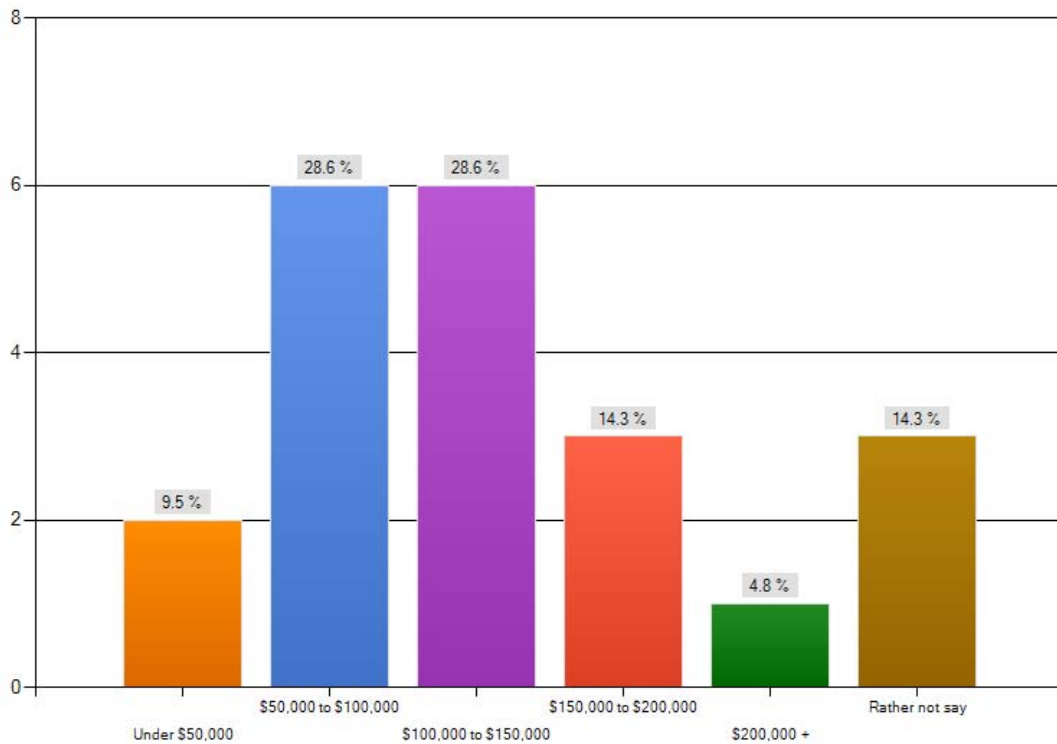


Figure 4.1 Combined before tax (gross) incomes of respondent families

When asked to best describe the area in which they lived, 71% of respondents lived in a rural area, with semi rural, urban (town) and urban (city) respondents equally catering for the other 29% (i.e. approx 9.5% each).

The number of five day boarding and seven day boarding respondent families was essentially even with only one more five day than seven day.

52% of respondents were parents of boarders who had left the school over the past two years. The next biggest group (24%) were the parents of boarders currently in Year 8.

A majority of the sons of respondents (54%) started boarding at the Year 7 level (approximately 11 years of age), the next highest number of respondents (21%) had sons who started to board at the Year 6 level (approximately 10 years of age). Less than 15% of the sons of respondents started boarding below Year 5 (nine years old and younger).

When asked how long their sons will have (or had) boarded by the time they leave (left) the school (at the end of Year 8) 43% of respondents' sons will have spent two years boarding and 22% will have spent five years or more boarding. The latter suggests possible inaccuracy somewhere in the data collecting process as one respondent (this is less than 5% of respondents) recorded that their son began boarding in Year 4 or below - a boy would need to start in Year 3 to board for five years unless he repeated a year level.

Communication

As indicated in the Figure 4.2 below, when asked how they first found out about their sons boarding school, nearly 44% of respondents stated that it was on the recommendation of friends and/or family with a connection to the school, with 37% first finding out about the school through a family member who had attended the school. This means over 80% of respondents first found out about the school through friends and family.

No respondents first found out about the school through newspaper/radio advertising, school signage or real estate agents. Data from the boarding expert

interview reinforced that “word of mouth was probably the best (form of marketing) wasn’t it” although it was important for schools to use and control a variety of communication methods to “keep families informed of boarding programmes/successes/issues”.

All members of the focus group agreed that they first found out about the school by some form of word of mouth communication (“Yeah word of mouth people who had been here before we had a history with the school”). They were only really aware of many of the commercial promotional vehicles used once they had signed up to or started at the school (“I was aware of some of them but we were coming anyway ... not advertisements or anything like that, not until we were actually here that we take notice”).

These responses provide valuable feedback for the marketing direction of the school and possible implications will be explored in later chapters.

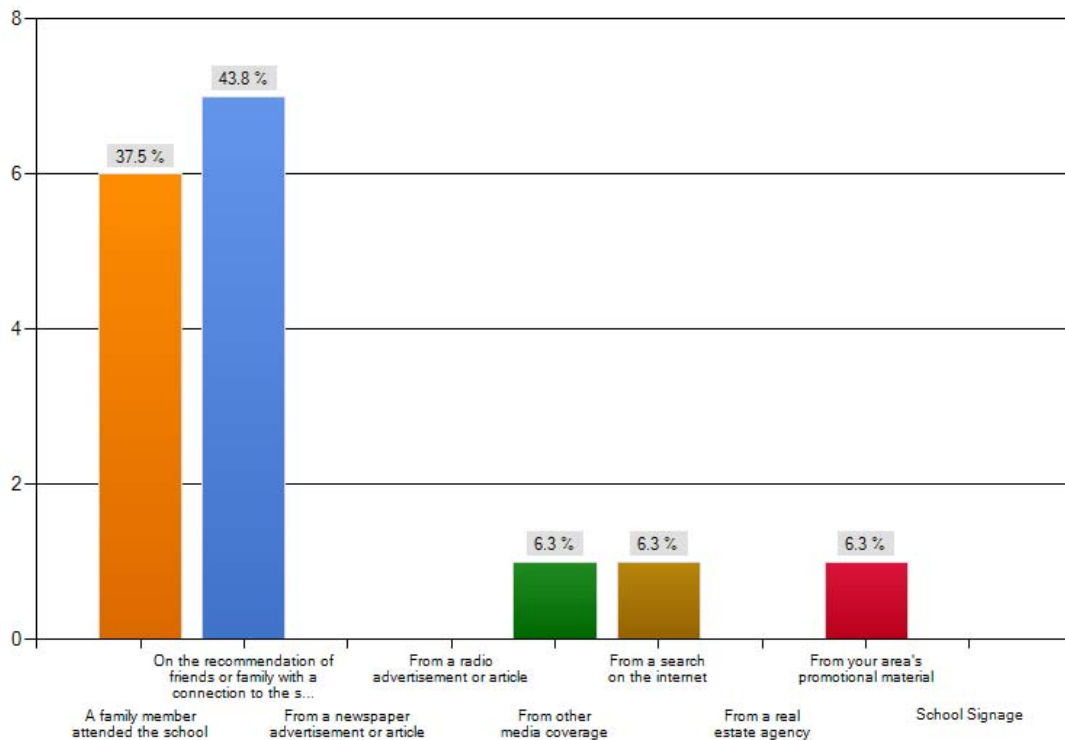


Figure 4.2 How families first found out about their son's boarding school

Data represented in the Figure 4.3 below indicates that when considering a boarding school for their son, respondents ranked a tour of the school and speaking with the Headmaster as extremely helpful in finding out information. Speaking with boarding staff, attending an Open Morning and speaking with families who had attended the school, were the next most helpful. Although none of the information options given were seen as not helpful, the school website was probably the lowest ranked, with respondents equally scoring it as either 'quite helpful' or 'neither helpful nor unhelpful'. This was confirmed by a member of the focus group who stated that he only really used the website to "do sports things, view the photo galleries and look up boarding stuff". These results reinforce the need to develop strategies to get parents into the school, to most effectively pass on information that will increase the possibility of them enrolling their son as a boarder at the school.

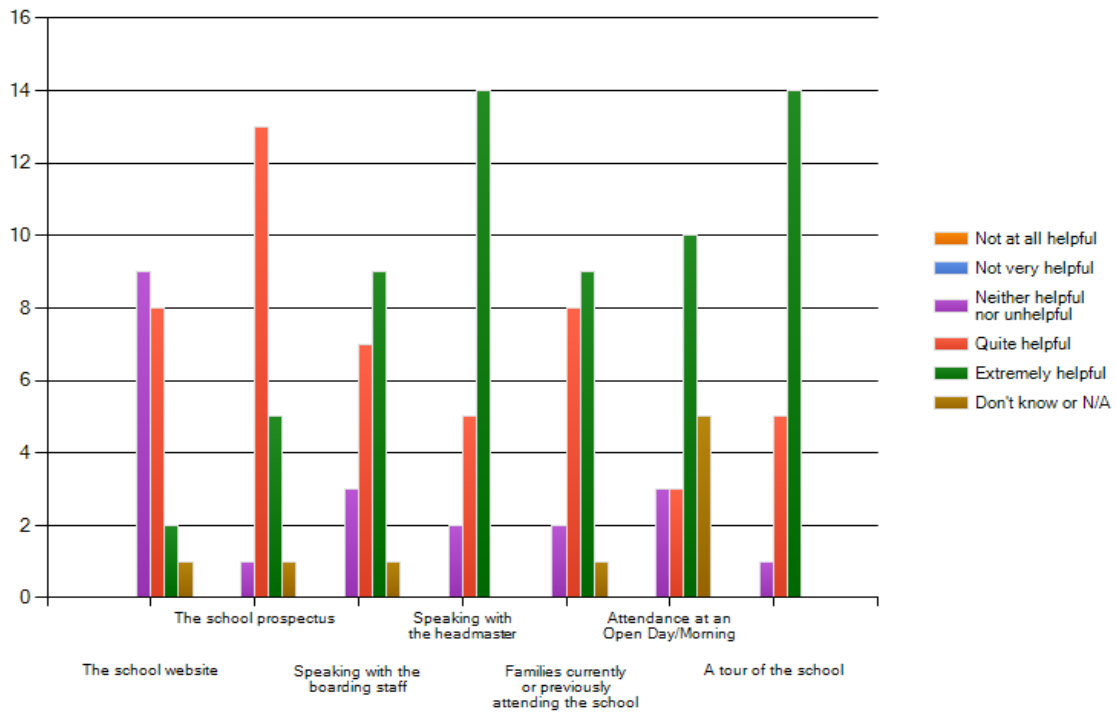


Figure 4.3 Helpfulness of information to families when they are considering sending their son's boarding

The results above are reinforced by data gathered in research done by IDEAction in 2007, in Figure 4.4 below (Lowry, 2007). Results in this table show that being shown around the school by the Headmaster and talking to other parents were the methods most used by parents to evaluate the school. It is also evident from these results that they found these two methods along with experiencing an Open Day the most useful method of evaluation.

Things did to evaluate school (% of parents)										
	Shown around by headmaster	Talked to other parents	Went to open day	Looked at website	Talked to boys currently enrolled	Shown around by pupil	Talked to ex-student adults	Looked at reports	Discussed with teachers at current school	None of these
Boarders	84	73	46	41	32	38	38	19	32	5
Day pupils	87	77	48	45	36	34	27	30	19	1
How many found that useful (% of those who did each)										
	Shown around by headmaster	Talked to other parents	Went to open day	Looked at website	Talked to boys currently enrolled	Shown around by pupil	Talked to ex-student adults	Looked at reports	Discussed with teachers at current school	
Boarders	87	78	76	46	59	58	13	26	34	
Day pupils	87	78	75	58	61	62	59	53	58	

Figure 4.4 Things families did to evaluate the school and how useful they found them (Lowry, 2007).

Family/Parental Expectations

The major concern most respondents had when considering sending their son's boarding was 'not being able to see their boy on a daily/regular basis'. This was followed closely by a belief that 'their boy would not cope in the boarding environment'. When these two concerns were discussed with the focus group there was a general consensus that although of concern, "I don't think there is anything you can do there ... I think it is just a natural worry ... something that everyone as an individual has to deal with and work through". And when prompted whether there was anything the school could do to help alleviate these concerns typical responses included; "open line with teachers and boarding staff is great ... email and telephone... compulsory communication ... writing a letter once a week ... so if you are hearing from them regularly then you are happy that they are happy". Then of slightly less concern was; 'their boy not coping with leaving home', 'distance - the school being too far away' and 'the cost associated with boarding'. Families appear not at all concerned about what others would

think of them sending their child boarding and had little concern that they (the families) would not cope with their boys leaving home. Data from the expert interview suggested he believed more families were seeing boarding as being tough for boys at the primary/intermediate level (“...a lot of parents who feel guilty they are sending their children boarding ... they would totally over indulge them, as a way of saying sorry”). At least two members of the focus group identified they were aware other parents who thought they were being ‘cruel’ or hard on their boys by making them board (“I got a lot of flak from other mothers that I was sending him off to board ...it was quite hard...you have got day boys driving past our gates to get here...they think we are being cruel”). These responses suggest that further thought needs to be given to addressing these concerns with prospective parents in recruitment/promotional material and in discussions prior to enrolment.

When making the decision to go boarding 67% of respondents stated that Mother, father and son were all key decision makers in the process. All respondents indicated that the mother was a key decision maker in the process. 85% indicated that the father was a key decision maker and 68 % indicated that the boy was a key decision maker. 29% of the respondents indicated that grandparents were also key decision makers in the *process*.

In relation to the above when asked whether or not one person was seen as the dominant decision maker in the process, 55% responded ‘no’. Of the 45% who answered in the affirmative, 40% stated the son was the dominant decision

maker, 40% the mother and 20% the father (refer Figure 4.5 below). The expert interviewed, believed those in the family unit involved in key decision making has changed, (“I think, very clearly the feminine influence has made a huge difference to boarding...I think the mothers make the decisions nowadays, fullstop”). When the results above were presented to the focus group, initially many of the group questioned that the mother and/or son were really the dominant decision maker, (“That bollocks... mum needs to step back and dad needs to step up...probably mum filling the forms in...maybe it’s single parent families...maybe someone dotted in the wrong number...from my point of view I think it’s more a joint decision”) however as the discussion progressed some parents accepted that their son was the dominant decision maker (“we let our son make the hard decision as to whether he was to be a boarder or a day boy...he (son) had a bit of a say, probably 50/50 decision...it was our sons call to come in Year 6 not 7).

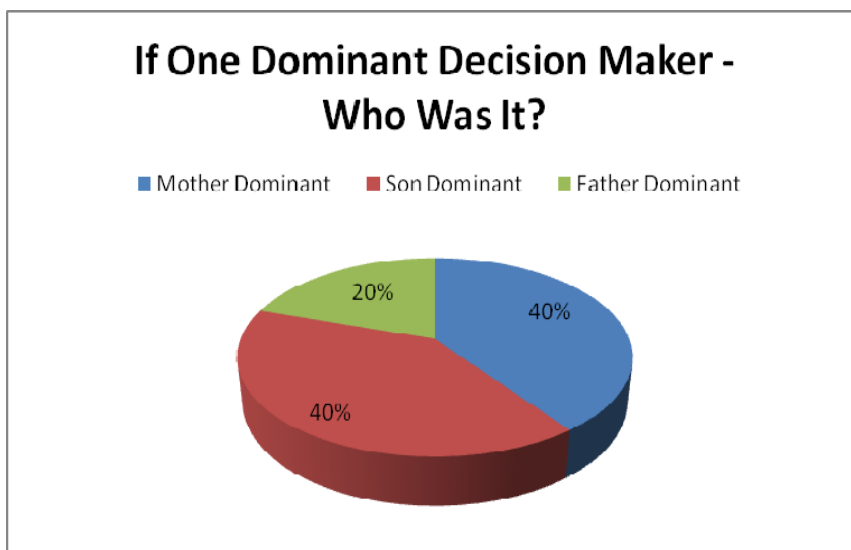


Figure 4.5 If there was one dominant decision maker – who was it?

From the above it is evident that although fathers play a part, mothers and boys play a key part in the decision making process to chose a school and the consequences of this need to be unpicked further in the next chapter.

Programmes/Curriculum

When considering moving their son from their local school to a boarding school, respondents ranked 'getting a better academic education than he was currently getting' and 'getting more interaction and socialisation opportunities with his peers' as the most extremely important reasons for moving their boys. This was followed closely by a belief that; 'my boy would gain from the boarding experience', 'my boy would benefit from a greater range of extra-curricular activities' and 'my boy would benefit from a boys only school'. The cost involved in sending a boy boarding was seen as quite important in the decision making process as was the recommendation of other families who had attended the school. The least important consideration seemed to be, the distance the family lived from their closest school. Additional comments made in this area mainly revolved around a school teaching values and manners and having good anti-bullying policies. These results indicate that when families look beyond sending their sons to their local school, the quality of the educational opportunities and programmes available at a new school are more important than the actual type of school (i.e. state/private, boarding/day, single sex/co-educational etc).

When asked to respond to statements about the weekend boarding programme (as displayed in Figure 4.6, below), 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed

with the statement that 'the weekend boarding programme is well communicated to families' - one respondent disagreed with this statement. 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'during the weekends boys are well supervised (one respondent was neutral on this statement and 24% didn't know). 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that during the weekend 'their boy experiences a good balance of school based and out-of-school activities. Two respondents disagreed with this statement, while 24% didn't know or couldn't answer. Exactly the same response rate as the later was received for the statement 'during the weekend my boy experiences a good balance of structured and unstructured activities. In response to the statement 'my boy is mostly positive about the weekends he spends boarding', only 43% agreed or strongly agreed with 15% disagreeing and once again 24% not knowing or unable to answer. Reasons for this lack of positivity about the weekend programme by a number of boys, is explored further in future chapters, as are reasons for nearly a quarter of respondents not being able to answers questions about the boarding programme.

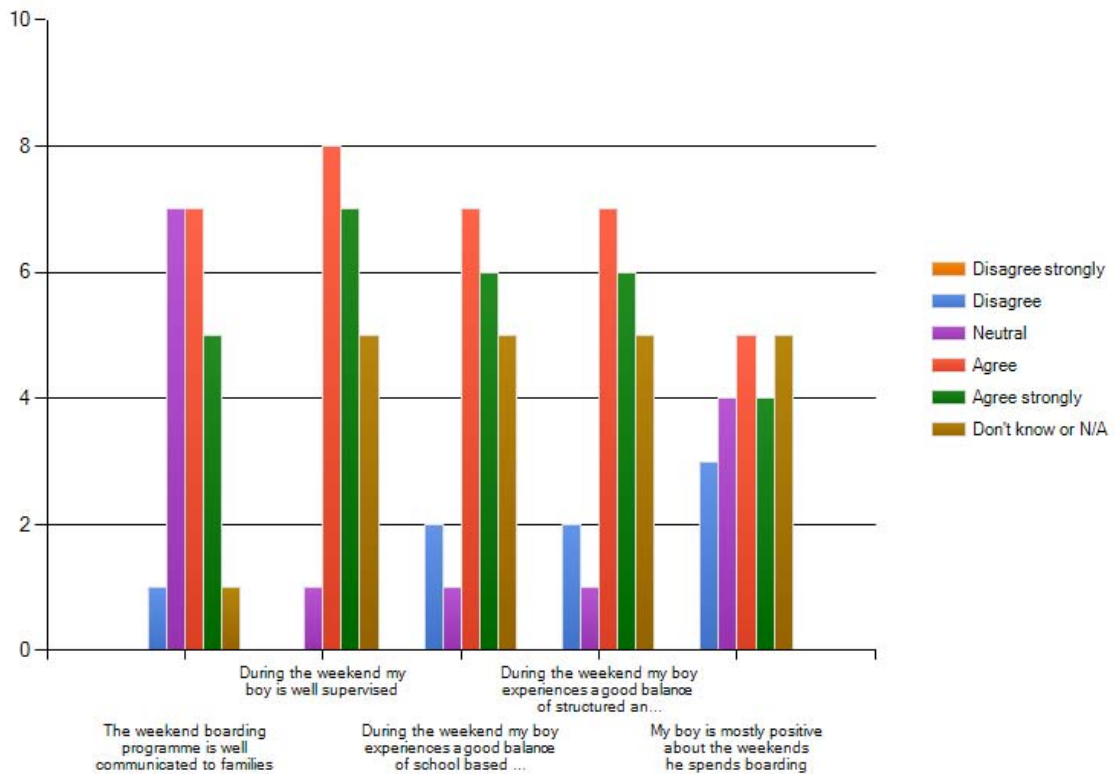


Figure 4.6 How much families agreed or disagreed with statements about the weekend boarding programme.

When the focus group was asked why nearly a quarter of respondents were unable to answer this question reasons suggested included; “you don’t know what they are doing unless you ask...you don’t get much out of the boys sometimes...they live in two worlds, one at home and one here”. This was reinforced in the additional comments made to this question where five families believed their son had times in the weekend where they had no-one to interact with and were either bored or homesick. Focus group members spoke about a number of reasons why boys may express this feeling including; “I believe boys are saying that it’s pretty boring in weekends because they’d rather come home... more to do at home, more time on Play Station or something... my older son at

secondary school says he's bored in weekends too". The boarding expert stated that he noticed increased expectations by families about the amount of and access to extra-curricular activities for their sons, especially in more recent years - "it (rate of change) sped up from the nineties (1990's)". When asked to comment on whether they believed full boarders had more opportunity to take part in extra-curricular activities responses from the focus group were mixed and ranged from; "it's all here on offer isn't it ... I just love what it's done for him really"... they love those outings", to "I think the day boys get more of an opportunity... it's not made readily available... you have to chase pretty hard to do these things".

Data from the questionnaire also alluded to full boarders finding it difficult to see five day boarders leave on Friday to go home for the weekend. When asked to discuss this statement, members of the focus group quickly started to take a stance on the making full boarding compulsory; "forcing them to make a choice... if you live a certain distance away you have to board... there are often so few here in the weekend it makes it hard for the full boarders", and also being a bit cautious about this "obviously boarding is expensive... if they are 50/50 on whether they are coming or not they are not going to come", and finally the looking at the alternative offer " I think the five day boarding is more modern, would be most appealing ... transport nowadays is so easy ... you have to come in for sports and things anyway".

Leadership

Respondents were asked to consider statements on how boarding has met the various developmental needs of their boys. 71 % of respondents indicated that 'boarding is having a positive influence on their boys **emotional** needs' (two families indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement). 85% agreed or strongly agreed that 'boarding is having a positive influence on their boy's **physical** needs (no respondents disagreed with this statement). 76% agreed or strongly agreed that '**supervised prep** is having a positive influence on their boy's **academic** needs (two respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement). 90% agreed or strongly agreed that 'boarding is having a positive influence on their boy's **independence**' (no families disagreed with this statement). 95% of families agreed or strongly agreed that 'generally boarding provides their boy with a **good balance of challenge and support**' (one respondent disagreed with this statement). One comment suggested leadership needs to explain boarding house procedures and expectations well and maybe many times not assuming boys know routines. Although these results show that the overall boys' developmental needs of most boys are being well met, some more focus could be given to meeting boys emotional needs and supervised prep (homework).

Data from questions requiring comments that covered all four themes

When asked about aspects of boarding life that had not reached families level of expectation, the responses were one offs (no repeating trend) and tended to relate to aspects of communication and/or the boarding programme. Examples of

these responses included, not enough communication about; events in the school, boarders prep (homework), out-of school activities involving parent input, behaviour management practices and the boarding programme being; a bit light at times, a lot of organised activity not encouraging their son to do his own activities.

When asked about the aspects of boarding life that had exceeded families level of expectation, there was more similarity in the nature of the responses (trends were apparent). Responses in this area tended to relate more to aspects of leadership and programmes. Comments around the quality of leadership and pastoral care given by the matrons were numerous which led to more comments about how quickly boys settled into boarding, made friends and loved it. The importance of effective staff was further backed up by comments made in the expert interview - ("it's the passion you are looking for isn't it, the genuine desire to do it ...") A number of comments also positively highlighted the academic progress being made and the effective preparation boys were getting for college.

On the boarding facilities, 85% of respondents were quite or extremely satisfied with the **format/structure** of the dorms (one respondent was not very satisfied). 95% were quite or extremely satisfied with the **comfort** of the dorms (one respondent was not very satisfied). 100% of respondents were quite or extremely satisfied with the **cleanliness and tidiness** of the dorms. 80% were quite or extremely satisfied with the suitability of the boarders **common rooms** (two respondents were not very satisfied). 85% were quite or extremely satisfied with the provisions made for **storing and distributing boys clothing** (two

respondents were not very satisfied). 80% were quite or extremely satisfied with the provisions made for **storing and distributing boys other personal gear** (15% of respondents were not very satisfied). 80% were quite or extremely satisfied with the **ablutions and shower areas** (15% were not very or not at all satisfied).

In the last section of the questionnaire families were asked to comment on what they would look for in a primary/intermediate school when making a decision about board for their son. Although there were a variety of comments a number of themes were present in the data around aspects of parent expectations of leadership and programming in particular. The most noted response was that the boarding leadership (staff) give boys care that is as close to that they would receive at home as possible. My interview with the boarding expert also indicated this was important to him to develop the boarding house into a “family unit – a big family”. This theme was explored more in the focus group situation. Suggestions for what would make the boarding house more of a home away from home related to; the nurturing nature of staff (“to be motherly... to make them feel safe... as long as my son is safe, happy and well fed”), having access to domesticated animals (“the cat’s a biggie... he’s a big hit) and the environment having a cosy feel (“maybe smaller rooms...needs to feel cosy...dorms don’t need to be too open...problem with noise and getting to sleep at night because it’s too open), without isolating boys (“boys are less likely to get homesick if it’s not easy for them to go off in a corner by themselves ... if too few in dorms and boys don’t get on with room-mate – life is a misery”)

Related to this and the next most noted response was that discipline and rules were in place where boys feel secure. Comments around having well supervised, stimulating and challenging programmes with a good balance of academic, physical and extra curricula activities were also prevalent. Having downtime or unstructured time, as well as structured time, in the boarding schedule/programme, was also noted as being important (“...got to occupy them (boarders) for about half the programme and they’ve got to occupy themselves for the other half ...We were concerned that they were totally structured all week ...Had to be some time on the weekend where they could ease back”; “...was important that children organise themselves ...they had some free time to be small boys”).

Summary

Key themes coming from results in this section needing further exploration in the next chapter are in the areas of creating a boarding environment that; is a home away from home, is a caring environment, has structure and a good balance of challenge and support. The analysis of the questionnaire and focus group has provided the basis for the discussion of findings in Chapter Five. The issues discussed in Chapter Five are those identified needing more focus or exploring throughout this chapter.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

This chapter discusses the significant findings that emerged from the data gathered and analysed during this research. By analysing the research findings, identifying issues and discussing these with reference to the themes identified in the literature, it is hoped that the knowledge gained will contribute to the body of knowledge currently available on the recruitment of primary and intermediate aged boarders in New Zealand schools.

The first section discusses key findings from participant and demographic information. For the sections following this, the research questions are used as subheadings for the discussion of the key findings from data from the questionnaire and focus group, remembering the questions were devised about aspects of primary boys' education in a context of boarding and prefixed with - "Given change and expansion over time;"

1. Participant and Demographic Information

Half of the respondents to the questionnaire were the parent(s) of a seven day boarder and the other half were the parent(s) of a five day boarder - this gave a good balance to response data. Just under two thirds of the questionnaires (65%) were completed by mothers alone with one quarter of the questionnaires completed by both mothers and fathers together and only one questionnaire (5%)

was completed by a father alone. This means mothers were involved in completing 90% of the questionnaires whereas men were involved in completing just 30% of the questionnaires.

A majority of participants (54%) were the parent(s) of boys who had left the school within the last two years, so although their experience as a boarding family was relatively recent, they could hopefully openly respond to questions without perceived fear of school reaction to more negative or well-meant constructive responses. Most respondents (71%) described that they lived in a rural area, as opposed to living in a semi-rural, urban (town) or urban (city) area.

Of the twenty one families who completed the questionnaire, nearly 40% of them stated their combined gross incomes as being under \$100,000. The annual boarding and tuition fees combined at the full primary level in New Zealand range between \$17,000 and \$20,000 - this does not take into consideration the cost of uniform and in a number of schools other attributable costs – camps, outings etc (this information was gained from school websites). The amount of income a family needs to pay these fees will depend on their circumstances and outgoings. It's more about having a sufficient level of disposable income than it is about having a certain level of salary (VideoJug, 2006-2010). However, a study completed by the Ministry of Social development showed that 82% of all New Zealand families, with or without children, carried some form of debt (Legge & Heynes, 2009). This data coupled with the current economic situation in New

Zealand (effectively created by a recent worldwide recession), and an international view point from Business Strategies International stating that; “New Zealanders are lacking in responsiveness and follow-through as a consequence of having lived for so many years under a socialist, welfare government, where many personal decisions were left for the government to make for them and where high taxes left little discretionary income for enterprise” (James, 2010) , has possible implications on the number of families able to afford (or warrant the cost associated with) a boarding education going forward. Given that all boarding schools at the primary level within this country are private schools, families need to be able to afford tuition fees on top of boarding fees.

2. What can we discover from past, current and predicted trends in leadership that will help ensure effective leadership into the future?

Data from the questionnaire reflected that a majority of respondents (81%) first found out about the school through friends and family, not through promotional material produced by the school, or advertising through a variety of other media. This demonstrates to school leadership the value of word of mouth promotion, perhaps over more commercial and costly methods that are currently not as effective, with none (or very few) of the respondents, first finding out about the school through advertising or articles in newspapers or other printed material, or on the radio. People are more inclined to believe word of mouth promotion than more formal forms of promotion because the communicator is unlikely to have an ulterior motive. As Corry (1999-2010), suggests people tend to believe people (or

information from people) that they know (Corry, 1999-2010). As a substantial amount of a schools promotional budget can go into more commercial promotional activities, this feedback should be reflected in future marketing plans.

Related to the above, respondents found a tour of the school, speaking with the head of the school and staff, and seeing the students in action (through an Open Day), more helpful in getting information about the school, than information found in the school prospectus and on the school website (with a tour of the school and speaking with the headmaster seen as the most effective source of information). As a recent British survey showed, despite the rise of internet and other electronic communication methods, employers still value face-to-face sessions the most when it comes to keeping staff up-to-date and informed and it would appear families feel the same way about information about a new school (Amble, 2005).

A majority of respondents either agreed, or strongly agreed, that the leadership of the school was providing a boarding environment where boys; emotional (80%), physical (95%), academic (75%) developmental needs were being met. However, only 20% of respondents stated that they 'strongly agreed' that their sons emotional needs were being met (50% agreeing with this statement) compared to over 50% of respondents in the other two developmental areas. In research completed by the Boarding School Association in the United Kingdom (Boarding Schools' Association, 2002), the three greatest misgivings respondents

had with their children boarding were; a) how much they were going to miss their child, b) what affect their child being away would have on the family dynamic, and c) that the child may be unhappy or homesick boarding. These issues (and related issues from this research project) relating to the welfare of the child and his family are inextricably linked to the emotional well-being of the student and his family.

Needing to be aware of, and deal more with, the increasingly varied expectations families have for the developmental needs of their son, have led researchers to note the changes in school leadership in terms of both scope and complexity in more recent times (Heck, 1991). This observation was echoed by the focus of the expert interview, a recently retired headmaster with fifty six years ongoing boarding school experience (retiring in 2007), who commented that leadership needs to deal with an increasing rate of change (“...it was a continuous event ... it sort of speeded up probably ...in the nineties (1990’s) certainly”; “I think you were continually adapting”).

3. What can we learn from past, current and predicted curriculum developments that will help inform the ongoing implementation of relevant and appropriate programmes?

The quality of the school’s curriculum and programme was one of two determinant factors that respondent families saw as extremely important when looking for a boarding school for their son, with a majority of families looking for a school offering ‘quality opportunities and programmes for their boy’ (the other

factor was more interaction and socialisation opportunities with his peers). The data also tells us that these two factors are seen as more important than if the school is single sex (i.e. boys only) or if it offers a boarding experience for their son. These findings are more or less reflected in a number of studies completed in Australia in the late 1980's and early 1990's where the most important reasons families had for sending their children to (rural) boarding schools was; perceived quality of teaching and academic standards together with high behaviour and moral standards (Baker & Andrews, 1991; Morrison, 1985; Partington, 1989). Recent research conducted for the International Boys' Schools Coalition (Reichert & Hawley, 2009) strongly suggests that the quality of relationships established between boys and their teachers could be equally if not more important than the actual quality of the teaching. What jumped out of this study was the precision with which boys talked, unprompted, about how relationships with their teachers were foundational to optimal learning and could lead one to assume other areas of their development as well.

In some contrast to 96% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement, "Generally boarding provides my boy with a good balance of challenge and support", an issue raised in the data around curriculum, was the apparent need for greater access to extra-curricular activities, to give boarders similar opportunities to day boys in out-of-school hours. Comments such as; "I think dayboys get far more of an opportunity because we can take them to them (extra-curricular activities)", "you know like at home you can have two guitar lessons during the week, or canoe polo, that's a sport my boy would like to do but the

school won't do it", "it's not made readily available, you've got to actually chase pretty hard", suggests a number of parents want a fuller after/before school programme. Over recent years many boarding schools have responded with an astonishing proliferation of academic and extra-curricular programmes to meet such desires (Cookson & Persell, 1985). However, downtime or unstructured time, as well as structured time, in the boarding schedule/programme, was also noted as being important in the data from the questionnaire ("We have noticed a reduction in our son's ability/ desire to do his own activities, and feel that it may be due to having such a lot of organised activity") and in data from the boarding expert interview ("...got to occupy them (*boarders*) for about half the programme and they've got to occupy themselves for the other half ...We were concerned that they were totally structured all week ...Had to be some time on the weekend where they could ease back"; "...was important that children organise themselves ...they had some free time to be small boys").

Of some concern, was that less than half (46%) of the respondents to the questionnaire reported that their son was 'mostly positive' about the weekends he spends boarding. A number of possible reasons for this lack of positivity about the weekend programme by a majority of boys were evident in the data. Firstly, a quarter of respondents were not unable to answer a number of questions about the boarding programme, perhaps pointing to issues with the communication of programme content and/or scheduling (a significant number of parents recorded that they were 'neutral' about whether they thought the boarding programme was well communicated to families). Secondly, data from the focus group

suggested that the large number of five day boarders leaving the school on Friday afternoon for the weekend has a negative effect on the weekend programme for a number of seven day boarders (“there is the big reason not to be, because there is such a small number here in the weekends”, “it’s was hard for them to see the weekly boarders going home every w/end & they couldn't”). Finally two respondents commented on incidents of bullying behaviour against their son (“there was a level of bullying”, “we were not satisfied with the intial response from the school in dealing with an ongoing bullying situation”). This issue was explored further in the focus group and it was established that once these ‘bullying’ situations were addressed (“they were of a verbal nature, but reasonably nasty”) then things improved. As pointed out by Hansen (2008) modern parents appear to be more sensitive to the complaints of their children, children tend to complain more ‘intensely’ if they are not happy (Hanson, 2008). And although it is beyond debate that bullying is extremely destructive and hurtful behaviour, we must keep in mind that as defined by the leading figure in the war against bullying, Dan Olweus, bullying is behaviour intended to hurt and is typically repeated over time (Rigby, 2010) – not necessarily a one off incident perceived by the child to be bullying.

4. What can we discover from past, current and predicted trends in parent/family expectations that will help us best meet the needs of the modern parent/family?

The major concern most respondents had when considering sending their sons boarding was not being able to see their boy on a daily/regular basis. This was

followed closely by a belief that their boy would not cope in the boarding environment. Further discussion on these issues in the focus group situation suggested the school coordinating more communication opportunities to feedback how their son is doing more regularly (especially during the boys first term of boarding when he is settling in) may help alleviate these concerns.

This is reinforced by data available from the 1950's until 2007 (refer pp 34-35 of this study) that the key reasons for families sending their sons to boarding schools during this time has not changed much at all. What does appear to have changed quite markedly however are parenting attitudes, particularly with regard to parents being separated from primary aged children and parents being more sensitive/responsive to their child's needs/opinions (Hanson, 2008). This coupled with the increased participatory role of parents in school life and life in general, since the inception of the "Tomorrow's Schools" project, twenty or so years ago, appears to have been one of the major contributors to current attitudes and perceptions of boarding (Wylie, 1991). Sloane (1996) also noted that modern parents prefer to watch their son growing up at home and consequently many families who sent their boys boarding tended to wait until they turn 13 years of age or older (Sloan, 1996).

Related to the above was a strong desire from a number of respondents (all mothers) to have a boarding house environment that is more a 'home away from home'. Where; "it's nice and warm, it has a nice feel to it, a nice environment", (interestingly, the focus group spent time discussing what would be the ideal

number of boys in each dorm without any real consensus), “the cats a big hit, the boys love the cat”, “the matrons are motherly and make them (the boys) feel safe”, “there is structure and nurturing”.

Data showed that when respondents were making a decision about what school their boys would attend, mothers were key decision makers on all occasions. Data also showed that in many cases the boy himself had a major say in the final decision on what school her would attend (“it was our son’s call to come in year six not seven”). A recent study by the BSA (2002) found that 58% of primary/intermediate boarders have some input into the decision for them to board (Boarding Schools' Association, 2002).

A number of respondents commented that at times they felt some guilt from sources outside the family for sending their sons boarding (“Day boys driving past gates of boarding families – leads to guilt of boarding parents”). A Boarding Schools’ Association (BSA) study, found that 86% of parents surveyed had at some time to defend their decision to choose boarding for their primary/intermediate aged children (Boarding Schools' Association, 2002).

Summary

The overall findings from the questionnaire, and focus group have identified that most families are either positive or very positive about most areas addressed in this research project relating to boarding for primary and intermediate aged boys. The data also indicated however, that there were varying degrees of

satisfaction and/or positivity towards a number of aspects of the boarding programme, and areas for development were identified. These recommendations are made in the following chapter. The common themes from the questionnaire and focus group data, influencing family perceptions of boys boarding at the primary intermediate level (Leadership, Programmes, Parental Expectations and Communication) and the relevant literature were identified. The summarised results in this chapter are combined in Chapter Six to present conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I will give an overview of the aim of the research undertaken in this study and also the research questions devised to help focus the study. This chapter also provides conclusions to key issues identified from the research questions and identifies recommendations for future practice and presents the limitations of the research.

Research Aim

The aim of this research project was to explore trends in primary/intermediate school boarding that may affect the recruitment of boy boarders. In order to investigate this aim the following research questions were devised about aspects of primary/intermediate boys' education in a context of boarding.

1. What can we discover from trends in school leadership that will help ensure effective leadership of boarding schools?
2. What can we learn from curriculum developments/trends that will help inform the ongoing implementation of relevant and appropriate programmes in boarding?
3. What can we discover from parent/family expectations of boarding schools that will help us best meet the needs of the modern parent/family of a boarder at the primary/intermediate level?

What follows in this chapter is a summary of the key findings derived through analysis of the data from a questionnaire, a focus group session, an interview with an expert and the literature review.

Summary of key findings

This section will summarise the key findings from this study under the four headings used to discuss the findings in Chapter Five – “Participant and Demographic Information” and the three research questions.

1. Participant and Demographic Information

Participant data from the study highlighted the significant role that mothers (90% involvement in questionnaire completion) play in the information sharing and possibly decision making process compared to men (30% involvement) at this level of education. This is substantiated through the literature and through data from an interview with an expert on boarding at this age level. Participant data also showed that nearly forty percent of respondents had a combined family income of under \$100,000. This in the light of a global recession, reasonably high personal debt levels in New Zealand and the increasing cost of boarding fees (in comparison to lower wage and salary increases) may be significant in terms of affordability going forward, to both the families and the boarding school itself. Demographic data from the study demonstrated that a significant number of the boarding families involved in this study (just over 70%) classified themselves as living in a rural area, as opposed to living in a semi-rural, urban (town) or urban (city) area.

2. *What can we discover from trends in leadership in primary/intermediate boarding schools that will help ensure effective leadership into the future?*

From the this study it is appears that to perform their roles effectively, the modern day boarding school leader needs to be; manager/administrator, instructional leader, pastorally adept and aware, communication savvy and focused, and an innovative visionary. With the role apparently growing, the successful school leader needs to delegate aspects of leadership to others, but maintain overall oversight in ‘an influenced relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes’ (Rost, 1991). In view of this, school leaders need to ensure the common values, ideals and standards of leadership are shared as an ongoing foundation for a shared vision and that this vision acknowledges a range of stakeholder perspectives (Day et al., 2000). It appears to be important that successful leaders of boarding schools need to be effective communicators and skilled in making the best of communication vehicles – through technology, media and face-to-face, people-to-people connections. It is also seems important for the school leadership to focus on getting prospective families into the school environment or in front of the head of the school, to help maximise the likelihood of families receiving what is perceived to be the most helpful and trusted information.

3. *What can we learn from past, current and predicted curriculum developments in primary/intermediate boarding schools that will help inform the ongoing implementation of relevant and appropriate programmes?*

In this study it appears to be significant that the quality of the curriculum and programmes being implemented at a school is often the key reason for families choosing that school. This aspect seems to be more important to most families than either the type of school (e.g. boys only or boarding) or the location of the school. Within the boarding aspect of the overall school programme there appears to be further discussion needed over the appropriate balance of structured and unstructured activities/time (and the type and frequency of these activities) during the weekends in particular. Views on this issue from data collected and literature reviewed were mixed and often contradicting. Perceived positivity of the boys attitudes toward the weekend programme were similarly mixed with less than half of respondents believing their sons were positive about these programmes most of the time.

4. What can we discover from past, current and predicted trends in parent/family expectations of primary/intermediate boarding schools that will help us best meet the needs of the modern parent/family?

A key finding of this study with regards to the expectations of the modern day parent of a boarding school is that the reasons families send their sons boarding, by and large, may not have changed over the past 50 years or so. What has changed quite markedly are parenting attitudes particularly in regard to parents being separated from their primary aged son and parents being more sensitive and responsive to their son's needs and opinions. Boarding parents also appear to be more aware of and sensitive about, how parents of boys who do not board, feel about them 'sending their son away' at

the primary/intermediate level. It is also apparent from this study that mothers are key decision makers and information sharers when families are considering boarding and on other boarding issues. Families are also increasingly taking into account the opinions of boys themselves when making decisions on boarding.

Implications of study and significance

This has been a relatively small study that has focussed on one school and its community. However, the findings presented here have significance because the data provides important insights into understudied aspects of trends in New Zealand boarding education that will add to, support, or challenge, the current body of information and literature on boys boarding at the primary/intermediate level. The study itself is unique as it appears to be the first done in this context in New Zealand and highlights keys challenges facing boarding schools and their leadership. These challenges may be indicative of issues that should/could be explored in the future. As summarised above, the study was developed around three key themes; the role of the leader, school curriculum/programmes and parental/family expectations in primary/intermediate boys' education in a context of boarding in New Zealand. The outcomes of this study will probably be of most significance to school governors, leaders and staff with an interest in, or commitment to, a boarding education both here (within New Zealand) and overseas.

Recommendations for Future Studies and Future Practice

a) Future studies: Following the completion of this research project, it is recommended that future studies in the following areas may address some gaps in the current body of literature and information available relating to effective boarding programmes, leadership and practices to meet the needs of the modern boarding parent and boy boarders at the primary/intermediate level.

- The affordability of boarding currently and into the future: What are families prepared to pay, and/or how are schools able to subsidise the rising cost of a boarding education?
- Effective staffing structures and roles with the boarding environment: Given the increased expectations of the modern parent on boarding structures and programmes, what are the most effective roles staff can play to best meet these expectations?
- The right balance between structured and unstructured activities within the boarding programme: What is the best balance between structured and unstructured activities in the boarding environment to help ensure boys are constructively employed, well supported, developing initiative and at the same time developing independence; and what types of activities would most effectively encourage these behaviours?
- Minimising anxiety of families and their sons at the beginning of the boarding experience: What procedures can schools put in place to minimise the anxieties of a new boarder and his family throughout the initial weeks of boarding?

b) Future practice: Through completing this research from my current educational context, I would recommend future consideration needs to be given to the following aspects of the recruitment and retention process relating to primary/intermediate aged boys:

- Given the financial impact of a recent global recession, international research stating that generally New Zealanders have little discretionary income as a result of recent years living under a socialist, welfare government (James, 2010) and research from Castalia (Castalia, 2008) suggesting that demand for private schooling will drop off in a number of areas of the country, how much boarding schools are able to charge parents in boarding and tuition fees, will need to be looked at closely. Schools will probably need to look increasing at other income streams (beyond fees from families) to remain a financially viable option for many families.
- Communication practices and structures need to keep adapting to the needs of the modern family – this appears to be needed on a number of levels: a) Reassuring: Many modern families need to know that their son is safe and happy in his boarding environment - so it is particular important, especially during a boys first term of boarding, that effective and regular communication systems are set up between home and school and that parents feel some ownership of this process. b) Informing: Communication of boarder activities, events and extra-curricular opportunities need to be timely and clearly articulated. This ‘feeding forward’ of information is as important (if not more important) to many families as the feeding back of information. c) On a Personal Level: Data from this research has shown that families

respond far more favourably to a personal approach when considering boarding for their son and this is far more effective if the approach is from a family member, a friend, or the leader of the school. This approach appears more effective than using written promotional material or commercial advertising agencies, as people tend to believe people (or information from people) that they know (Corry, 1999-2010). d) Targeted: Communication needs to be targeted at the key decision makers and information sharers in families and this study has shown that targeting mothers and increasingly boys are key in this area.

- Particular focus needs to be given to the quality of the academic programme within the school together with the quality of the teaching staff. These two aspects rated higher than any other aspects of the school structure in this study and another study referred to in this research (Lowry, 2007).

Limitations

This study has produced data and recommendations that will be useful for practicing teachers and boarding staff associated with primary/intermediate schools with a boarding component. There are also a number of recommendations made in this study that may form the basis for future research. However, this study may have some limitations due to the following:

- Having only conducted the questionnaire and focus group in one school, any claims from the study findings need to be provisional. Future studies could address these issues in a range of contexts.
- The relatively small number of completed questionnaire returns (21 out of the 50 distributed) limited the possible range of responses to the key issues being

explored. This issue highlights some of the difficulties encountered in undertaking research in busy and complex educational environments. However the results from the questionnaire were supplemented by other tools, including the expert interview and a focus group, which added further insights to and triangulated the questionnaire results.

- Even though the questionnaire and the focus group were both administered by an independent person (i.e. someone other than the researcher), the researchers role as a leader in the school, where the research was taking place, may have influenced responses to the data collecting process. Over half of the respondents were parents of boys who had already left the school; however, nearly half of the respondent families still had boys attending the school.
- Although the researcher was able to immerse himself in the data following the focus group session, he was reliant on the transcript for data analysis and notes made by a research assistant who coordinated the session. The research assistant conducted the focus group session following guidelines set down by the researcher, to address any possible issues around participant's rights and imbalance of power due to the researcher's position within the school community.

Summary

In this final chapter, I have outlined the aim of the research undertaken and also the research questions devised to help focus the research process. I have then summarised the conclusions of this research project. Key findings from the data

related to the research questions have been summarised, along with key participant and demographic information that I believed added value to the study. The possible implications and significance of this study to those interested in aspects of primary/intermediate boarding relating to recruitment of boarders, have been outlined, as have possible recommendations for future studies and practice in this area. The chapter concluded with a number of limitations that may have affected this project.

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Appendix A: Questions for Focus Group

Thinking about the boarding programme

1. From the recent boarding survey it was apparent that most boarders (over half) board at Hereworth for two years only (Years 7 and 8) with a further 20% boarding from Year 6. What do you think from your experience is the best age/time for boys to start boarding and why?
2. Over 80% of respondents to the survey found out about boarding at Hereworth by word of mouth, from friends or family members. As a prospective parent did you find any value in other forms of advertising/promotion (radio, newspaper, meetings, magazines etc)?

How valuable do you find the school website?

3. Two of the greatest worries parents appear to have before sending their sons boarding is not being able to see them on a daily/regular basis and that their son will not cope with the boarding environment. What do you think is at the root of these worries and are there any things you think the school might be able to do to help overcome these worries?
4. When looking at a boarding school for their son the greatest number of respondents to our survey stated they looked for a school where 'the care the boys receive is as close to that they receive from home as possible' (or words to that effect). What would be the characteristics of a boarding environment that fulfilled such a desire from parents?
5. Another key aspect looked for when deciding on a boarding school was the balance between academic, cultural, physical and extra curricular activities. There is a greater opportunity for boarders to take part in extra-curricular activities than day boys what are your thoughts on this?
6. The survey results showed that **just under 50%** of parents reported that their sons were 'mostly' positive about the weekends he spends boarding and 24% did not know (or were unable to answer). Why do you think this may be the case?
7. It appears from the questionnaire data that in nearly 70% of cases mother, father and son are all involved in the decision making process around choosing a boarding school. Mothers were always involved. However when there is a dominant decision maker it is likely to be the mother or son (40% each) making the final decision. What are your thoughts on this feedback?

Please thank participants on my behalf for their input.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Research Aim: To determine issues facing the recruitment of boy boarders at a primary/intermediate boarding school

An Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.. All the information you provide is completely confidential, nothing you record will be passed on in your name, or be in any way attributable back to you.

Please read the instructions/questions carefully and answer ALL the questions that apply to you. **CIRCLE** the answers where choices are given. Thanks again!

1. This survey is being filled out by which parent?

	Circle one only
Father	1
Mother	2
Both parents together	3
Another guardian	4

2. Please Indicate which before tax (gross) combined family income bracket you fit into

	Circle one only
Under \$50000	1
\$50000 to \$100000	2
\$100000 to \$150000	3
\$150000 to \$200000	4
\$200000 +	5

3. Which of these best describes the area in which you live?

	Circle one only
Rural (country)	1
Semi Rural (near town or city)	2
Urban (town)	3
Urban (city)	4

4. Please indicate below whether your boy(s) is/are 5 or 7 day boarders (or casual 'part-time' boarders)

	Circle all that apply
5 day boarding	1
7 day boarding	2
Casual / flexi-boarder	3

5. Please indicate below the current class level of your boy(s)

	Circle one answer for each boy you have at this school		
	Boy 1	Boy 2	Boy 3
Year 4 or below	1	1	1
Year 5	2	2	2
Year 6	3	3	3
Year 7	4	4	4
Year 8	5	5	5

6. Please indicate below the year level your boy(s) started as a boarder

	Circle one answer for each boy you have at this school		
	Boy 1	Boy 2	Boy 3
Year 4 or below	1	1	1
Year 5	2	2	2
Year 6	3	3	3
Year 7	4	4	4
Year 8	5	5	5

7. How many years will your boy(s) have boarded by the time he/they leave the school?

	Circle one answer for each boy you have at this school		
	Boy 1	Boy 2	Boy 3
1 year	1	1	1
2 years	2	2	2
3 years	3	3	3
4 years	4	4	4
5 years or more	5	5	5

8. How did you **first** find out about your son's boarding school? CIRCLE ONE ONLY

	Circle one only
A family member attended the school	1
On the recommendation of friends or family with a connection to the school	2
From a newspaper advertisement or article	3
From a radio advertisement or article	4
From other media coverage	5
From a search on the internet	6
From a real estate agency	7
From you area's promotional material	8
School Signage	9
None of these (comment opposite)	10

Other (if circled 10 opposite):

9. When considering boarding school for your boy(s), please CIRCLE the number indicating how importantly you rated each of the following reasons:

	Not at all important	Not very important	Neither important nor unimportant	Quite important	Extremely important	Don't know or n/a
The distance we live from our closest school	1	2	3	4	5	6
A belief that my boy would gain from the boarding experience	1	2	3	4	5	6
My boy would get a better academic education than he was currently getting	1	2	3	4	5	6
My boy would benefit from the greater range of extra curricular activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
By boarding my boy would get more interaction and socialisation opportunities with his peers	1	2	3	4	5	6
My boy would benefit from a boys only school	1	2	3	4	5	6
The recommendation of current/past families who had attended the school	1	2	3	4	5	6
The cost involved with sending your boy as a boarder.	1	2	3	4	5	6

If you had any other considerations/reasons - please comment below

--

10. When considering having your boy board, how helpful did you find information from: (CIRCLE the number that best completes each statement)

	Not at all helpful	Not very helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Quite helpful	Extremely helpful	Don't know n/a
The school website	1	2	3	4	5	6
The school propectus	1	2	3	4	5	6
Speaking with the boarding staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
Speaking with the Headmaster	1	2	3	4	5	6
Families currently or previously attending the school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attendance at an Open Day/Morning	1	2	3	4	5	6
A tour of the school	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other useful sources of information below

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11. What were your major concerns when considering sending your boy to boarding (limit (CIRCLE) – up to three major concerns):

	Circle up to three only
Your boy not coping with leaving home	1
Your boy not coping in the boarding environment	2
You not being able to see him on a daily/regular basis	3
You not coping with your boy leaving home	4

The cost associated with boarding	5
What others may think of you sending your boy away boarding	6
Distance – school is so far away	7
That your boy’s needs may not be met as well as you would like during the week	8
That your boy’s needs may not be met as well as you would like during the weekend	9
I/we had no concerns about my son becoming a boarder	10

Please list any other major concerns when considering boarding (if any) below

12. When deciding to send your boy boarding, who would you describe as the key people in the decision making process? (Circle as many as is appropriate)

	Circle as many as is appropriate
Mother (female caregiver)	1
Father (male caregiver)	2
The boy himself	3
Sister (of boy)	4
Brother (of boy)	5
Grandparents	6
Other extended family members or friends (please list below and comment as necessary)	7

12a. In making the decision to send your boys boarding, was their one person who you would see as the dominant decision making (i.e. it was up to them to make the final decision

	Circle only one
Yes	1
No	2

If you answered Yes to 12a. please list the dominant decision maker below (e.g. father, grandmother, boy going boarding etc.)

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13. Please rate how much you agree/disagree with each statement below on weekend boarding by **CIRCLING** the appropriate number

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree strongly	Don't know or n/a
The weekend boarding programme is well communicated to families	1	2	3	4	5	6
During the weekend my boy is well supervised	1	2	3	4	5	6
During the weekend my boy experiences a good balance of school based and out of school activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
During the weekend my boy experiences a good balance of structured and unstructured (free choice/down time) activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
My boy is mostly positive about the weekends he spends boarding.	1	2	3	4	5	6

List any other comments about weekend boarding below

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14. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement below, on how boarding is effecting the developmental needs of your boy by **CIRCLING** the appropriate number.

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree strongly	Don't know or n/a
Boarding is having a positive influence on my boys emotional needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Boarding is having a positive influence on my boys physical needs	1	2	3	4	5	6

Supervised prep is having a positive influence on my boys academic needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Boarding is having a positive influence on my boys independence	1	2	3	4	5	6
Generally boarding provides my boy with a good balance of challenge and support	1	2	3	4	5	6

List any other comments on the developmental needs of boarders below

15. List and comment upon any aspects of boarding life that have not reached your level of expectation (i.e. reality did not meet expectation)

16. List and comment upon any aspects of boarding life that have exceeded your expectations (i.e. reality exceeded expectation)

17. Read each statement below and indicate how satisfied you are with the boarding facilities as outlined by CIRCLING the appropriate number

	Not at all satisfied	Not very satisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Quite satisfied	Extremely satisfied	Don't know or n/a
The format/structure of the dorms (the areas the boys sleep in)	1	2	3	4	5	6
The comfort of the dorms	1	2	3	4	5	6
The cleanliness and tidiness of the boarding house	1	2	3	4	5	6
The suitability of the boarders common rooms	1	2	3	4	5	6
The provisions made for storing and distributing boys	1	2	3	4	5	6

clothing						
The provisions made for storing and distributing boys other personal gear	1	2	3	4	5	6
The ablutions and shower areas	1	2	3	4	5	6

List any other comments on boarding facilities below

18. What do you think parents will look for in primary/intermediate schools when making decisions about boarding for their sons in the future?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2009-1043

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 24 February 2010 to 23 February 2011. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 7248). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.