
Title	Standing on your own two feet: An examination of Singaporean trainee teachers' perceptions of the primary-to-secondary school transition
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Standing on your own two feet: An examination of Singaporean trainee teachers' perceptions of the primary-to-secondary school transition

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Abstract

Every year, around 40,000 Singaporean adolescents transition from primary to secondary school. This transfer can often be a challenging experience for students and it is therefore crucial to understand how to support them during this period. Yet while several studies examining student experiences of this transition and how they can be supported are available, the opportunities to apply them to the Singapore context are limited. As a result, the present small-scale qualitative interview study sought to investigate seven Singaporean trainee teachers' perceptions of the primary-to-secondary school transitioning experience and the role they play in it. The findings revealed that post-transition students are frequently perceived as immature, that teachers have high expectations – which may form part of an unspoken teacher culture – and that they recognise the need to foster a sense of autonomy. The interaction of these themes and the possible contradictions among them may impede students' successful transition. Forms of teacher support were also identified.

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The findings are used to articulate recommendations on how the primary-to-secondary transition can be successfully bridged through more targeted help.

Keywords

School transition, teacher perceptions, student support structures, Singapore

Introduction

Transitioning from primary to secondary school is a significant milestone that many adolescents around the world experience every year. It is an important adaptation to new social and academic rule systems and being able to leave old internalised ones behind; an ongoing adaptation that serves as a benchmark for future transitions in other areas of life and how to manage them (Howe & Richards, 2011). However, despite being a normative experience (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Neal et al., 2016) this particular educational move can be a difficult process for young people due to the wide-reaching newness of the post-transition environment and the multiple changes that lie ahead (Forrest et al., 2012; Knesting et al., 2008; Lofgran et al., 2015). For many, there are physical moves to new and often larger school buildings, which will initially be unfamiliar. Classroom size will frequently increase, which may lead to reduced individual attention from teachers. The number of subjects and teachers will increase. Social circles from primary school will often disband and need to be reformulated at the secondary school level. Alongside these school changes, students will typically also experience biological maturation as they enter puberty. Some of these can also be seen as an opportunity for students to formulate their identity as a student.

The Transition Experience

An often-reported implication of the primary-to-secondary transition process is reduced academic performance following the transition (Howe & Richards, 2011; Symonds, 2015; Wijsman et al., 2015). For many students, this tends to be a temporary effect and their performance recovers from this dip by the end of their first year of secondary schooling. However, for others a lack of such a rebound can lead to continued academic difficulties from which they cannot recover (Mamolo & Sugano, 2020) and can affect their overall wellbeing (Evans et al., 2018). This effect is closely connected

with being confronted with a new set of cultural norms and expectations that were not present in students' primary schools, which may affect their motivation and engagement. For one, students are expected to be more independent in their work (Wijsman et al., 2015) and to adhere to several new classroom rules (Akos, 2002; Galton & Pell, 2002). Students struggle further when these expectations are inconsistent because of a broader range of teachers, or because they are not clearly stated by their teachers (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). This can lead to a strained teacher-student relationship, impeding the potential success of the transition process.

A further key element of the transition process for students is having to leave their existing social networks and form new connections in an entirely new environment (Strand, 2019). The puberty-related changes are already likely to heighten their self-consciousness and the related negative anxiety-based implications, which may be further exacerbated by being in a new environment (Liu et al., 2019; Nelemans et al., 2018; Somerville et al., 2013). In turn, friendship structures are noted to ease the adjustment process, whether it is because primary school friends are moving to the same secondary school, or because opportunities for friendship establishment are provided in the new environment (Hagenauer et al., 2013). This social shift may also be linked to academic self-perceptions, which in turn may help understand the academic dip. Particularly where academic achievement at the primary school level is used as a tool for secondary school admission, self-perception of at least some young adolescents will be impacted by the so-called big-fish-little-pond effect (Becker & Neumann, 2016, 2018; Becker et al., 2014; Gore & Cross, 2014). Where previously they may have been considered high achievers in their old primary school environment, they are in the subsequent new secondary school environment part of a large group of students who themselves were also high achievers in their prior schools. As a result of this change in reference group, students may now perceive themselves as less academically able and competent than before.

Nonetheless, the transition experience may also afford students with positive opportunities since it presents a chance for new friendships, autonomy and in establishing a sense of the self. Indeed, looking ahead, this seems to even be a desirable affordance by many primary school children as they seek a chance for change in both social and academic identity (Measor & Fleetham, 2005). This requires a sense of autonomy and self-directed searching, meaning relevant support must be able to accommodate these. However, at the same time they require opportunities for developing their identity alongside a sense of belonging to the school (Hamm et al., 2011),

meaning that some form of school-based guidance may still be essential. Particularly students who have less developed social skills or are simply shy in their engagements and who therefore lack social support structures may benefit from such guidance as they are already at greater risk of not being able to cope with the transition experience (Baly et al., 2014; Solberg et al., 2020; Thompson & Bell, 2011; Thornberg, 2011). As a result, there is an opportunity to consider what role teachers should play and to what extent their role is needed in the student experience.

Bridging Transitions and the Role of Teachers

Galton's seminal work in the primary-to-secondary transition field has highlighted five key processes that need to be addressed for successful student adaptation to a new school (Galton, 2010; Galton et al., 1999, 2003; Galton et al., 2003; Galton & McLellan, 2018). These five so-called bridges of transition collectively try to address the gap between different school levels from different key aspects. The bureaucratic bridge is concerned with a transfer of records from primary to secondary schools. Insight from such records allows secondary schools to identify students with any particular learning needs, behavioural difficulties or home lives that might affect their performance. The social and emotional bridge aims to equip students with the necessary skills to manage the new experiences. The curriculum bridge seeks to ensure continuity in learning through appropriate syllabus structures. The pedagogical bridge focuses on how students learn, particularly shifting from concrete to more abstract forms of thought, which may also affect teaching styles. Finally, the management of learning bridge is about providing students with autonomy in their own learning process.

Due to their extensive direct contact with students during school hours, teachers have been noted to play a crucial and wide-ranging role in fostering positive transitioning experiences for students in various aspects, both on the academic and the social level (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Smyth, 2016). Where teachers are generally more involved in managing the transition process, students report being happier and less anxious (Fontaine et al., 2017; Guess & McCane-Bowling, 2016; Pitzer & Skinner, 2017; Yu & Singh, 2018). In turn, they demonstrate greater levels of engagement in school activities (Hughes et al., 2008; Reyes et al., 2012; Ricard & Pelletier, 2016) and show higher achievement levels due to a heightened sense of school belonging fostered through teachers (Anderman, 2003; Hughes & Cao, 2015; Lee, 2012; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Conversely, where appropriate teacher support is lacking, the reverse of such patterns

can be expected. Strictness and a poor teacher-student relationship can lead to heightened anxiety among adolescents (Symonds & Galton, 2014). Feeling overlooked by teachers can result in students self-isolating and not making friends (Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2013), worsening their adjustment and transitioning. However, fostering a sense of autonomy and competence, for instance when students are adapting to new expectations, also leads to increased engagement and achievement (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2006). It is therefore necessary for teachers to find the balance between involvement and affording independence for pathfinding. All of these can be fostered through specific practical support from teachers (cf. Federici & Skaalvik, 2014), and building on Galton's five bridges may help in doing this successfully.

The Singapore Context

Every year, a substantial number of Singaporean adolescents moves from primary to secondary school. In 2020, there were almost 40,000 secondary school starters, with a similar number in their final year of primary school (Ministry of Education, 2020a). However, what are the transition-related experiences of these students, and how do they potentially need to be supported? A modest number of studies has already examined the general issue of school transitioning in the specific context of Singapore (Choy & Karuppiah, 2016; Clarke & Sharpe, 2003; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Sharpe, 2002; Yeo & Clarke, 2005, 2006). However, this body of work is limited to transition experiences in the contexts of school readiness, or of moving from preschool to primary school. Studies on the primary-to-secondary transition, on the other hand, are practically absent, though a very small number of papers tangentially addresses the topic in the context of students with special needs (e.g. West et al., 2004).

Drawing on the existing primary-to-secondary school transition literature from elsewhere is also problematic. Studies have almost exclusively been conducted in Western contexts (cf. Jindal-Snape et al., 2021; Symonds & Galton, 2014), yet the Singapore context presents some unique challenges that may limit cross-application of findings. For one, Singapore explicitly identifies as a meritocratic system, where academic performance is given high regard. Relatedly, children in Singapore sit for the high-stakes primary school leaving examination (PSLE) in their final primary school year; a national examination that determines admission to secondary school. These two points may have unique implications for the school transition experience and expectations placed upon students. Both in turn can also be linked to the most recent

PISA findings showing that while Singaporean students performed well above average on academic measures, they also expressed above-average levels of fear of failure (OECD, 2019). Students who took part in this assessment were already in the later stages of secondary schooling but still close enough to the primary-secondary boundary that such self-perceptions could be linked to the transition experience.

The Present Study

Teachers have already been identified as playing a critical role in making the transition experience a successful one for students, since students are not always able to identify the necessary skills to cope with this move (Zeedyk et al., 2003). To an extent, this is also currently reflected in the recent implementation of the character and citizenship education syllabus in Singaporean secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2020b). Teachers are expected to create positive school learning environments and classroom cultures as well as have positive teacher-student relationships, and relevant lessons are required to include a specific focus on transitioning to secondary education. However, in order for this support role to be successful there needs to be an appropriate match between teachers' perceptions of students' needs and students' actual needs (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Bru et al., 2010). Therefore, an initial focus on exploring teachers' perceptions should help shed light on their perspective, paving the way for more targeted support strategies for students. The present study therefore aimed to address the lack of relevant insight into the Singaporean context by taking an exploratory approach to examining trainee teachers' perceptions¹⁾ of their understanding of the student experience of primary-to-secondary transitioning, their own role played in shaping this experience, and what other forms of support they believe are necessary to support students.

1) This study formed part of a pre-final year undergraduate research programme at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Due to the time constraints of the programme, trainee teachers were selected for ease of access, whilst still representing a participant body that could provide appropriate experience of and insight into the research questions.

Method

Participants

Invitations to participate in the study were sent out via email to trainee teachers at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. Interested students needed to have had experience of teaching either Primary 6 or Secondary 1 classes during their school attachments. Based on this, seven trainee teachers were recruited. Despite being a small-scale study, the sample still aimed to be somewhat representative through distributions of gender (four female, three male) and subject area (covering Mathematics, English, Literature and Geography). However, because trainee teachers rarely have opportunities to experience teaching in Primary 6 due to the increased focus on the PSLE during this teaching year, insight from the secondary side of the transition was predominant, represented by six of the participants.

Design and Procedure

In order to gain insight into trainee teachers' perceptions of student challenges during transitioning, teacher roles in supporting them, and the support they need to better help their students, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted around 60 minutes each, with the interviews being audio-recorded. All interview participants were remunerated SG\$10 as a token of appreciation for their time. Following data collection, interviews were transcribed verbatim and anonymised, with participants being referred to by pseudonyms. Line by line open coding was conducted and thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2014) was adopted to identify relevant and meaningful themes that emerged from the data. Ethical approval for the study was granted by Nanyang Technological University's Institutional Review Board (IRB-2020-12-007) and all ethical guidelines were followed.

Results and Discussion

The present study sought to explore trainee teachers' perceptions of their understanding of the student experience of primary-to-secondary transitioning, their own role played in

shaping this experience, and what other forms of support they believe are necessary to support students. As a result, the analysis centred on themes around perceived conceptions of student maturity, teacher expectations, and additional support sources.

Conceptions of Students

A common perception amongst the participants was that their Secondary 1 students seemed playful and childlike in their behaviours and educational engagements. Yet although it was accepted that the secondary school environment was new to them, there was simultaneously the expectation that the students should now behave in a more mature manner. The articulations by some participants suggest students may even be expected to have laid off their childish ways before joining secondary school.

I will do less babysitting. I will already expect them to have some idea of what is proper, quote, unquote, proper classroom behaviour, expectations of, like, submitting your work on time ... I expect more independence and less hand holding. (Charles)

The issue of perceived immaturity is an important one. Prior research has similarly demonstrated that secondary school teachers tend to see students as lacking academic prowess and being highly dependent – where just prior to the transition these same children may have been labelled as the very opposite (Tsukerman, 2003). Such lowered expectations may affect students' self-esteem (Howe & Richards, 2011) and may even carry the risk of creating a sense of helplessness (Zeedyk et al., 2003). Conversely, when students are held to an appropriate standard of maturity, they appreciate being treated as more of a grown-up (Strand, 2019). It may instead be helpful to understand where this perceived behaviour stems from. For a Singaporean student just entering secondary school, the next high-stakes exams are still some years away, so the immaturity that teachers are seeing may be explained through a change in students' priorities as compared to the pre-transition context.

With Primary 6 they are a lot more exam-minded, exam-centric, because of PSLE. With Sec 1 they are a lot more ... they just, like, start relaxing, because the next exam is just four years down the road ... which kind of allows the students to take their foot off the pedal. (Stella)

So unlike during the final year of primary school, immediate academic performance is no longer linked to any specific event. Instead, focus now shifts to the importance of social relationships and the opportunity to develop a new sense of belonging (Dawrent, 2008; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Zeedyk et al., 2003) – which will both also have been impacted by the transition due to old peer structures no longer existing as children from the same primary school move on to different secondary schools. Indeed, the lack of familiar peer structures was identified as a further challenge to students being able to settle into secondary school.

Once they leave primary school, they are literally deprived of all their friends and they have to recreate a social circle ... They might feel vulnerable and insecure and quite scared of meeting new people. So, that might influence how they transition into secondary school. But those who are quieter might take a lot longer to warm up to people, they may lose out. Once you enter secondary school it's like a grabbing contest, you have to grab friends. For example, once you don't attend orientation you lose out on a lot of opportunities to make friends. (Stella)

Not only does Stella highlight recognition of the issue of students having to reformulate peer relationships as a result of the transition process and the importance of having friends (Strand, 2019), she also picks up on how this process could be supported at an early point. Specifically, she does this by emphasising attendance at orientation sessions, which can act as one form of opportunity for friendship establishment, in line with recommendations in the literature (Hagenauer et al., 2013). Particularly the shyer and quieter students (cf. Baly et al., 2014; Solberg et al., 2020; Thompson & Bell, 2011; Thornberg, 2011) might benefit from such an emphasis on needing to attend orientation for this reason, and at both ends of the transition the social importance of such attendance should be highlighted to students.

Teacher Expectations

A notable point raised by participants was that they had expectations surrounding student behaviour and performance. Quinn noted that there is the expectation for them “to take charge of their own learning”. This is in line with previous research demonstrating children having to get used to new sets of classroom expectations and rules when moving to secondary school, and to take more responsibility (Akos, 2002;

Galton & Pell, 2002). These expectations are typically based on limited student information that is available or at least implied, such as high PSLE cut-off scores for certain secondary schools. This, in turn, carries the risk of such expectations being generalised to the students' overall experience and thereby missing out on students who may be at risk of transition difficulty in other domains.

You assume that students who can do well in academics can also do well in other areas. You expect, but with this expectation some students may not be able to cope ... you assume the high ability students for acads are able to manage or transit well, by the sheer fact that they can score. On the other hand, it also means that students who may not be able to cope academically imply that they are facing area or trouble in other areas also, like social emotional competencies ... Don't assume, because you're not doing justice to the student. And also, you are not doing justice to yourself. You expect your students to be here [hand gesture for high] but because of problems or issues that they face in life, they cannot hit that expectation, then you angry, you also sad, then not worth it also. (Toby)

However, it may be important to further recognise where at least some of these expectations are coming from. The interview responses suggested that they are, at least in part, the result of an inherent teacher culture that passes from senior to junior teachers.

Even the younger teachers will quickly adapt, and they will then expect their own students to conform to what the prevailing school culture is like ... If the senior teachers tell the junior teachers "you should not have to explain any of the basic key terms for this particular science concept called diffusion and osmosis ... they will just read it themselves, and they will know it. You don't have to go into the details at all" ... this obviously creates challenges for the students ... Senior teachers very much shape the whole teacher expectations in the school as a whole. (Tom)

Secondary school teachers have greater expectations and stricter rules than children might be used to from primary school, but sometimes these expectations could be unspoken (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). The issue of unspoken expectations seems to be further complicated by the specific cultural context, highlighting why drawing on existing literature on the primary-to-secondary transition may not work to a fuller extent. Fundamentally, the concept of rule changes from one environment to the other

are being recognised by the trainee teachers, but the implication appears to be that students should adapt to the teacher in the new setting, not vice versa.

For six years, you were in the same school, and you were very used to the way things were being done. The teachers were all around the same pattern, you know, they would just do things in a particular way, and every school has their own culture ... You're bound to have challenges when it comes to adapting and fitting in to the mould, right, because the teachers don't change, they are not going to change for you ... And in Singapore, particularly, because of the whole Confucian idea, the student is subservient to the teacher, right? So, you have to adapt to them. (Tom)

Whether such an attitude constrains the teacher-student relationship is difficult to ascertain as the principles highlighted by Tom are not uniquely limited to school but also frequently feature, for example, in the Singaporean parent-child relationship and within its society generally. This also chimes well with Stella's observation that secondary school is "a lot more real of a society". However, some attention may nonetheless still need to be given to the implications of such a teacher-student relationship given that a poor relationship can lead to heightened anxiety among adolescents (Symonds & Galton, 2014; Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2013).

Fostering Autonomy

It may be necessary to differentiate between an expectation of independence and the fostering of autonomy. While expectations of independence are perceived as a challenge to students, even well into their first year of secondary school, fostering a sense of autonomy seems to be what students themselves want at this stage (Galton et al., 2003; Symonds & Galton, 2014; Strand, 2019). As part of the maturation process, students will be seeking to find their own niche and sense of belonging.

I find that autonomy is very important. And if we just try to like rein them in too much into what we think is best, right, it might not actually be best for them, because they are not carbon copies of us, you know? (Gwen)

To support the development of this sense of autonomy, participants noted that students need to have a realistic understanding of what secondary school will be about before they transfer. Siying, for instance, thought it would be useful to tell them that "the

positive thing about secondary school is that you get to learn a lot of new things like literature ... Then you get to join a CCA [co-curricular activity] ... But ...you have to study way more.” Doing so can enable students to identify early on the opportunities for developing a sense of belonging through autonomous decision making and a search among new alternatives, which will enable them to feel more prepared and thereby experience a more positive transition as a whole, even in light of some of the possible downsides (Bagnall et al., 2019; Waters et al., 2014). However, providing autonomy does not mean leaving students to their own devices, meaning teachers may need to find an appropriate balance between expectations of independence, provision of opportunities for autonomy, and guidance where it is necessary.

It’s always embarrassing needing the help of a teacher, to do something that is social and expected for you to kind of grapple with yourself. But as an educator you cannot just turn a blind eye and say to figure it out themselves. I mean, there’s a limit, you know, and if you see that they’re clearly struggling ... you kind of have to step in. (Gwen)

Finding this balance may be a more formidable task for teachers given that students may see guidance as a form of help that in itself may imply they are not being regarded as mature enough, for which they have a need at that time in their development – a conflict with the expectation of independence may thus emerge, negatively impacting the teacher-student relationship.

Additional Support Sources

It may be unreasonable to place sole emphasis on teachers as a form of support, and many in fact feel unsupported and unequipped to handle their students who are going through emotional difficulties (e.g. Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015). In line with this, the trainee teachers also recognised that there are limits to what they can do to support the transition experience, particularly for those students who are finding this process more challenging. But they were able to suggest ways to address this by drawing on the experiences of others, emphasising staff with more relevant experience such as counsellors, and senior teaching staff in particular.

Sometimes you feel that you are ill-equipped to tackle anything, so you go to a more experienced teacher or even the school counsellor. Teachers need that kind

of training and even telling us that “hey, you guys should look out for these things and talk to them about these things”, to kind of push us. (Gwen)

However, while Tom pointed out the same support avenue for teachers, in his response he also noted that following this approach might not be as simple: “The reality is that the senior teachers are not always forthcoming.” This means teachers may need to seek further support elsewhere, but which requires recognising that such support options exist for them beyond the school perimeters.

The organisation I volunteer with do have a survival camp ... it’s a camp to help the students to transition better to Sec 1 through team-building games, helping the kids find a community and all that. So, we could also have that camp for P6s. (Siying)

Siying’s recommendation seems particularly relevant since, as she notes, such organisations may provide specific opportunities for students to develop a sense of belonging and possibly even friendships; adding to Stella’s earlier advice that students attend orientation sessions. Secondary schools may wish to consider drawing on the expertise of such organisations when helping their new arrivals to settle in. And students who at the primary school level are already identifiable as being at risk of transition difficulty could be encouraged to attend such events prior to the move to secondary school.

Implications

The findings give rise to different recommendations on how Singaporean adolescents can be supported in their transition from primary to secondary school. Despite some cultural variations, it is clear that the perceptions of transition experiences are still reflective of the wider body of research in this field, and that a gap between primary and secondary school exists here, too. In order to ensure that such support is as holistic as possible, the recommendations are therefore made through the lens of Galton’s five bridges (Galton, 2010; Galton et al., 1999, 2003; Galton et al., 2003; Galton & McLellan, 2018). Where possible, an effective exchange of information between primary and secondary schools may be of benefit so that secondary schools may be better prepared to meet the specific needs of individual students. In meeting this bureaucratic bridge, a

stronger teacher-student relationship should be possible, particularly for students who are at greater risk of a negative transition experience. Additionally, emphasising specific social and emotional skills towards developing positive peer relationships and promoting a sense of self-esteem can be achieved through, for instance, greater focus on orientation and team building activities as well as positive classroom cultures. To meet the curriculum bridge, teachers may need to ensure they understand each student's level of understanding as they transition into secondary school so as not to have unreasonable expectations that might otherwise lead to a lowered academic self-concept. Teachers may need to develop some sensitivity towards their own pedagogy, recognising that every teacher students are exposed to will have their own style. While it is not necessary – or indeed possible – for teachers to adopt similar teaching approaches, teachers may need to clarify the kind of thinking that is required in their domains, including a rationale for why it is required. Finally, through fostering a greater sense of autonomy, which can also include providing opportunities for leadership or other meaningful roles, students are able to generate a stronger sense of school belonging and increase engagement in learning activities, thereby managing their own learning. The character and citizenship curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2020b) may play an important role in the fostering of some of these bridges, particularly in the areas of identity, sense of belonging and mental health.

Limitations and Recommendations

The present study provides important exploratory insight into the primary-to-secondary transition in Singapore. Given that prior research in this field was near-absent, it marks an important contribution. However, as a result of this the study also remains limited in some crucial areas. Despite the fact that the study sought to consider a reasonably diverse sample, the findings are nonetheless the result of a restricted number of perspectives. It would be useful to consider a wider range of positions, including more explicit experience from the three different secondary school streams in Singapore.²⁾ Since, for instance, the Express stream requires higher PSLE scores for entry than the Normal streams do, different teachers may place different emphasis on expectations

2) Streaming is to be replaced by full subject-based banding from 2024, which is currently being piloted in some Singaporean schools. However, this will still be based on academic performance and may therefore continue to present similar implications for the student transition experience.

around student independence and autonomy. This may also help understand more about the possible role played by the big-fish-little-pond effect. Secondly, the sample consisted of trainee teachers rather than teachers who had more experience in the classroom. This has some advantages since it can highlight how the topic of transition may need to feature in teacher training programs in particular, as well as highlighting the issue of incorporating new staff into existing teacher cultures. However, more detailed student-based examples from more experienced teachers might be able to generate more insight into long-term understanding of student issues and relevant support approaches. Finally, and importantly, the study did not consider the student position in the school transition experience. Future research would therefore do well to examine this, which can then be complemented by the teacher viewpoints offered here. A more holistic understanding of the transition experience from multiple angles should help tailor the necessary support processes even more.

Conclusion

School transition is no new phenomenon. Globally, many studies have been conducted over the past decades to try and understand the student experience of moving from primary to secondary school. Yet surprisingly, this topic had to date not been broached in the Singaporean context. As a result, the present study is able to add to the global insight as well as offer a particular contribution, albeit a small one, to the education endeavours in Singapore. By examining the teacher perspective, a better understanding of teachers as part of adolescents' microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) is afforded, allowing schools to help students manage life-wide changes through the normative experience of transitioning to secondary school. Particularly in this disruptive time period of a global pandemic, which in itself is affecting the mental wellbeing of young people, looking into ways to support them is essential. Helping them stand on their own two feet in secondary school is just one way to do so.

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