

TITLE OF THE PROJECT REPORT  
**“EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS ASSIGNED TO THE LOWEST STREAMS IN A PRIMARY  
SCHOOL IN CENTRAL TRINIDAD”**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the “Experiences of teachers assigned to the lowest stream in a primary school in central Trinidad”. This study was something of great concern for the researcher as well as other members of staff. Although some members of staff and the researcher are aware of the short and long term effects of streaming, especially on the teachers and students in the lowest stream classes, it has been observed that the more experienced teachers and administration are not keen to abandon such a culture. It must be mentioned as well that all members of staff at this school in central Trinidad are aware that the Ministry Of Education’s policy is against streaming in the primary school.

The finding revealed that there were several challenges teachers are faced with, especially teachers of the lowest streams. These teachers are stuck being the teacher of the lowest stream for more than five consecutive years and are experiencing all the ills that these lower stream students come with. The teachers interviewed, based on experience, were able to identify some of the needs of students in the lowest streams and discuss the strategies they employed to meet those needs. They were also able to offer some recommendations of how some of these ills can be remediated.

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**if** the purpose for  
*learning* is to score  
well on a test,  
**WE'VE LOST**  
**SIGHT** of the  
**REAL REASON** for  
**LEARNING.**

-Jeannie Fulbright

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## **Definition of terms**

**Streaming**-the wholesale allocation of children to groups on the basis of a fixed, single ability label. (Benn,2011).

**Streaming** – sometimes referred to as tracking or grouping by ability- is a method of organizing teaching whereby students are categorized according to their academic ability and placed in different classes at the same level or in different groups within the class (Evans, 2001).

**Banding** – the year group is divided into two three or four bands differentiated by ability. Each band contains a number of classes, which may vary according to ability and size (GB. DES.HMI, 1979).

**Inclusive education** – is a process whereby the school systems, strategic plans and policies adapt and change to include teaching strategies for a wider more diverse range of children and their families (Lene, 1998).

**Special education needs** – a child is considered to have special education needs if he/she has learning difficulties which are greater than those encountered by the majority of pupils of the same age (Jones & Charlton, 1992).

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This paper seeks to enlighten its readers as to the effects that streaming is having on students of the lowest stream in a primary school in central Trinidad. This school has been in existence since 1991, over twenty (20) years. Of these twenty years, streaming has been practiced for approximately fifteen years. I have been at the school for over ten years, and streaming has always been an issue of great concern. Some teachers believe in its use, others feel it has negative effects and there is a significant group that is quite undecided as to whether streaming has more positive than negative effects.

They were aware of the study been done and was quite willing and keen to give whatever assistance necessary to make this study fruitful with the hope of gaining some insights on this issue of streaming and how it is affecting the teachers and students of the lowest streams.

Prior to this study most members of the staff were unsure whether they were for or against streaming. However, it must be mentioned here that a few senior members of staff are strongly supporting this streaming culture and are unwilling to accept or comply with the Ministry of Education's policy which does not advocate streaming in the primary schools. As this study unfolds I hope that the readers of this research paper, especially the teachers of this school, will be given some researched information and relevant findings that will bring them a bit closer to coming to a conclusion on the effects that streaming has on students and the real challenges that teachers of the lowest streams face as a result of this streamed culture.

## ***Background***

Internationally, a study done in the UK from the institute of education, the Guardian development professional network, researcher Melissa Benn defined streaming as the wholesale allocation of children into groups on the basis of a fixed single ability label (Melissa Benn, 2011). It is also highlighted in this article that one in every six primary age children within the UK is now streamed by the age of seven.

Crown Woods, another researcher featured in this professional network article from a school in South London went one step further as it relates to streaming by suggesting that children be housed in “schools within schools”, according to ability, each with its own colour coded uniform. However, further studies done by the Guardian Global Development Network found that dividing younger children by ability can entrench disadvantage.

The organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD), a Paris based think tank analysed successes and failures in education systems in 39 of the world’s most developed nations. It found that countries that divided pupils into ability groups at an early age tended to have higher numbers of school drop outs and lower levels of achievement.

Beatriz Pont, an educational analyst and one of the authors of the of the OECD’s study said streaming by ability at an early age “fuelled a vicious cycle” in which teachers had low expectations of students in the lowest sets. These students were often locked into a lower educational environment before they had a chance to develop to their potential.

This educational analyst, Beatriz Pont, further argued in her study “equity and quality in education-supporting disadvantaged students and schools” found that the most experienced and capable teachers often taught pupils in the highest streams and streaming by ability exacerbates inequalities

because immigrants and pupils from low income families are more likely to be placed in low ability groups.

Research conducted in Ireland says that some pupils who are grouped into lower streams at the start of first year may find that they will never get access to any higher-level courses throughout their junior and senior cycle education (Raftery, 2012). In UK society there are significant social class, gender and ethnic inequalities of educational achievement. With regard to each of these social groupings these inequalities have been explained in terms of different theories which emphasise differences in IQ (which it is claimed may be mainly inherited), differences in cultural and material circumstances operating outside of the school environment and processes operating within the schools themselves which involve negative and positive labelling.

Interactionist sociologists are so-called because they focus their attention on the analysis of interactions among individuals in small groups .By the late 1960s in the USA and the UK some interactionist sociologists were undertaking relatively small scale studies of individual schools and classrooms often based mainly [but not entirely] on observational research methods which in their view would generate more meaningful data than could be generated by other methods such as questionnaires and interviews. Interactionists in the UK were often especially keen to focus on the possible impacts of negative and positive labelling and of systems of streaming, banding and setting on pupils' educational achievements.

Regionally, results of research done by Hyacinth Evans (1999) in the journal of education and development in the Caribbean, which focused on the effects of streaming on boys and girls in secondary schools in Jamaica and based on a sample of over 3,700 students from all types of secondary schools. There were two aspects to the study—a survey in which students responded to questionnaires, and a qualitative investigation into school processes and students' sentiments. The

study found that girls were more represented in high-stream classes, while boys were more represented in low-stream classes.

This study concluded that in Jamaica streaming affected academic achievement, students' experiences of school practices such as being beaten or insulted, and students' sense of alienation from school. There were gender differences in all responses, with low-stream boys most likely to do poorly academically and to experience negative school practices. However, low-stream girls were the group most likely to feel alienated from school. Implications of these results for equal opportunity and equal access to knowledge are discussed.

It must be mentioned as well that regionally, the Change from Within Project which began in 1992 by the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus, Jamaica, as an attempt to deal with violence and aggression that was creeping into the education system four schools, which were attempting transformation by building students' self-esteem, had been selected by the UWI. UWI documented and tracked the changes of school profiles and brought the principals together to discuss on a continual basis how they could collaborate to achieve their goals, including drawing on resources within their respective communities, hence the evolution of the project name "Change from within". To date there are 32 schools involved in the programme. One of the strategies used in the programme was the abandoning of streaming in schools. This UNICEF initiative to create more student friendly schools was adopted by countries such as Barbados, Barbuda and St. Lucia. These countries followed best practice from Jamaica, abandoning streaming in their attempt to make their schools more students friendly.

Locally, in Trinidad and Tobago streaming should not exist in our primary schools according to the Ministry of Education (MOE) policy. It must be mentioned here that there is no anecdotal evidence that states that the Ministry of Education's policy is against streaming. However after discussions

with the School Supervisor and the Principal of the school, it was brought to my attention that this information was indeed transferred to the school's principals at a Principal's meeting and it was mentioned with reference to the Ministry's 1993-2003 policy document that supports inclusion. This concept of inclusion was further highlighted with an increased emphasis on inclusiveness and equity in the Ministry of Education National Model 2007-2015. This model put forth by the MOE makes provisions for mainstreaming challenged and gifted students with a focus on student centred education supported by equipment and effective curriculum delivery mechanisms for the challenged as well as the gifted students in all schools.

In light of this therefore, it can be inferred that streaming will soon have no place in the primary schools because according to the ministry's statements which are in keeping with the implementation of inclusive education by 2015, there should be no discrimination of students based on ethnicity, race, religion, economic status, and or ability.

Presently in Trinidad and Tobago streaming has become the order of the day in the so called 'Prestigious' primary schools because of the challenge of staying ahead of their competitors in the Secondary Entrance Assessment exam (SEA). In an informal conversation with teachers employed at six of the surrounding primary schools, to find out whether streaming exist in their schools, especially schools that have more than one class pre level. The answer was a resounding yes for all of these six schools located in central Trinidad.

### **School context**

This school in central Trinidad is one such school locally, in which streaming is a school policy. In accordance with the schools policy, students on entry are administered a screening test to decide which stream they are to be placed. The screening documents consist of a number recognition, letter recognition, and colour recognition, writing and reading skills. Based on the performance at these

tests students are placed in one of the three streams. Students, who firstly, did not attend pre-school, cannot recognise any or a few of the numbers, letters and colours, and cannot write or recognise their names are usually placed in the lowest streams.

This streaming mechanism is maintained throughout the child's school life which is based on teacher made test. It must be mentioned here that these tests are not standardized among the classes and varies from teacher to teacher based on what they deem necessary to be tested. There may be little or slight modifications made as the student moves from class to class based on test scores and teacher recommendations. This process has given rise to one class being the higher performers and the lowest stream being the underachievers. Teachers are rarely reassigned to classes and this has resulted in some teachers being the so called "A" class teachers for several years and the lowest streams being taught by the same teachers every year.

This rural school in central Trinidad has a staff of twenty three (23) teachers, including a principal, vice principal and two heads of department. It has a student population of four hundred and forty five students, two hundred and fifty four boys and one hundred and ninety one girls. There are generally three classes per level, however this year there are four standard three classes.

Although this school has as part of its address as Enterprise Chaguanas, it is not within the crime area of Enterprise. Actually Enterprise is out of the school's catchment area. This school was specifically built for this small, but vastly growing community because prior to the building of this school, children had to walk miles to go to neighbouring schools. It is a Government school, with an over sixty percent East Indian population; however the dominant religion is Christianity based on the attendance at Religious Instruction classes which is based on the child's record given by the parent on admission in school.

## **Statement of the problem**

In spite of the Ministry of Education policy in support of inclusive education, students are being streamed at a primary school in central Trinidad. Teachers assigned to the lowest streams are of the view that students in those streams tend to have learning challenges or special education needs.

They also express dissatisfaction in their frequent placement in the lowest stream classes as they tend to lack motivation and often complain that their students show little or no improvement in spite of the strategies employed.

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of teachers of the lowest streams in meeting the students' educational needs within the environment of a streamed culture.

## **Research questions:**

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?
2. What do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students in the lowest streams?
3. What are some of the strategies they employ to meet those needs?

**Expected outcomes:**

As a result of these teachers' challenges being made known, administration and staff will be better informed. Administration and staff will be made aware of the effects of streaming on both teachers and students, especially those of the lowest streams. The various needs of these teachers and students when highlighted will inform administration as to how they could better assist these teachers and by extension the students of the lowest stream classes.

Administration and staff will be made aware of the effects of streaming on both teachers and students, especially those of the lowest streams. Staff being made aware will have some information as to the rationale used by the MOE in not promoting streaming in the primary school and to understand that Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to UNESCO's definition of inclusion which should be implemented in schools by 2015.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter puts forth the review of relevant literature related to this study. The literature that was explored is divided into four sections based on the various themes and topics that were deemed pertinent and relevant to this study. The first section gives an introduction and an overview of the rationale and reasons why streaming was useful, but soon began to lose popularity. The second section looks at the first key theme related to the topic that this researcher found was of great importance, which were the inequalities and inequities in the education system as a result of streaming. The third section looks at the effects of streaming on students in the lowest streams and finally the last section looks at attitudes and perceptions in relation to streaming in schools.

#### **Introduction**

According to Oakes (1985) we look for sources of educational failure in their homes, their neighbourhoods, their language, their cultures, even in their genes. However he argues that in all our searches we almost entirely overlooked the possibility that what happens within the schools might contribute to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes. Oakes (1985) further states that in our quest for higher standards and superior academic performance we seem to have forgotten that schools cannot be excellent as long as there are groups of children who are not served well by them.

Conor Feehan, 2012 stated that if your child finds it difficult to keep up in the classroom you might think that a separate stream, which takes things at a slower and more focused pace, would help them learn more and improve their grades. In contrast, if your child is really bright you may want a separate class away from the slower students so they can learn faster.

According to Feehan (2012) you are wrong on both counts!

A recent study into the effects of this 'streaming' has shown that students left in a mixed-ability environment actually do better than those who have been grouped according to the hierarchy of test results. This new study, commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), shows that if you take a student out of mixed-ability education and put them in a 'slow' stream they tend to reach the level of underachievement they feel is expected of them, rather than strive to grasp the topic and rejoin the mainstream. They also argue that having a 'fast' stream for quicker learners doesn't guarantee greater exam success either. If you place the elite into the fast stream means students might reach the level of achievement expected of them, however it is also possible that they will settle into a sort of comfort zone and fail to challenge themselves by striving to go further.

Although on paper the idea of separating students into different streams in order to better meet the learning needs of particular students may seem like a practical one. Research carried out on behalf of NCCA indicates that the natural human factors of competition and motivation play an important part in how far we push ourselves.

The practice of streaming is becoming more commonly practiced in disadvantaged schools in the UK, especially with foreign children who are struggling to navigate a new language and culture. While anyone would be reluctant to place the slower children with the faster ones, there certainly seems to be a lot of good in exposing challenged students to the entire spectrum of ability. The study done by the NCCA shows that students in lower streams perform poorly in the Junior Cert exams, and one factor in this is that students in lower-stream classes become progressively more negative about school, act-up and end up drifting or becoming disengaged.

According to Malcolm and Harlem streaming students into performance levels based upon academic ability is a common practice in Australia as well as other parts of the world. This practice is known as “tracking” in North America and “setting in the United Kingdom and generally involves assigning students to classes based on ability (Harlem & Malcolm, 1999).

According to Simon, 1993, the rationale behind streaming related to classic theories of intelligence testing which argue that individuals have a fixed, general level of intelligence that they acquire genetically and which can be objectively measured with the use of standardized tests.

Di Martino, 2005 highlighted three main reasons that he believes have been given to support the schools practice of streaming. Firstly, teachers found it easier and more efficient to stream students because they do not have to teach the students with varying abilities. Secondly, streaming helped students to reach their learning potential and feel better about themselves. Thirdly, streaming limits the amount of failure slower students may experience and feel.

Di Martino (2005) further disputed each of the main reasons for supporting streaming. He believes that the benefits of streaming on students level of achievement are questionable when overall research evidence is considered and began to highlight the negative social consequences of streaming for distinct groups of pupils. He points to studies that have shown that it is not possible to place students equitably and accurately into groups based on ability, for example research shows a lower self esteem for students in lower streams and that streaming creates elitism, sets low expectations for lower stream students as well as teachers and encourages segregation.

The second reason for the unpopularity of streaming grew out of research highlighted by Hooper, 1992, that supports the above view point, showing that any academic gains from ability groupings are too small to be significant. Upper streams produced a weak positive result and the lower streams produced a strong negative result.

Therefore in concluding, streaming has deep, long term and short term effects that will be discussed further in this section. Oakes (1985) writes that we cannot have educational excellence until we have educational equality.

### **Inequality and inequity in education**

A study done by the Global Development Professional Network (2011) in Paris argued that dividing younger pupils by ability can entrench disadvantage and label students for life. The organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD), a Paris based think tank, studies found that countries that stream pupils at an early age tend to have lower levels of achievement.

Guanyinmiao's Musings Word press (2013), article on streaming wrote that streaming should be a tool for optimization and not discrimination. They argue that we have been moving beyond academic accomplishment as the sole bench mark for success and while it seems like we might be on the right path, many concerned parents are cognizant of the shortcomings of alternative pathways, and the stiff competition for the entrance into specialized institutions.

Jing Yng & Sreadharan 2012, in their article entitle "teach less – learn more in Singapore" recommended that for streaming to be effective in the first place, modes of assessment should be designed intelligently and not allow present modes of rote memorization and regurgitation to continue.

Evidence from studies done by the OECD, 2008 suggests that in secondary and primary schools such sorting can increase inequalities and inequities, particularly if it takes place early in the education process. Early sorting can also weaken results overall. Although the opportunity for mobility is often stressed as an important and necessary feature of homogenous grouping systems, those studies which

have investigated the level of transfer between streams have generally found little evidence of mobility, regardless of end of year examinations results and especially as pupils get older (Devine, 1993).

According to a study done by Toscano (2013) entitled “teachers claim burnout at streaming school”, a Melbourne school that separates its best and worst performing students is under scrutiny after several teachers claimed “burnout” from being allocated too many abusive classes. Teachers who were allocated low-achieving classes at Werribee Secondary College say they developed stress, anxiety and depression after the school introduced a “like-achievement” grouping model in 2000. Toscano (2013) further argues that at least four former teachers have taken stress leave, saying their classrooms were full of uncontrollable and disengaged students who encouraged each other’s bad behaviour.

Under this system, students in years 8, 9 and 10 are divided into five streams: select entry, high achievers, medium achievers, low achievers and foundation. Werribee Secondary is the only Victorian school to divide students into different classes for all subjects based on their academic performance. Principal Steve Butyn said the streaming system had sparked debate among staff when it was introduced, with some teachers worried that separating the “best of the best” would also concentrate the “worst of the worst” into very challenging classes, which makes it very difficult for the teachers of the foundation class.

According to an OECD report entitled “ten steps to equity in education”, many countries have special schemes to direct additional resources to schools or school areas serving disadvantaged pupils. Such schemes need to ensure that the extra resources are used to assist those most in need and avoid labelling certain schools as “disadvantaged”, which may discourage students, teachers and parents.

In the said article by the OECD (2008) extra resources also need to be channelled through schools to help disadvantaged students. This should help overcome the effect of social background and help to tackle poor performance. The stigma arising from labelling of particular schools as “for disadvantaged children” should be avoided. Teaching quality is also an issue that was mentioned. Disadvantaged schools have the greatest need of experienced teachers, but in many countries the “difficult” schools can only attract the less experienced teachers. Therefore there should be incentives for more experienced teachers to work in these schools.

### **Effects of streaming on students**

According to Oakes (1985) tracking or streaming may inhibit the learning of many of our country’s teenagers, especially those who are poor and non white. Studies done by Abraham et al, 1989 indicates that those in low ability streams are provided with a lower quality of instruction and with teachers who are less qualified and less experienced.

Researchers such as Boaler et al, 1997 also presented findings that indicates that teachers with the greatest amount of experience and who were more highly qualified (i.e. heads of departments) are more frequently allocated to teach pupils of high ability. As a result of such findings researchers argue that it has substantial negative effects on pupils in terms of lowering self concepts, attitudes and inhibit their adjustments to school (Oaks, 1985). Another researcher also put forth some research evidence which suggests that streaming has a negative impact on the achievement of low ability pupils ( Kerckhoff et al, 1985).

Grouping students by ability is bad for their education, a new study from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (nd) has found. In a major review of how the quality of secondary education could be improved, researchers found that streaming harms educational outcomes. Students

assigned to lower ability classes tend to do much worse under streaming while those in higher ability classes do not make the corresponding gains – leading to a fall in average student performance.

The study also found that student-teacher interaction has a crucial effect on how students perform.

The research also revealed that teaching methods matter – and that best results are achieved by student-centred active approaches. Interaction and discussion are better for students rather than passively listening to instruction, the study found.

Dr Emer Smyth (nd), the head of the ESRI and one of the two authors of the report, said that teacher training and continuous professional development for teachers should be a priority for policymakers. In the current climate, it is important that schools know they can make a crucial difference to the educational development of their students by moving away from rigid ability grouping, by promoting a positive school climate, and by making the classroom an engaging place for young people.

The review looked at almost 100 studies worldwide as well as available Irish evidence to determine how the quality of second-level education could be improved in the face of the funding challenges Ireland currently faces. The study, *Improving Second-Level Education: Using Evidence for Policy Development*, was conducted by Dr. Emer Smyth and Dr. Selina McCoy of the ESRI.

Oakes et al, 1985, argues that more school resources are allocated to higher streams; the groups with less ability are those students who need more, but are given less. Once students are streamed, they are treated and taught differently; very often they are offered a different level of the curriculum and are not afforded the same level of respect and civility.

Keith (1976), has shown that in Jamaica, streaming influences the teacher's expectations and hence the evaluations which they make of students. Students in a low stream are not expected to do as well

as those in the higher stream and their evaluations are consequently less positive. Research done by Oakes, 1985 provides evidence for this.

Evans (2001) further argues that a stream is not only an academic category; it is a social unit as well. Students in a particular stream associate with the other students in that class; and students in other classes begin to think of all those students as one of a kind. Students in a class are influenced by the habits, inclinations, and behaviours of other students in that class.

Yusuf – Khalil cited in Evans, 2006, set out to answer two main questions. Firstly, what effect does placement in a stream have on primary students? Secondly, what is school like for high and low achievers? She observed and spoke with students and teachers in two all aged schools and one primary school over a period of six weeks. She focused on the perspectives and the feelings which students of the A and C streams (high and low) have about school. Her account describes some of the features of primary/ all age school classrooms such as teaching methods in which students are rarely active participants, the absence of attention to the emotional needs of students, the use of corporal punishment (beating) as a means of discipline, and authoritarian classroom climate.

According to Yusuf – Khalil (2006) the quality of instruction causes low achieving students to experience little if any success in school. This erodes the self esteem they may have. Incorrect work and other incidences that annoy the teacher were also seen to bring on the wrath of teachers, often resulting in verbal abuse. Students evaluated themselves on the basis of their stream placement. Students in the low streams, however, regularly received negative evaluations from their teachers.

One important analysis of the labelling process was provided in *Deviance and Classrooms* (1975) by David H. Hargreaves, Stephen R Hestor and Frank K Mellor in which the authors distinguish between three stages of the labelling process; the speculative stage, the elaboration stage and the

stabilisation stage. It is claimed that in the speculation stage teachers gradually form opinions about the characteristics of their new pupils on the basis of their appearance, their readiness to accept school rules and discipline, their abilities and enthusiasm for work, their personality, likeability and relationships with other pupils and their overall conformity or deviance.

This leads teachers to construct a so-called "working hypothesis" as to the nature of each individual pupil which may nevertheless be either confirmed or modified as the teacher increases her/his knowledge and understanding of the pupils in the so-called elaboration stage. Finally in the so-called stabilisation stage teachers come to believe that they now fully understand the nature of their pupils and come to interpret their behaviour in terms of their now relatively fixed "stabilised opinions of them so that, for example, poor work by one student might be interpreted as evidence of a fundamental lack of ability and by another as evidence that fundamentally high potential is not currently being fulfilled.

It must be noted however that whereas in this study the labelling process occurs gradually as teachers increase their understanding of their new pupils, in other studies it occurs very quickly as in Rist's 1970 study of an American kindergarten where pupils were being segregated on the basis of teachers' evaluations of their abilities within as little as eight days. The use of positive and negative labels amounts to the construction of self fulfilling prophecies whereby the labels themselves generate the behaviour and educational outcomes which are predicted or prophesied in the labels themselves.

One important study which attempted to assess the strength of the self-fulfilling prophecies generated by positive and negative labelling was entitled *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968 R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson). The study relates to all pupils in Grades 1-6 (aged approximately 5-11) in an elementary school in a large American town. These pupils come primarily from "a preponderantly

lower class community" although few of the children are "desperately poor" but "the children's lower class status is indicated by cultural impoverishment of language and experience"(Quotes from "Pygmalion).

These pupils were given an IQ test at the beginning of the academic year and teachers were incorrectly told that the test (fictitiously named the Harvard Test of Inflected Ability in an attempt to enhance its legitimacy) was designed to predict which children were most likely to make rapid intellectual progress in the coming year. All teachers were then given the names of pupils in their class who had allegedly scored in the highest 20% on the test although in reality these children's names had been chosen completely at random and bore no relationship to their test scores.

Toward the end of the academic year all pupils were given the same intelligence test and the new test score data indicated that for the entire school the 20% of pupils said falsely to be capable of faster intellectual progress had indeed made faster progress. Their test scores had risen by 12.2% by comparison with the 8.2% improvement for the remaining 80% of pupils. Here according to Robert Rosenthal and Leonora Jacobson (1968) was evidence that higher teachers' expectations even when misguided could nevertheless result in faster pupil progress.

Pygmalion in the Classroom could be seen as an ingenious [although possibly ethically questionable] study but it soon attracted some criticisms. Thus it was noted that it was only in the lower grades that the children falsely classified as potential fast improvers did improve more rapidly and there were no such effects in the higher grades possibly because these pupils were better known to their teachers who might therefore be unlikely to change their behaviour in response to the provision of IQ data which they might in any case not take very seriously. Furthermore R. Rosenthal and Leonora Jacobson did not actually observe pupil and teacher classroom behaviour and so they could only

speculate as to the relationships between the IQ test data, the change or otherwise in teacher behaviour and its effects on subsequent pupils' performances in the later IQ test.

According to Finders & Lewis (1994), students in the lower stream classes tend to have parents who rarely visit the school. They stated that instead of assuming that absence means non-caring, educators must understand the barriers that hinder some parents from participating in their child's education. In their role as teachers and as parents, they have been privy to the conversations of both teachers and parents. Until recently, however, they did not acknowledge that their view of parental involvement conflicts with the views of many parents. It was not until they began talking with parents in different communities that they were forced to examine their own deeply seated assumptions about parental involvement.

Finders and Lewis (1994) in their article entitled "educating for diversity" from talking with Latino parents and parents in two low-income Anglo neighborhoods; they gained insights about why this group felt disenfranchised from school settings. In order to include such parents in the educational conversation, they needed to understand the barriers to their involvement from their vantage point, as that of outsiders. When asked, these parents had many suggestions that may help educators re- envision family involvement in the schools.

The institutional perspective holds that children who do not succeed in school have parents who do not get involved in school activities or support school goals at home. Research emphasized the importance of parent involvement in promoting school success (Comer 1984, Lareau 1987). At the same time, lack of participation among parents of socially and culturally diverse students is also well documented (Clark 1983, Delgado-Gaitan 1991).

The model for family involvement, despite enormous changes in the reality of family structures, is that of a two-parent, economically self-sufficient nuclear family, with a working father and

homemaker mother (David 1989). As educators, we talk about “the changing family,” but the language we use has changed little. The institutional view of nonparticipating parents remains based on a deficit model. “Those who *need* to come don’t come,” a teacher explains, revealing an assumption that one of the main reasons for involving parents is to remediate them. It is assumed that involved parents bring a body of knowledge about the purposes of schooling to match institutional knowledge. Unless they bring such knowledge to the school, they themselves are thought to need education in becoming legitimate participants. Discussions about family involvement often center on what families lack and how educators can best teach parents to support instructional agendas at home (Mansbach 1993).

### **Attitudes and Perceptions on streaming**

Taylor, 1993 states that teachers preferred to teach students that are responsive, motivated and college bound (high ability pupils). This is because they tend to view low ability pupils as presenting more problems in terms of discipline and therefore more difficult to teach. Finley, 1984 claims that based on research teachers compete with one another and in the process conduct an occupational hierarchy. In other words the teachers too are streamed.

Malcolm 1997 argue that teachers interact with high ability groups more frequently and positively than they do with low ability groups which can have negative consequences for low ability groups which can have negative consequences for low ability students in terms of lowering their levels of expectations, motivation and achievement, thus confirming and further reducing the expectations held by teachers.

Banding and streaming are seen by some sociologists as the personification of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy theories. Hallam and Toutounji 1996 summarized research findings concluding that pupils tend to be labelled by teachers, peers and themselves according to the ability group that they are in and for some this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the UK interactionists have been especially keen to investigate relationships between labelling theory, streaming, banding and setting and educational achievement. Most secondary schools (and some primary schools) operate systems of streaming, banding or setting in which pupils are allocated to streams, bands or sets according to the teachers' perceptions of their abilities in the belief that pupils learn more effectively when they are taught in groups of similar abilities rather than in mixed ability teaching groups.

When pupils first enter Secondary School they are likely to be streamed or banded on the basis of reports from their middle schools. However critics argue that these reports and the resultant allocations of pupils to ability groupings may have been neither accurate nor fair because many teachers operate with a concept of the "ideal pupil" who has primarily middle class characteristics so that working class students are more likely to be assessed, reported upon and allocated to lower sets not on the basis of their ability or potential but because of their known social background, appearance, behaviour or language style. Also whereas working class parents may for a variety of reasons be relatively likely to accept the allocation of their children to lower sets in the belief that "teachers know best" middle class parents might be more likely to complain if their children are allocated to lower sets and to pressurise teachers to evaluate their children more positively.

Interactionist theorists have argued that these processes of streaming, setting and banding involve the negative and positive labelling respectively of mainly working class pupils in the lower sets and mainly middle class pupils in the higher sets which has adverse consequences for the educational

prospects of the lower set pupils. Hargreaves study of mainly white working class secondary modern school boys in the 1960s demonstrated that low stream pupils were denied academic status within the school and that they therefore tried to regain status among their peers by misbehaviour and unwillingness to work which led to the development of anti-school subcultures in lower streams. Also, it was possible that "better" teachers were assigned to higher sets and that teacher preparation for lower set students were lacking because these students were seen as incapable of real progress. In general terms therefore, lower set students were labelled as failures and the system of setting created the conditions for the self-fulfilling prophecy in that by allocating students to lower streams, the teachers actually created the conditions which ensured failure.

Additional criticisms of setting, banding and streaming were made by Nell Keddie in "Classroom Knowledge" (1970) where she claimed that a supposedly undifferentiated Humanities course was delivered differently according to the sets of the students and that, for example, teachers chose not to teach the more complex, theoretical ideas to the working class students, lower set students, on the not necessarily accurate assumption that these students would not understand them. Obviously this was likely to restrict these students' progress.

Stephen Ball (Beachside Comprehensive 1980) is also critical. He presents evidence that teachers were continuing to label low band students extremely negatively as for example, "a waste of time" while the reverse was true in relation to higher band students. However, he did also raise the strong possibility that even if so-called mixed ability teaching was introduced, there could still be informal setting within individual classes such that this so-called mixed ability teaching would not necessarily overcome the problem of labelling and self-fulfilling prophecies.

Teachers reported in Evans 2006, that unlike the parents of high achieving students who will sometimes check on the progress of their children, the parents of low achievers seldom do so.

Students in the low streams, however, regularly received negative evaluations from their teachers. Parent's reactions to their child's placement in the "C" stream were often just as damaging to their self esteem. In short, according to Kelly (1978) we have come to recognise the significance of what some have called the "hidden" curriculum. For certain some social and moral learning and emotional development are as much a function of the organization of the school as of any positive attempts we make to promote them and we have already referred to the particular kinds of social learning and emotional development that are forwarded by streaming.

### **Summary**

The literature review revealed several perspectives on this issue of streaming and the effects it has on students, teachers and the education system on a whole. It focuses especially on the effects of streaming in the lowest streams. It highlighted the inequalities and inequity that exists in the education system as a result of this streamed culture in the school and it also gives the reader an insight into the challenges teachers are faced with in teaching students of the lowest streams. It must be mentioned as well that the literature review informed my research questions, interview guide and the methodology among other things. Without having a literature review this study will definitely lack focus and direction. In the chapter that follows the methodology used to execute this study will be discussed.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

This section outlines the process which was adhered to in the design and implementation of this research project geared towards studying the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest stream in a

primary school in central Trinidad. This research is intended to gather rich, thick descriptions of the main issues faced by the teachers of the lowest streams. In this chapter we discussed the design chosen for this study, the sampling procedure followed, the sample size and how the participants were selected, as well as a profile of each participant. There is also information about data collection and data analysis procedures followed in this research and finally there is a section detailing the researcher's experience in doing this project, as well as a short explanation of the ethical considerations and the limitations and delimitations of this study.

The two research questions that will be operationalized are:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?
2. What do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students of the lowest streams?

## **Design**

According to Mertens (1998) in her book "Research methods in education and psychology", qualitative methods are used in research that is designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific programme, practice or setting. For this reason, this qualitative approach was used for the purpose of this study. This approach enabled the researcher to gather data concerning the personal experiences of the teachers in their day to day teaching of students of the lowest stream classes.

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual context- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For the

purpose of this study I used semi structured interviews together with some observation. However mainly the information from the interviews were used in order to answer the research questions.

## **Sampling procedure**

### ***Purposive sampling***

Purposive sampling is a valuable kind of sampling for special situations. It is used in exploratory research or in field research. It selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. With purposive sampling the researcher never knows whether the cases selected represent the population. Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation. The purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of types (Neuman, 2006).

For my study three teachers from standards one – three, who have been at the school for over five years and teaching the lowest stream for over three years consecutively, were selected. This sample was chosen because it will focus on the younger students who the literature sees as the ones most affected by streaming. The sample of teachers that will be used have also been teaching the lowest streams for a number of years and therefore are in the best position to give the views of the challenges being faced by the teachers in the lowest streams and share with us there experiences.

### ***Sampling size***

Three teachers (3) from a staff of twenty three (23), including the principal, vice principal and two heads of departments. Each teacher for the sample is a teacher of the lowest stream class.

## **Selection of the participants**

For the purpose of this study, three teachers that have been at the school for over five years and teaching the lowest streams for over three consecutive years were chosen. This purposive sample was chosen because the researcher believes that they will have the required information that will be relevant to answering the research questions. These three teachers are quite familiar with the culture and internal running of the school as it relates to streaming of students at the different levels. They are also quite familiar with the school's screening policies, especially as it relates to the placement of students.

## **The Participants**

### **Participant 1**

The standard one teacher who was given the pseudonym "Shelly" has been in the teaching service for about thirteen (13) years and highlighted the fact that she has always been a teacher of the lowest stream. All the schools she taught in before had a culture of streaming. She has never worked in a school where streaming did not exist. This teacher was able to compare the children of the A and C streams because she has two daughters who were students of the A stream classes. She recently completed her bachelor's degree in Guidance and counselling and she voiced her preference of wanting to teach the lowest streams because she believes that they need the assistance most.

### **Participant 2**

The standard two teacher who was given the pseudonym "Carl" also has over fourteen years experience being a teacher and is quite familiar with teaching the lowest streams, especially since he was only given an A stream once in his over ten years at the school. He comes with a lot of experience now in teaching the lowest stream classes because previously he taught adult mathematics

classes for individuals who dropped out of school. He was proud to let me know that he got a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate at the adult mathematics CXC exam in the years that he taught this course. He has a bachelor's degree in primary school teaching from UNB and is one of the most punctual and regular member of staff.

### **Participant 3**

The standard three teacher, who for the purpose of this research was given the pseudonym "Paul" also comes with a lot of experience in teaching the lowest streams because he has been an adult / evening class teacher for many years and has also taught YTEPP classes. He is a trained teacher, and from observation uses a lot of technology in his classroom. He has been a teacher for over twelve years and has only taught another stream once. He voiced his opinion against streaming in the school because he believes it places a lot of stress on these teachers who continuously get the lowest stream classes and feels stigmatized by the other, so called A' Class teachers.

### **Data collection**

This study employed the use of semi-structured interviews to collect rich thick data. This was chosen because according to Neuman, 2006, face to face interviews have the highest response rates.

Interviewers can also observe the surroundings and can use non verbal communication and visual aids, as well as can use extensive probe questions.

The Interviews were conducted face to face and was audio taped when consent was granted from the principal and the three teachers to be interviewed. Notes were made during the interview sessions in an attempt to capture what the researcher notices in terms of physical appearance, gestures and other relevant information necessary for this study that was not asked in the interviews. This study using qualitative research took place in the natural settings employing a combination of observations, interviews, and document reviews (Wiersma, 1995). Interviews were conducted in the school's

computer room and one took place in the classroom during lunch time. The researcher being a teacher of the school in the “B” stream was in a strategic position to make observations and was able to verify some of the observations made by the teachers.

According to Mertens (1998) “we acquire information about people and things through collecting data. Data collection is the vehicle through which researchers collect information to answer the research questions and defend their conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from the research. The collection of data allows researchers to anchor what they wish to discuss in the empirical world”.

For the purpose of this study interviews were mainly used to collect data because it was the most appropriate method to collect the data needed to answer the research questions which were:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?
2. What do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students in the lowest streams?

These semi- structured interviews were designed to obtain unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed and to find out about “a thing” that the researcher was unable to observe themselves (Stake, 2010). The interview sessions were semi structured because although I had a prepared instrument, based on the interviewee’s response the researchers at times had to either rephrase questions or ask the same question in another way if the individual being interviewed was misunderstanding the question being asked. Semi structured interviews allows for such flexibility in an interview hence the reason why it this interview style was chosen.

It must be mentioned here that according to Stake, interviews should be tailored to the individual person and often should be conversational, with the interviewer asking probing questions to clarify and refine the information and interpretation. This was followed in this research and open ended questions were asked for the interviewee just to comment and tell their story at times.

The use of semi structured interviews was intentional because it allowed the researcher more flexibility in wording questions in the interview and it allowed for some structured questions for the collection of information for the pointing questions that needed to be answered. This format according to Merriam 1998 allows for the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.

The main purpose of an interview according to Merriam 1998 is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is in and on someone's mind and to find out those things that we cannot observe... we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of the observer. The purpose of interviewing then is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Merriam recommends interviews because she believes it is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals. Thus this statement by Merriam just validated the reason of a case study being the best choice for my study.

There is also need to mention that according to Best and Khan 2006, the key to effective interviewing is establishing rapport. This skill is somewhat intangible, including both a personality quality and a developed ability. How much the subject is willing to reveal and the attitudes expressed will depend on the rapport established by the researcher. Best and Khan also made mention that validity is greater when the interview is based on a carefully designed structure ensuring that the significant information is elicited. Reliability, or the consistency of response, may be evaluated by restating a question in slightly different form at a later time in the interview.

As a data gathering technique, the interview has unique advantages. In areas where human motivation is revealed through actions, feelings, and attitudes, the interview can most be effective. In the hands of a skilful interviewer, a depth of response is possible that is quite unlikely to be achieved through other means.

It must be considered though that the issue of interview bias is constant because the objectivity, sensitivity and insight of the interviewer are crucial, this procedure is one that requires a level of expertness not ordinarily possessed by inexperienced researchers (Best & Khan, 2006). Keeping these things in mind the researcher has limitation and or sources of error that has to be considered when gathering data especially in the form of interviews. Best and Khan (2006) makes the statement that new researchers (as myself) need to be aware of the potential pitfalls in the gathering and analyzing of data. Issues such as confusing statements with facts, failure to recognize limitations, careless or incomplete data entry and the researcher's unconscious bias, are all issues to consider when collecting and analyzing your data.

### **Data collection instrument**

An Interview guide with lead and probe questions were used. Interviewees were asked questions related to:

- years of service in the teaching service
- years teaching in the lowest stream classes
- the class size

what are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?

- parental involvement experienced in these classes
  - level of job satisfaction felt by the teachers
  - classroom challenges
- 
- suggestions for better performance of students
  - Administration's support.
  - What do you think is required to be better able to meet the needs of these students
- } what do teachers perceive to be the needs of students?

These questions, in an interview style were used to answer research questions one and two which were operationalized. This style of interviewing was used to gather the rich thick data needed in response to the research questions.

To ensure accuracy member checking was employed. Member checking according to Cresswell 2008 is the process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account. The data and unclear interpretations will be taken back to the participants to ensure accuracy.

### **Position of the researcher**

According to Lichtman (2009) the researcher is the conduit through which information is gathered and filtered. As discussed in our lectures and as seen in the literature, the researcher plays a pivotal role in the qualitative research process. Data are collected, information is gathered, settings are viewed and realities are constructed through his or her eyes and ears (Lichtman, 2009).

This researcher is a teacher at the school, teaching the “B” stream standard three class. This places me in the position to observe both the “A” and the “C” stream classes because I am placed in the middle of both classes which is only separated by blackboards. I am also in the position to observe what actually takes place on a daily basis and I am also frequently spoken to about the plight of the lowest stream teachers. We often have informal conversations as to the issues they are faced with daily. This is one of the reasons why I decided to do this study to formally gather information that is researched and is relevant to this school.

Further, this qualitative researcher is responsible for analysing the data through an iterative process that moves back and forth between data collected and data analysed. Finally, the qualitative researcher interprets and makes sense of the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), as what was done in the data analysis, presentation of findings and discussion.

### **Researcher’s Experience**

The research topic was first taught off after attending my first research seminar in September of 2012. Looking at the presentations of these budding researchers wondering whether I would be able to execute such a presentation, became of utmost interest and a top priority for me. I knew since then that I wanted to pursue research on streaming. Was this entire concept of streaming effective? Was it having a positive or negative impact overall? Was it beneficial for all the parties involved or was it just a way for schools to inculcate inequality, where the talented improved and the not so talented fell by the way side? All these questions became of great concern for me.

As time went on and we proceeded to do quantitative and qualitative research the importance of doing something you where passionate about became more real. Although I knew I wanted to do something related to streaming, it was quite difficult to come up with my research topic. At the end

of our first academic year, in our final class for that semester with our course lecturer we were urged to start putting our minds focused on our research projects. We were also given the opportunity to ask for help in phrasing our topic into something researchable. I did seek advice and was settled with the topic of how does streaming impact on students in the primary school. I really wanted to explore whether streaming was effective and to what extent.

However, as time went on and we were given the names of our supervisors, I realized that this topic needed to be narrowed and defined more specifically. After my first meeting with my supervisor my topic was changed to the challenges faced by students in the lowest streams of the school. If one were to reflect on work done in quantitative and qualitative research you would realize that the mini research projects done, really gave you a sneak preview of what is to come.

After gathering literature on the topic since October last year, more information surfaced and hence the reason for the final change in the research topic to “the experienced faced by teachers in the lowest stream in a primary school in central Trinidad”. Although I had first intended to do my research based on student’s views of being in the lowest streams because of time constraints it was a bit more challenging to interview students and it took a longer time to get the approvals. Therefore I decided to do the experiences of these teachers and let them give me their opinion as to what these students really require.

Acquiring local information on streaming was challenging. Weeks were spent gathering information and then grouping information collected into topics relevant to this study. There were visits to the Port of Spain library when the library at campus did not yield sufficient, current information. The literature review and background proved to be most challenging to me. After my research seminar in April of 2014, taking into consideration the comments made, interviews were done. The transcribing and coding of the information also proved to be time consuming and challenging. However, I am

now convinced that this research project will yield the results desired of answering the research questions and be of some utility to the school and this researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the most crucial part of qualitative research and any research as a matter of fact. Qualitative data analysis consists of “ working with data, organizing them, and breaking them into manageable units, sanitizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learnt and deciding what you will tell others” (Bogden & Biklen,1992). The main issue in analyzing the data is to make sense of the data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Patton, 1990).

According to Best and Khan (2006) the first step in analyzing qualitative research involves organizing the data. The interview data, for instance, was organized according to the individual respondents. Once the data was organized, the researcher can now move on to the second stage of analyzing the data, description. The researcher has to describe the various pertinent aspects of the study including the setting, the individuals being studied, and the viewpoints of the participants and

the effects of activities on the participants (Best & Khan, 2006). Some of this was already done in the methodology where the participants were profiled and the setting of the research site described.

Once the data has been analyzed and described, only then the researcher can begin the final and most crucial step of the analysis which is interpretation of the data collected. This is where the researcher attempts to gain meaning from what was collected (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process involved transcribing the data verbatim, then coding it, then categorizing it into themes. The interviews that were recorded were transcribed, ensuring that the participant's actual words were captured. When all the interviews were transcribed and printed, the detailed process of analyzing the data was followed.

The transcripts were read several times and suitable codes were recorded in the margins provided. According to Miles and Huberman, 1994, codes are "tags or labels" assigned the "chunks" of the data collected. One colleague from the masters in education programme assisted me in carefully rereading the transcripts and coded data.

The researcher then grouped similar codes into categories or themes to reflect the purpose of the study and the research questions to be answered. The categorizing of the data revealed patterns as certain terms and phrases kept resurfacing in the transcripts. As a result of the reoccurrence of these patterns, themes were created. The themes were then presented in a tabular and narrative style using some of the raw conversations transcribed from the participants. The findings were summarized based on the research questions.

### **Ethical considerations**

- ▶ Permission to conduct research has been sought from the three (3) teachers and the Principal.

- ▶ Participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the research and their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time.
- ▶ Participants were assured that anonymity and confidentiality of their identities and information will be preserved.

### **Limitations and delimitations**

Limitation:

- ▶ Time constraints – if time permitted the researcher would have been able to interview some of the students from the lowest streams to hear their views of what they experience being a student in the lowest stream.
- ▶ Unable to use the teachers from standards four and five because students after standard three are in exam mode and teachers are unwilling to spend time doing an interview. Secondly, after standard three the lowest stream is usually split into two classes A and B. students who did not reach the thirty percent mark at their end of term test are asked to repeat the level. Therefore the students in the standard four and five classes do not truly represent the students in the lowest stream classes.
- ▶ Delimitation :

- ▶ Information gained from this study cannot be generalized. This study was only done with the teachers from one school hence the reason why the findings of this research cannot be generalized.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Data Analysis**

This research project being based on a qualitative design begins with a preliminary exploratory analysis of the data to obtain a general sense of the data, record ideas, thinking about the organization of the data, and considering whether you need more data (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell

2008, the further process of analysing text in qualitative research begins with the coding of the data. Coding is the process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes. The researcher made sense of the data, divided it into segments, labelled the segments with codes, examine the codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes.

This qualitative process was employed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?
2. What do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students in the lowest streams?

When this part of the qualitative process was completed, thick, rich descriptions of the data was written in a narrative style, which follows this section. Tables summarizing the findings alongside the research questions and themes can be viewed in the appendix.

Therefore the first and second research questions will be analysed and the findings presented. The data collected here is most rich and descriptive.

## **Presentation of findings**

### **Research question: 1. What are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?**

The first research question attempts to discover the challenges these teachers face in being a teacher in the lowest stream for a consecutive number of years. On analysing the data collected from the interviews four main themes surfaced as challenges affecting these teachers of the lowest streams. These themes are learning problems among students, behavioural problems impacting on learning; parental involvement varies according to level and stress of the job.

#### **Learning problems among students**

Paul, Shelly and Carl all made reference to learning problems as the greatest challenge in teaching the lowest streams. Paul highlighted that the students in the lowest streams are:

“Lethargic, they lack focus and they cannot concentrate”.

He believes that as a result of these signs these children will have presenting learning problems because they lack the necessary ingredients to perform well. Learning problems in another interview was focused on the fact that these children are expected to do the same curriculum as the students of the A streams although they are challenged with the basic skills. Carl stated that:

“They can’t even reach the basic standard, but we have to finish the curriculum just like everybody else, we have to cover everything, but nobody wants to know that at the beginning you have a half a class who can’t add, who can’t spell, and who can’t even put a sentence together”.

All teachers interviewed also expressed the sentiment that the children with the behavioural problems are also the children identified as having learning problems. The teachers also made a connection with learning problems, behavioural problems and the home environment. Shelly was quoted as saying that:

“Personally over my years teaching, in my experience, the children who behave badly are the same children who have the reading problems, spelling problems, mathematics problems and these are the same children, who don’t have a stable home”.

Carl also made reference to the link between learning and behavioural problems, stating:

“The lower streams have reading problems, computation problems, attention problems, behaviour problems, the whole span of problems... everybody have a problem”.

It should also be mentioned here that all three teachers also made a comparison of the level of learning among the streams. For example, Carl stated that:

“the A’ stream students are more focused, they actually know more than the topic you are going to teach, some of them they finish work faster, they need more activities, they want task all the time”.

On the other hand, Shelly and Paul highlighted that the students in the lowest streams lack the basic skills, they have serious difficulties in learning and they are believed to come to the class lacking the basic skills required at the particular level.

It must be mentioned that these children are obviously performing poorly academically because they are placed in the lowest streams, which in itself tells the teacher and parents that these children are having difficulties in learning. All three teachers also expressed their concern that these students may not only have difficulties with learning but they may also have psychological and mental issues that should be addressed as well if they are to perform better academically.

### **Behavioural problems impacting on learning**

As mentioned earlier, these students in the lowest streams have behavioural problems as well. Carl, shell and Paul expressed the same view. Shelly stated that:

“These are the children who are involved in the confusion, the chaos and the fights. These are the children who normally give the discipline problems”.

Carl can be quoted as saying:

“I don't know why these classes have the more aggressive children all the time, you would have the ones who don't have no control over their emotions and so you get them grouped together so that is a problem we always have”.

It is therefore quite apparent that these students in the lowest streams challenge the teacher with discipline problems which makes it difficult to teach them. Teachers even felt that a lot of the challenges in the classroom of the lowest stream are discipline or behaviour related. Shelly also mentioned that time spent dealing with discipline issues is so vast that a lot of the teaching time is wasted dealing with behaviour.

Shelly also made a very important link between learning and behavioural problems where they believed that:

“Because the children cannot read and write and spell and do mathematics so well, they tend to stray..... you find them always getting into mischief, they always pinching and can't sit down”.

Teachers are therefore confronted with these two major issues simultaneously, which will and has affected the time teachers have to spend on teaching which eventually affects their ability to complete the curriculum, creating a challenge in their ability to complete the task set out before them. It also reduces the amount of teaching time and individual attention that is much needed in the lowest stream classes.

### **Parental involvement varies according to level**

Teachers also sighted the home environment as another challenge that teachers in the lowest streams are faced with. All three teachers made the comparison between the level of parental involvement in the A streams as opposed to the level of parental involvement in the C' streams. They saw the parents in the A streams being much more involved, if a parent meeting is called in the A stream classes most parents attend. However if a parent meeting in the C stream is called there are only a few parents and the parents you are interested in seeing are not the ones that you see. Students in the lowest stream classes, based on teacher's experiences are from broken or single parent homes. Shelly stated that:

“These are the children who don't have a stable home, these children don't have parents to support them, most of these children have single parents, and so is just mommy or daddy”.

The home environment also posed a challenge based on Paul's observation where he related a lack of nutrition at home as affecting the student's level of learning. He is quoted as saying that:

“Maybe they are not nourished home properly, maybe they are not given vitamins, and maybe they lack exercise or something. Sometimes you see them sleeping on themselves, they are lethargic”.

However Shelly highlighted the fact that if:

“The children have parental support they still do well, when compared to the other children who have no support and no help, you don’t see the growth and much progress”.

Carl said they:

“Don’t revise they don’t do well on weekly test, they don’t do well in their end of term test because when they go home nobody to supervise them. Nobody to tell them revise this or learn this. Nobody to sit with them and make sure they do their home work. These parents like they don’t even bother to check home work and that kind of thing”.

### **Higher levels of stress in the lowest stream**

Paul, Shelly and Carl all felt a lot of stress because of the challenges they are presented with in the lowest stream classes as highlighted early in this discourse. The challenges of behaviour problems, learning problems and a lack of parental support all added stress on the teacher being able to perform their job. Paul felt:

“Frustrated, de-motivated, very little ..... you don’t see much progress”.

He also made the statement another time in the same interview that:

“I feel less satisfied because as an individual, as a teacher, I feel de-motivated..... it is really de-motivating. It stresses me out, it affects my psyche”.

Stress of the job is also a sentiment echoed by Carl and Shelly who believes that having a class of children with discipline and learning problems can be a stressful situation for teachers to constantly have to deal with. Shelly can be quoted as saying:

“You won’t have all these children in one class because you already have to deal with reading problems, now you have behavioural problems too, so it is difficult. I already have to

help the whole class with test, and the hard part is I have a child who couldn't read or write ... so I am doing totally individual work with him”.

Even Carl made comments that echoed similar sentiments stating:

“Like you have a greater level of stress because you have such a deficiency in learning skills and levels..... it is difficult to reach all of them”.

Shelly, Paul and Carl did not feel as though they were appreciated. They felt as though their work was going unnoticed because the progress with these children is slow and below the average level.

In answering this research question where the teachers were asked about the challenges they are faced with in teaching the lowest stream classes, it is quite evident that the responses are linked and related to each other. For example, behavioural problems are linked to learning problems, which are also linked to the child's home environment, all of which adds stress to the teacher in their ability to perform their jobs effectively and cater for the needs of these children.

### **Findings for the second research question, which is “what do teachers perceive to be the needs of students in the lowest streams”?**

For this research question four themes were generated. The themes were the importance of parental involvement, increased resources needed in the lowest streams, individual work necessary for students in the lowest streams and avoiding labelling, as the key needs perceived by teachers. The findings related to these themes will be presented under their respective headings.

#### **The importance of parental involvement**

Teachers believed that these students in the lowest streams need a lot of support at home from their parents in order for them to improve academically and otherwise. Shelly voiced her perception that:

“The naughty children who have that kind of behaviour, they come here from very depressed kind of homes. The parents don’t ever take interest in the child, so you have nobody home pushing anything, you alone doing everything”.

Therefore the teacher believes that for the child to progress there has to be continuity from parents, which it is believed to be a need of these children.

Paul believed that the children also need to be properly nourished at home in order for them to be able to concentrate and focus. He is quoted as saying that:

“They are not nourished.... They are not given vitamins”.

Although some children are given box lunches in school, it is believed that if they are not feed well at home then they will not be able to do home work and assignments and so on.

### **Increased resources needed in the lowest streams**

The children in the lowest stream classes are known to have learning difficulties. Shelly, Paul and Carl feel that in order for them to progress academically they need to employ a lot of resources. All three teachers mentioned the use of different kinds of resources needed for students. Resources like individual classrooms, resource persons, manipulatives, use of technology and time for the planning of individualized work are all resources seen as necessary by these teachers. Shelly said that:

“ A separate remedial teacher, with a separate remedial room, that they will go to two or three times a week, for separate reading, phonics , maths ..... will help a lot”.

All three teachers felt that the children need separate classrooms to be able to focus and concentrate well, away from the distractions existing in their present situation where classrooms are separated by blackboards and not walls. Carl made mention of my class having two children of similar names, so when I call:

“Andy or Brandon, who are constant offenders as his boys they usually listen attentively as if I am speaking to them”.

Paul said that:

“Providing a room that is sound proof, as in a sheltered area where the children can actually hear my voice when I am teaching”.

He sees this as a necessity for these children. He felt that the children are:

“Easily distracted”.

This does not help them to focus especially since earlier he is quoted as saying the children lack focus and concentration.

Shelly, Paul and Carl recognized the need for manipulative as critical for these children. Paul made mention of the need for the use of:

“colourful charts, use of prepared worksheets, use of worksheets that are child friendly in terms of colourful pictures, the wording of the documents, use of group work , use of technology and so on”.

It is believed that these children need these things to aide them in their learning.

### **Individual work necessary for students in the lowest streams**

This is seen as another important need for these students because of the difficulties they are experiencing in their learning. Paul, Shelly and Carl all stated that:

“You have to do a lot of individual work. They need someone over them all the time”.

These teachers expressed their concern that these children are not getting the individual attention that they need. Shelly clearly said that:

“It difficult to afford that time.... That quality time. These things need individual kind of work”.

They also made the comment that as a result of behaviour problems and the time spent dealing with such issues constantly, this even further reduces the time that these teachers have to spend on individual work. Carl stated that:

“You have to stop doing everything and make one set of reports and go to the office and be calling (parents) and be out of your class dealing with these situations”.

Shelly was convinced that individual work was a key need of these students. She stated that:

“I give them individual work that is number one. You have to spend time with them individually and let them bring up their books and you have to go over, you have to repeat instructions, you have to give them examples, you have to basically treat them like a baby”.

Paul said that he believes that the lowest stream classes have to be:

“Extremely small because you need individual kind of work”.

All these teachers recognized and make mention as well of understanding the needs of their students in order to be able to tailor work for their individual learning styles and issues. Shelly, Paul and Carl recognized the fact that this is not the A class. These students, according to Shelly may not be able to do:

“ten... or twelve sentences, I would just give them six, I will just reduce the amount of questions”.

Shelly actually gives an example of how understanding your students can help you to do individual work. She also recognised the fact that these students have vastly different needs than that of the A class students. They therefore have to be taught differently to cater for their individual needs.

### **Avoid labelling these students as being in the lowest stream**

Teachers stressed the importance of not branding (labelling) the students as being in an A, B or C class.

“I don’t know if it is a mindset these children have, sometimes I am asking what class you are in..... when I brand them you all in the star class, so they say what that means sir”.

These are the words of Carl who believes that teachers need to avoid branding or labelling the students.

Paul supported this concern paying special emphasis on the children coming to the class demotivated because of the teacher they are assigned. He makes the statement that:

“They are aware that they are going in teacher “X” class..... so they already know during the August vacation..... when they get the news, they already have the preconceived notion that yes they are slower, yes they going to the dunce class so they come with that, they come being motivated mentally because they know”.

It must be mentioned here that based on researcher observation and experience of over ten years at the school, the teachers are not frequently rotated therefore a teacher is in the A, B or C class for several years and are hardly ever moved. This is evident as well in the number of years that each teacher said that they have taught the lowest stream. Shelly has always taught the lowest stream classes and she has been at the school for over eight years. Carl only taught the A class once in his seven to eight years at the school. Paul has been at this school for over ten years and he has always taught the lowest stream classes except for teaching the second year “A” class once many years ago.

This research question related to what do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students in the lowest stream can be summarized by saying that these teachers highlighted the need for individual work, appropriate and increased resources, parental involvement and avoiding labelling or branding as some of the critical needs of these students in the lowest streams.

In summary, the findings discussed basically revealed that teachers have challenges in teaching the lowest streams, such as learning problems, behaviour problems, lack of parental involvement and stress associated with teaching these classes. They were also able to give some of the needs they perceive students to have and offered some of the strategies they resorted to help with their daily challenges posed by these students. In the upcoming chapter, the discussion will give you a more concise review of the findings and what the literature said in relation to these findings.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams**

The teachers were asked about the challenges they are faced with in teaching the lowest stream classes. The responses were linked and related to each other. The behavioural problems were related to learning problems, which was also tied into the child's home environment. These issues were believed to add stress to the teacher in their ability to perform their job effectively and to be able to fully cater to the needs of these children who are in the lowest stream classes.

Shelly, Paul and Carl echoed the belief that teachers of the lowest stream experience behavioural problems. Based on their experience they recognise that these children who are identified as having learning problems are the same students who have a lot of behavioural issues. Taylor, 1993 states that

teachers preferred to teach students that are responsive, motivated and college bound (high ability pupils). This is because they tend to view low ability pupils as presenting more problems in terms of discipline and therefore more difficult to teach.

All three teachers made a comparison between the lowest and the highest stream classes. Shelly commented that although she never taught an A stream class, she had two daughters who were in the A classes and she felt that they were more on task and were only given work with little explanation. However in the lowest stream class students lack the basic skills and exhibit a lot of behavioural problems that requires a lot of time to resolve the situation which creates a loss of teaching time. According to Zevenbergen, all teachers in all classes recognised that there were qualitatively different learning environments for the upper streams than for the lower streams. The upper streams were more on-task whereas there were considerable behaviour management issues in the lower streams (Zevenbergen, n.d).

From the range of comments offered by students in both streams, the ethos in the lower streams acts as a significant barrier to learning mathematics in terms of the depth of knowledge being presented as well as the disruptive behaviour (Zevenbergen, n.d). All teachers support this view that behavioural problems affect these students ability to learn. This is also reflected in the inability of the teacher to complete the curriculum because of the wastage of time to discipline and the student's difficulties with learning.

Teachers reported in Evans 2006, that unlike the parents of high achieving students who will sometimes check on the progress of their children, the parents of low achievers seldom do so. This is also an issue for Shelly, Paul and Carl because they too recognize that based on their experience these are the students whose parents do not have the time to support and work with them. These parents most times are single parents who have to work to support their family and do not have the

time for their children. Teachers recognize that the children who have the support from their parents progress well and develop better academically than those who do not have the parental support at home.

Shelly explains that those parents who *need* to come to the school to check on their child's progress, don't usually come". She revealed the assumption that one of the main reasons for involving parents is to remediate the students and have continuity at home for these students of the lowest streams to progress. It is assumed that involved parents bring a body of knowledge about the purposes of schooling to match institutional knowledge. Unless they bring such knowledge to the school, they themselves are thought to need education in becoming legitimate participants.

Administrators too, are frustrated by a lack of parental involvement" (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Parents and the home environment are seen by these teachers as playing a key role in their students learning. Carl, Shelly and Paul believe that if they get the support of their parents at home they will see progress in all areas of learning and development. However, Shelly expressed her concern that only a few parents are motivating their children to do better to go to a higher stream.

Shelly linked the home environment to the students learning in school. She believed that these children who have reading and spelling and mathematics challenges are the same children who do not come from a stable home. These teachers made the statement that these children in the lowest streams usually comes from low socio economic backgrounds, however studies done in the UK suggest that working class parents may accept the allocation of their children to lower sets in the belief that "teachers know best". Middle class parents might be more likely to complain if their children are allocated to lower sets and to pressurise teachers to evaluate their children more positively (Hallam and Toutounji, 1996 ).

Teachers who were allocated low-achieving classes at Werribee Secondary College say they developed stress, anxiety and depression after the school introduced a ‘‘like-achievement’’ grouping model in 2000 (Toscano, 2013). Shelly, Paul and Carl all expressed the same feelings of stress because of this streamed culture’s existence in this school. They believe that they work harder and have to deal with learning and behavioural problems in a class full of students who are challenged with learning. Shelly, Carl and Paul also made mention of the fact that progress is slow and not noticeable. They are therefore seen by the other teachers as not making any progress with their classes, they feel as though they are not appreciated and valued as part of the staff. This makes them frustrated, de-motivated and affects their ‘‘psyche’’.

### **What do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students in the lowest stream?**

In looking at this research question four themes were generated by the researcher. That of parental involvement being a critical need of these students in the lowest stream, resources used for students will also be discussed, individual work is also a need for these students as well as the need to avoid labelling or branding.

Oakes at el 1985 argue that more school resources are allocated to higher streams, however these teachers believe that the students in the lowest streams need to use a lot of resources that are colourful and attractive, simply worded and should integrate the use of technology for them to be able to meet the needs of these students. Therefore they require more resources than the higher streams based on these teachers experiences. It is also the observation of the researcher that these

students who evidently have difficulties with learning require the use of a lot of concrete resources to be able to effectively grasp concepts.

Carl commented on the need to avoid branding or labelling of students. Shelly and Paul believed that they are stigmatized as the C class teacher or the teacher of the lowest stream. They feel as though the A class teachers feel superior to them because they are seen as the ones bringing the fame and glory to the school and the C class students as the ones that are badly behaved and learning challenged. Di Martino 2005 stated that “research has shown lower self esteem for students in lower streams. Streaming creates elitism, sets low expectations for low stream students as well as teachers and encourages segregation”.

Labelling theorists argue that positively labelled students will be encouraged to improve their performance, while negative labels will generate reduced self confidence and or increased rebellion among working class students leading to the limited educational achievements. Paul voiced his concern that these children in the lowest streams come de-motivated mentally because they know that they are going to the lowest stream class, the “dunce” class or the slow class. They therefore do not set high expectations for themselves and not even their parents do. This is reflected in the way they behave and perform in their work.

Based on the researcher’s observation these teachers do not have high expectations from these students because they already perceive that these children can’t perform beyond a certain level and hence they come to the class with low expectations. This is seen where the teachers said that they try to avoid labelling the students but the students know that they are in the C class and act accordingly. Their experience is that the parents are the ones who label the classes. Hargreaves study done in the 1960’s argue that lower set students were labelled as failures and the system of setting created the

conditions for the self fulfilling prophecy in the allocating of students to lower streams, the teacher actually created the conditions which ensured failure.

Shelly, Carl and Paul voiced their opinion that they have to do a lot of individual work in the lowest streams because the students have a lot of varying abilities. Teachers felt that they had to meet the students individually to be able to understand where they are at and to tailor the work to meet there needs. According to the National Centre for learning disabilities, on a daily basis, teachers face multiple challenges in the classroom. One of those challenges is teaching a group of students with varying abilities so that everyone can learn grade-level skills and content. This means that while teaching to the group, you have to keep in mind the needs of individual learners. This is especially important for those students with learning disabilities (LD) in your classroom.

According to the OECD's report in 2008, one way of improving performance and preventing dropout is to identify at-risk students early and take action quickly. Based on what teachers have said, as a teacher of the lowest stream we have to understand our students in order for us to be able to meet them at their needs. As a researcher it is my observation that as teachers you have to first identify the needs of your students and plan appropriately in order to be effective. It must be mentioned that the teachers interviewed were of the view that they need more time for individualized planning, especially for the students of the lowest stream classes.

Woods (2006) states that, "teachers must attend first to their lack of confidence by offering opportunities for them to experience small successes. Individualizing assignments, breaking objectives into smaller components, trying experimental assignments, and using all types of learning aides and resources may encourage such students. These statements made by Woods really encompasses what these teachers believe would be helpful for these students. Although presently they employ the use of some resources, they believed that there is much more that can be done in this

area. They do employ the use of technology currently, but there is room for them to have more resources and even a collection of videos that can most evidently enhance their work and the students learning experiences.

Although teachers did not make mention of the issue of the teachers continuous placement in a particular stream, the researcher on looking at teachers years of experience and attendance leave, the findings put forth by Boaler et al (1997) that indicates that teachers with the greatest amount of experience are more frequently allocated to teach the pupils of higher ability. This is true to some extent at this school because four out of the seven A class teachers are teachers at the school for over fifteen years, who have exemplary attendance records and have been teaching those streams for over ten years, which indicates their level of experience in those classes.

This discussion on the finding of this research which was mainly supported by the literature has been developed surrounding the themes generated by the interviewees and the researcher. The challenges faced by teachers and the perceived needs of the students in the lowest streams were discussed and in the upcoming chapter recommendations to assist with these findings will be made in an attempt to reduce the challenges that these teachers are faced with on a daily basis.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research teachers were faced with four main challenges in being a teacher of the lowest stream class. The first main challenge was that of learning problems or what is referred to as having difficulties in learning. The second main challenge was that of behavioural problems, which was commonly been related to learning problems both in the literature and in the research findings from the teachers interviewed. Thirdly, they highlighted the issue of the home environment's impact on students as another challenge. Lastly, teachers saw their level of stress on the job as another challenge that they are continuously faced with.

In an attempt to deal with the issue of learning problems, it is recommended that:

1. More diagnostic testing is done by teachers. Testing should be done frequently to assess the level at which students are working and more individualized planning can be done more effectively.

Kelly (1978) argues that students who have learning difficulties also have reading problems that affects all other areas of learning. He further states that even pupils with above average ability in other areas can be seen experiencing difficulties in learning basic skills such as reading.

2. It is also recommended that there should be someone trained in reading to assist these teachers in the lowest stream classes especially. Presently on staff we have one teacher who is trained in remedial reading. If an extra teacher is created at the school, she can be used as a reading teacher throughout the school. At a staff meeting two terms ago this teacher volunteered her service to do such a job because she was previously engaged in such an exercise in her previous school.

It must be mentioned however, that recently the Ministry of Education has sent a reading specialist to assist those children with reading difficulties. However only one person was sent and she is only dealing with the first year to standard one students. Therefore the need is still there for the standard two to five classes.

3. If this need of a reading teacher is materialized then teachers can also have some non- contact time that can be used to better plan for classes and do more individualized planning that is critical in the lowest stream classes.
4. Students with difficulties in learning also need a lot of resources in order to enhance their chances of learning. To address this issue we need the employment of a variety of resources and resource personnel. It is recommended that in addition to the resources teachers already

employ, administration will be asked to make a list of resources compiled by teachers of the lowest streams that they deem necessary for these students to aid in their learning.

Presently, the MOE are allowing schools to do their own purchasing of materials and resources, so this recommendation has already been sort from administration and has been considered. However, charts are not part of the listing for resources. Therefore it is further recommended that school funds raised can also be used to assist these teachers in their quest for resources to improve students' performance.

5. Students with learning difficulties are also known to have mental, behavioural and social issues that need to be addressed. Teachers recommended the increase intervention of guidance counselors and social workers to assist some of these students in remediation of some of their issues. Recently two new guidance officers and one new social worker visited the school and it is hoped that they will be effective from next term.
  
6. In relation to the behavioural problems that the teachers are experiencing, it is recommended that the discipline matrix be enforced. A discipline matrix was presently developed with the input of teachers and it is hoped that with the recent change in administration that teachers will uphold and put this into effect. There should also encourage the continued and increased visits by the community police to address students who have behavioural problems and their parents.
  
7. It is also recommended that teachers encourage parental participation in school. An open day once per academic year, as was done five years ago should be reintroduced. The news letter we circulate should include an article with helpful practices at home for parents to educate them on ways that they can assist their children.

8. The challenge of being stress out on the job can be addressed by rotating teachers if streaming is to continue. This will reduce the level of continued stress on these teachers who are continuously placed in the lowest stream classes.

Findings from the second research question that dealt with the needs those teachers saw that these children had were that of greater parental involvement, increased resources, individual work and the need to avoid labeling students as being the children in the lowest stream classes. The issue of resources, individual work and parental involvement was already addressed in the previous section. However in terms of labeling, it is recommended that:

1. Teachers will need some professional development exercises on how to motivate there students. Teachers will also be encouraged to take up the suggestion by the guidance counselor, where we were asked to make a list of things that we see necessary for them to speak to the students in your class about.

These recommendations are based on the present culture in the school, as well as on discussions with the present administration. It must be made clear though that the present Principal and Vice Principal are acting and there may be changes coming in September which may have an effect upon the execution of these recommendations.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, although there are vast amounts of research that points to the negative impact streaming has on students, it is quite difficult to convince teachers of this. The school strives with the existence of streaming, however with time and the MOE stressing that there should not be streaming in the primary school, it is hoped that in time this entire issue of streaming will be non-existent. Presently, based on the research finding it is quite evident that teachers of the lowest stream classes have to bear the brunt of this streamed culture's existence in this school. It is hoped that based on discussion held with the principal and heads of departments, that they are aware of the challenges and the struggles of these teachers and will make some effort to reduce the mounting levels of stress these teachers are experiencing. However, it is my belief that if mixed ability classes exist, some of the ills in this school can be reduced. The stress experienced by teachers, students and parents will also be addressed to some extent.

## *Appendix C*

**Tables showing a summary of the findings in relation to the research questions.**

RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	FINDINGS

<p>1. What are the challenges faced by teachers of the lowest streams?</p>	<p><b>Learning Problems among students</b></p> <p><b>Behavioural problems impacting on learning</b></p> <p><b>Parental involvement varies according to level</b></p>	<p>All three teachers made reference to the fact that students in the lowest streams generally have learning problems that presents a challenge at the inception of a class that has been placed in the lowest stream. There where over fifteen codes noted that had reference to this theme.</p> <p>Findings from interviews done by three teachers at the school revealed that a lot of the students in the lowest stream exhibited behavioural problems which were linked by two of the three teachers to their learning problems.</p> <p>Findings indicate that all three teachers believe that the child's home environment if closely followed will reveal the child's performance in class. These teachers are of the view that parental support and involvement at home and in school does have an impact on the child's level of performance. There were over fifteen codes in support of this particular theme being a challenge for the teacher. This is because teachers based on their experience, students who are placed in the lowest streams usually comes</p>
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	<p><b>Higher level of Stress in the lowest streams</b></p>	<p>from home backgrounds that lacks supervision and support which will affect their academic performance in schools.</p> <p>These three teachers all had feelings of stress being a teacher of students who have such a wide range of issues that has to be dealt with on a daily basis. They particularly linked these feelings of stress to not being able to meet the needs and expectations of the curriculum and students. The issue of stress was also linked to a lack of time to do individual work which is much needed in the lowest streams.</p>
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RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME	FINDINGS
<p>2. What do teachers perceive to be the needs of the students in the lowest streams?</p>	<p><b>The importance of Parental involvement</b></p> <p><b>Increased Resources needed in the lowest streams</b></p> <p><b>Individual work necessary for students in the lowest streams</b></p> <p><b>Avoid</b></p>	<p>All three teachers confirm that parental involvement plays a key role in students' progress. They made mention of the fact that based on their experience students who are supported at home tend to perform better and show more progress in all areas of the academic development.</p> <p>All three teachers highlighted the fact that these children need individual classrooms, resource persons, manipulative, use of technology and time for the planning of individualized work.</p> <p>The teachers voiced their concern that in the lowest stream these students need a lot of individual work because of their difficulties in learning. Most times teachers do not have that time available to cater for these children with varying abilities, for this requires a lot of time for planning.</p> <p>Teachers believed that they avoid labelling the</p>

	<p><b>labelling these students as being in the lowest streams</b></p>	<p>children, however they see evidence that the parents are the ones who make mention of the labels assigned to classes. One teacher even made mention that those students come demotivated because of the class and the teacher they are assigned to.</p>
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