

Experiences of Remedial Tutors
in a High-Risk Government Secondary School in Trinidad
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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of two remedial tutors employed by the Ministry of Education to work with remedial students in one high-risk government secondary school in Trinidad. This issue was considered important for research as these tutors are young individuals who were exposed to a single week of training before being sent to the school. A qualitative case study research design was adopted. Insights were drawn from interviews held with both participants. The findings demonstrate that the tutors had challenges in gaining access to resources, dealing with students' indiscipline and short attention spans, lesson preparation and classroom management. They used a variety of professional, personal and institutional coping mechanisms to deal with their classes and gained some support from teaching and administrative staff in carrying out their duties.

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The Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago has embraced the motto: “Excellence in Education”. To achieve this objective, there has been a focus, in many policy documents, on the strengthening of the teaching corps. In the most recent policy document developed by the present government administration, the Medium-Term Policy Framework (MTPF) 2011-2014, there is a distinct focus on literacy development. One of the key areas identified is the development of a “remedial programme in reading and numeracy at the secondary level” (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2011, p. 92). One strategy to improve this, according to the document, is to improve the quality of pedagogy in schools, highlighting the provision of “training and certification of teachers at all levels” (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2011, p. 92). Improving teacher education has been a major issue in other former policy documents of the twin-island state (Ministry of Education, 1993; The Vision 2020 Multi-Sectoral Group, n.d.) and in the newest policy document: the Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2011-2015 (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2012).

Background

The concept of remediation in the field of education is not a new one in the international arena, but has gained a lot of interest in recent years because it is deemed as necessary in assisting students to reach the required levels of educational mastery in order to achieve self-actualization and the expected standards for pursuance of higher-level studies.

Research has shown that remedial education varies from country to country. As a result, the scope of remedial education, the elements that should be included therein and the kind of

students who deemed eligible to participate in remedial programmes will also vary (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Kozeracki, 2002). The findings and conclusions that can be drawn on remedial education in any given context are also relative (Eric, Pevrah, & Cann, 2014).

In the United States, there has been a major thrust in remedial or developmental instruction, as it is otherwise called. The focus has been towards students at the postsecondary level, as it was noted that there was an increase in the number of high school students who are failing college level academic programmes due to their lack of basic skills (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). As a result, many universities and colleges have created remedial or developmental programmes for their students to increase the chances of student success at the tertiary level of study. Developmental education is now a “field of research, policy and practice” (Texas State University, n.d.)

Remedial education, as stated before, is referred to by other names. The more widely used terms are “developmental instruction” and “basic skills instruction”, terms which were developed because of the increasing negative connotation given to the word “remedial” (Parker, Bustillos, & Behringer, 2010). All of these programmes (which differ by state and educational district), however, while referred to by different names, are all geared towards giving supplemental instruction to students who are shown to have deficiencies in the areas of Reading, Writing or Mathematics.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) (2014) has devised a systematic Remedial Education Program (REP) for students in grades 6 to 12 and provides “individualized basic skills instruction” in the skill areas outlined above “to ensure students meet grade level expectations at the middle and high school level” (p.3). This programme has been legalized by the state of Georgia and mandates that all REP teachers “meet the appropriate certification

requirements as defined by the Professional Standards Commission and be fully qualified to teach reading, writing or mathematics” (p. 4). Based on this legal document, any REP teacher in the state of Georgia must be qualified, that is, trained and certified to teach any of the three basic skill areas.

In the School District of the Chathams (2015), another school district found in the United States, the remedial programme is known as Basic Skills Instruction (BSI). It “responds to a need to strengthen reading, writing, and mathematical skills of students who are struggling to meet grade level expectations” (School District of the Chathams, 2015).

In other countries, such as Zimbabwe, a remedial programme was developed at the primary school level when it was realized that there was a reasonable number of pupils in its education system that were not able to pass their examinations at a particular grade level. This programme was introduced as a curriculum innovation to help students who were considered average or below average to attain the required mastery in basic skill areas. In 1982, remedial Mathematics and Reading programmes were introduced in all Zimbabwean primary schools, using teachers who were nominated by each primary school in both subject areas to carry out the programme. Teachers who have been newly appointed to give remedial instruction are trained by more older and more experienced remedial teachers and are required to visit the District Remedial Tutor for guidance on remedial matters. These teachers are also expected to attend in-service courses that are run by personnel from the School Psychological Services and are to share the techniques learnt in these sessions with the teaching staff of their schools. These teachers must consult with the heads of their respective schools, organize times for their scheduled classes and must develop instructional programmes and keep files for the students in their charge. Furthermore, they are expected to keep in constant contact with the children’s

regular class teachers and submit all information them to the District Remedial Tutor who will submit these to the Principal Educational Psychologist. Because the remedial programme for these teachers is so intense, they are exempt from some, if not all extracurricular activities (Ndebele, 2014).

The education system that exists in Wales also justifies the need for remedial programmes. Brooks (2009) argues that these programmes are necessary in order for children with significant literacy difficulties to catch up and get the individualized help and attention that normal, classroom teaching does not usually provide.

The Philippines has also instituted remedial programmes in their education system at the fourth grade level, since the school system expects that students should develop a certain level of fluency in reading at that level that would facilitate their enjoyment of independent reading. In order to prepare remedial teachers to remediate students, fourth-grade teachers must attend a two-day training session in which they learn how to implement the reading programme. They are given a myriad of ideas to engage in reading lessons that will be enjoyable for their students (Abeberese, Todd, Kumler, & Linden, 2013).

Speaking about student underachievement in Jamaican schools, Lewis (2010) states: “Educators and researchers in Jamaica have observed and examined the less-than-desired student performance in English literacy exams over several decades” (p. v). There have also been low grades in Mathematics, caused by early student dropout and low academic achievement in these subject areas at the end of secondary school. In 2007, a Jamaican non-profit network organization called ICT4D Jamaica, in collaboration with Japanese Grass Roots Fund, have begun a remedial programme, infusing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to assist school leavers and dropouts in attaining basic skills and knowledge in

Mathematics and English. The programme had been introduced to ten national vocational training centres and in nine community based organizations. (International Institute for Communication and Development, 2015).

In the local context, remedial education programmes in schools are not as established and continuous as those in other countries. There is, however, an existing Adult Education remedial programme provided by the Ministry of Community Development to help school leavers and adults to attain their Primary School Leaving Certificates (Ministry of Community Development, 2014).

At the secondary school level, remedial programmes were at first spearheaded by the principals of particular schools, in an attempt to assist the students of their schools to attain the necessary skills to achieve academic qualification in their chosen subject areas. Such is the case of the remedial programme that was started in the school which is under investigation in this study. Consequently, The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT), through the Ministry of Education, has, within the past five to ten years, employed many different systems of providing remedial education to its students at the secondary level. Retired teachers were employed on a contractual basis to provide remedial education to schools with high numbers of underachieving students. This lasted for a few years and these teachers were removed. The present governmental administration has introduced remedial instructors and tutors in 2014 and 2015, with an aim to assisting students in the upper school in remediation in Mathematics and English. The remedial instructors tend to be younger, are qualified in their subject area, yet have very little to no teacher training or teaching experience. In addition to teaching upper level classes, these teachers are also given classes at the lower levels and are teaching students who are in need of dire remediation in Mathematics and English, based on their

Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) scores. These teachers are being employed for six months and are then removed from the schools.

Remedial education does not seem to be well researched in the local context. As such, in this researcher's opinion, it is considered to be in a fledgling stage of development in Trinidad and Tobago. Some research has been done on underachieving, struggling readers in the primary school system, but little to no research has been undertaken that explores the experiences of teachers in the remedial programme and how this programme is being executed in the education system currently. The experiences of these teachers can give greater insight into the programme and how it should be executed so that it would be of benefit not only to the remedial teachers who would be employed in the future, but also of meaningful benefit to the students who would be using these services to achieve expected levels of mastery in literacy and numeracy.

The Research Setting

In northern Trinidad, nestled within a suburban community located in the St. George East Educational District, is a secondary school built by the government of Trinidad and Tobago. This school opened its doors to its first intake of students in the year 1976. In the school's initial existence, it was labelled a senior comprehensive school, which meant that the school was not only educating students in academic areas, but also in a full cadre of technical and vocational disciplines at the Fourth and Fifth Form levels, with an aim to preparing students to write the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and the National Examinations Council (NEC) examinations. The students who entered the school at the Fourth Form level came from junior secondary schools, previously built by the government to educate students from the Form One to Form Three levels.

There were many teething problems in the early beginnings of the school. Major infrastructural, timetabling and staffing issues arose and, as time progressed, it was found that the students who were assigned to the school were not progressing well in their schoolwork. Although they were offered a wide range of subject choices, many of the students were deficient in basic English and Mathematics skills. They became frustrated due to their inability to do well in their chosen areas of study. Consequently, there was a rise in the levels of underachieving pupils. This was evidenced by their dropping out of school, manifesting unruly behaviour and their being disillusioned at their inability to access certification in practical craft-oriented subject areas, to which most of the students were drawn due to low academic performance in their previous schools. The administrators of the school realized that there was a need for students to be remediated in basic skills.

A remedial reading programme was implemented in 1982, involving teaching staff from all subject areas. Four intense sessions were held at the school for a period of two months. Students were tested to determine their specific language deficiencies and were assigned voluntary tutors. A similar programme was later instituted by the Mathematics department. In 1984, the government of Trinidad and Tobago took a decision to withdraw underachieving students from writing external examinations. This caused a greater influx of students into the remedial programmes developed by the school. They were eager to take these classes as they enabled them to realize their goals of making them eligible to sit external examinations.

The remedial classes at the Fourth Form level were designed and geared toward assisting students to qualify to sit external examinations at the Fifth Form level. Those students, however, who had entered the Fifth Form level and had still failed to attain the qualifying grades, were then placed in programmes that aimed at helping them to be functionally literate, with no

expectation of their writing examinations in the near future. As the remedial programme grew, teachers of Modern Languages, the Social Sciences, formerly trained Primary level teachers and teachers of Mathematics, Science and Business Studies, along with a few volunteers from other departments, were assigned to teach Remedial Mathematics and English.

In 1989, the school was converted to a secondary comprehensive school, admitting its first intake of Form One students, yet having the heavier student intake at the Fourth Form level. The school continued to offer a wide range of academic and technical/vocational subjects. In the academic year 2000/2001, the Ministry of Education had begun to implement Universal Secondary Education (USE), a system where students were placed in a school of their choice or one chosen for them by the Ministry of Education based on their performance at the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago & United Nations Development Programme, 2006).

After the final phase of de-shifting government-run junior secondary schools to full-day classes in 2007, there was a sharp decrease in the number of students entering the school at the Fourth Form level, which conversely brought about an increase in the number of students who were sent at the Form One level. These students were placed at the school based on their Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) results, which, in some cases, ranked in the thirty percent (30%) range and lower. The students who scored lower than twenty percent (20%) were particularly weak in the areas of Mathematics and English and were some of the most challenging students to deal with in the school. Many came from high-risk areas and were thought to have very obvious learning and reading disabilities and short attention spans. They tended to be very indisciplined and, in many cases, were very disruptive in the classroom setting, as they were not able to handle the work assigned to them at the secondary level.

Consequently, the school administrators had taken the decision, along with teachers, to stream the students who scored lower than twenty percent (20%) into a particular class. Although the students have been streamed into this class particularly because of their deficiencies in Mathematics and English, they also have all of their other subject classes together. This form of remedial streaming is done at the lower secondary school level – from Form One to Form Three.

The students of this class were taught at first by teachers of the school, who were completely overwhelmed by the special needs of the students. With the approval of the senior administration of the school, some of these teachers, in an attempt to get further educational assistance, brought in experienced teachers from the Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA), who helped for a while. After this initiative, the Ministry of Education then employed and sent to the institution a number of remedial teachers in Mathematics and English Language to give special instruction to these classes. Various teaching resources were also purchased by the school to assist them in teaching the students. Furthermore, they were assigned subjects that were more practical in nature, such as the craft subjects. This seemed to have helped the situation somewhat. Other problems arose, as some of the teachers who were sent either had no formal teacher training or were retired teachers who were reemployed by the Ministry of Education to work on a contract basis and had neither the energy nor the required strategies to work with the students who were, at that time, in their charge.

After a few years, the Ministry of Education terminated the contracts of these remedial teachers and teachers of the school were again used to teach these particularly weak students under challenging circumstances. The English Department of the school took the decision to assign two teachers to each remedial class, as it was found that there were distinctions in ability among the students. It was also done to increase the individualized attention that would be given

to a group of students and to assist in helping teachers to manage their classes more effectively. This was not done in the Mathematics Department; one teacher was assigned to an entire remedial class.

As recently as February 2014, two other remedial instructors had been employed by the Ministry of Education and had been sent to teach at the school. The teachers were quite young and inexperienced. Both had had no formal teacher training and had only attended a two-week training course with the Ministry of Education before being employed to teach at the school. Some of the following observations were made of their teaching experiences: there were challenges in classroom management and in getting students to attend classes; one of the teachers was accompanied by a senior teacher to her classes; and there were some difficulties teaching the classes assigned without assistance. This remedial instruction programme was short-lived; it lasted only a few months and the teachers were removed from the school.

Teachers of the school were re-assigned, once again, to give instruction to these students who seemed to have the greatest of difficulty in coping with academic work at the secondary school level. In January of 2015, however, two more remedial tutors, one male and one female, were sent by the Ministry of Education to the school under a contractual arrangement. They had a week of training with the Ministry of Education and were sent to the school to work with the Form Five classes, but they have also been assigned to lower school classes who are in need of remediation in English and Mathematics. The English remedial tutor has been assigned a small group of remedial students at the Form Two level; the Mathematics remedial tutor has been assigned an entire class at the Form One level. Their time at the school is also short-lived, as they have been contracted to tutor the students for six months. Thus far, these tutors have already experienced disciplinary problems with the students and at times find it very difficult to teach

them, as many of them are at frustration level and are unable to cope with the academic programme that other students of the school treat with on a daily basis.

In light of the above, it was felt that the situation regarding the implementation and execution of the remedial programme and the experiences of the tutors in this school warrant further investigation in order to gain a fuller understanding of the issue.

Statement of the Problem

Selvarajan and Asanthagumar (2012) posit that remedial teaching acts as a safety valve for students who have not attained expected levels of academic achievement. It also caters for the diagnosis of specific difficulties and supplies adequate remedial measures and educational support to prevent the reoccurrence of those difficulties in the future.

There is a need for a highly structured and well-monitored remedial education programme in Trinidad. Although there local policy documents that address the issue of remedial education (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2011; Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2012), the proper implementation of these policies does not seem to be evident.

Special care should be given to prepare remedial teachers to deliver specialist remedial instruction to their students, yet it seems that the remedial tutors assigned to the school under investigation are ill-prepared to deliver remedial instruction due to their lack of teacher training and teaching experience.

The ill-preparedness of these tutors can lead to an increase in the low academic achievement of students; therefore there is great need for extensive research in remedial education in the local context.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the experiences of tutors of remedial classes in a high-risk government secondary school in Trinidad. It seeks to gain a fuller understanding of their perspectives on the challenges they face in teaching remedial classes, the mechanisms they use to cope in the classroom, and the support systems and resources that exist, if any, to assist them in classroom instruction.

Research Questions

Grand tour question. What are the experiences of remedial tutors at a high-risk government secondary school in north Trinidad?

Sub questions.

1. What are some of the tutors' perspectives of the challenges faced in teaching remedial classes at the school?
2. What are some of the coping mechanisms of these tutors?
3. What support systems and resources are in place at the school to assist these tutors in their instruction of the students?

All three sub questions will be operationalized in this research.

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, some key terms are defined.

Remedial education is defined as education designed to assist students who have deficiencies in the Language Arts or Mathematics.

A remedial tutor is an individual employed by the Ministry of Education to give instruction to students who have been identified as having deficiencies in the Language Arts and Mathematics.

A high-risk government secondary school in Trinidad is a secondary school that is owned, operated and funded by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This school is one that has a trend of having high numbers of incidences of school violence, indiscipline and other criminal activities among its students.

Expected Outcomes

This study is significant and original in its contribution to research on the subject of remedial education in Trinidad and Tobago. As far as the researcher is aware, there seems to be a lack of research on this topic; therefore, this study will add to the body of literature focused on remedial education in the local context.

This research can also be used to develop plans for a formal and continuous remedial education programme in the local setting and could help curriculum professionals and educational innovation developers to develop educational courses whereby teachers can be suitably qualified and properly certified with the appropriate skills to teach children in need of remediation.

Outline of Study

This chapter outlines the background to the research problem, the research setting, the purpose for the study and the expected outcomes. In the second chapter, the literature review will look at relevant topics that are related to this study. This chapter will seek to highlight the issues that are discussed in the larger body of literature and will assist in giving a larger framework in which to base the study and will inform the research questions outlined in the introduction. The third chapter describes the methodology of the study. It gives insight into the research design, participants, sampling procedures, ethical considerations and describes how data analysis was carried out in this study and the timeline of the research. The fourth chapter shows the results of

the data analysis and presents the findings of the research questions in sufficient detail. The fifth chapter discusses the findings in light of the literature based on remedial education and seeks to give recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Introduction

As was previously stated, what seems to be clear from studies of remedial education programmes in different countries is that there is no set or consistent framework as to how these programmes should be implemented in any given context. The practitioners of remedial education and the services they provide to their students at different levels of the education system, whether primary, secondary or postsecondary, all vary from one country to the next (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Kozeracki, 2002).

Given the nature of the inconsistencies that exist in the literature concerning the setup and execution of remedial education programmes in varying contexts, this researcher chose to ground this study in the larger body of literature by exploring a common topic that is frequently discussed in the literature – that of remedial streaming and tracking and what has been found in the research concerning the benefits and disadvantages of using these class and group placement systems for students. In addition to this, the researcher also chose to explore two other topics that would assist in informing the data analysis of this study. These are the coping mechanisms that remedial teachers use in their teaching and the support systems and resources for remedial teaching. These two topics seek to explore what the larger body of literature says in these areas, as these discussions are directly related to the second and third research questions of this study.

Remedial Streaming and Tracking

In the field of education, streaming is the practice of placing students who are perceived to have similar ability into a particular class or a particular grouping within a class. Streaming is the term used in the United States of America for the grouping of students by ability. In the United Kingdom, it is called tracking. Chen and Goldring (1994) state that this practice of grouping students by ability is one that is widely supported by educators, since it facilitates the exposure of students to content that is in tandem with their levels of understanding and competence. This, in turn, should help teachers to scaffold the information for their students in such a way that the students progress to greater levels of understanding and skill mastery (Slavin, 1990).

The practice of streaming is used in Trinidadian schools and is evidenced by the case of the school under investigation in this study. While in some education systems, settings and institutions, streaming, or “setting” and “ability grouping”, as it is also commonly called, is mandatorily implemented by the state (Boaler, 1997(b)), in other places, it is left up to the discretion of the school to implement based on the peculiar situations and issues that may arise in the classroom (Zevenbergen, 2001). The latter applies to the education system in Trinidad and Tobago; each individual school is allowed to stream their students by class or subject grouping based on their levels of ability.

Many schools seem prone to streaming students at times because it is claimed that teaching can be more effective with the use of the practice than without it. The curriculum can be more accurately targeted to suit the needs of the students; it can also facilitate lesson planning and lesson delivery to students. Lessons can consequently be taught at a pace at which students

are able to follow easily. Mason and Good (1996) claim that teaching was more complex and challenging for teachers whose classes were composed of students of diverse abilities.

Other researchers purport, however, that the practice of streaming widens the gap between the groups of students beyond what would normally be expected (Slavin, 1990). In keeping with the rationale in support of ability groupings, high academic achievers are exposed to a high level of content and a faster pace of learning and lesson delivery, average performers are exposed to the standard curriculum, and lower achievers are given remedial or low level work. Gamoran (1993) and Boaler (1997 (b)) strongly dispute that there is a fundamental difference in the nature and quality of interactions in higher and lower streamed classes. In studying American youth on a large scale, Hoffer (1992) found that higher streamed students advanced in their studies and students in the lower streams were severely affected. Boaler (1997a; 1997b) claims that streaming can have a negative effect on students of varying abilities that are caused by teachers' expectations of the classes, the pacing of lesson delivery and the overall content to be covered.

Teachers of lower and remedial streams often find challenges in teaching their students, claiming that there is difficulty in managing the behaviour of the students. As a result, they blame the students for their disruptive conduct. Gamoran (2000) supports this by saying that low-level classes are often fraught with interruptions and student misbehaviour. Therefore it is in these classes that teachers assign work for their students to be done in their individual seats rather than encouraging oral interaction among them. Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ousten (1979) contend, however, that there is a greater risk of excessive behavioural problems from students if they are all streamed into one class and in that class, there is the strong likelihood that the students would not succeed at school.

Studies also report many differences on the impact of streaming or setting in the classroom. These differences may depend on how streaming is implemented and carried out in each individual school setting. In his research on primary schools, Slavin (1987) reported that there was a lower risk of achievement inequality when the assignment of students to different streams (by group or by class) was subject-specific, that is, based on criteria that was relevant to the subject area and catered to suit the individual needs of each student. A study done in Israel, however, showed that there were higher academic scores for students in differential academic programmes than in undifferentiated ones due to giving incentives to low-achieving students to perform well at a level that was manageable for the students to attain (Ayalon & Gamoran, 2000).

Coping Mechanisms of Remedial Teachers

Lipsky (2010) describes teachers, along with a long list of other public employees, as “street-level bureaucrats”, as they provide services on behalf of the government, uphold and execute the law and distribute public benefits directly to the citizens of the country to which they belong. These employees, according to Lipsky (2010), are policy makers, since they have a direct and major impact on the lives of the people and make daily decisions as to how different people will access public goods and services based on their varying needs and circumstances. In the case of teachers, they are the ones who ultimately decide which students will be streamed or tracked for more advanced studies, and which will require remedial instruction. At the classroom level in any educational system, it is the teachers who decide what exercises, strategies and teaching methods would be best employed to give every child access to the national curriculum and the relevant educational tools and skills they need to become better learners.

These educational decisions are made against a backdrop of a lack of resources, an increasing demand for public services and the nonattainment of teachers' individual goals. This causes these government employees to devise coping mechanisms which will enable them to deal with the day-to-day realities of their workplaces (Lipsky, 2010). These coping mechanisms either assist in making teachers more comfortable in their workplaces, help them to manage the stress that is added due to the pressure of work, or aid with the implementation and delivery of educational curriculum and policies (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014).

In his study of coping mechanisms among teachers, Smith (2012) reported that most teachers either tend to distance themselves from situations that are considered by them to be stressful whenever it was possible, or took actions to confront and deal with problems that presented themselves. Mansfield, Beltman, Price and Mcconney (2012) also identified other coping mechanisms such as problem-solving, seeking for help, the ability to accept failure and relying upon social support networks. Other scholars have classified teachers' coping mechanisms as personal, professional, social, or institutional (Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, Silins, Banfield, & Russell, 2000). These classifications will be examined hereunder.

Personal coping mechanisms are described as teachers' attempting to focus on the benefits derived from challenging situations and conditions in their places of work (Brackenreed, 2011; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000). Teachers are capable of coping when they have a greater understanding of the nature of their work. Based on this understanding, they are able to set realistic goals which they know can be attained. Professional coping mechanisms, however, speak to the level of organization and preparedness that teachers would employ in the performance of their teaching duties. In order to avoid unwanted stress, educators may meticulously plan their work and focus on the mastery of their pedagogical skills, ensuring that

they are well acquainted with their subject content. As a result, there is a high level of planned problem-solving and contingency planning (Yeung, 2012; Brackenreed, 2011). Sharplin, O'Neill, and Chapman (2011) contend that these professional coping skills are only developed in teachers after a prolonged process of professional socialization has taken place.

Social coping mechanisms involve educators utilizing their social networks and affiliations to assist them in dealing with the stresses and challenges of their work situations. It has been found that many teachers talk about their problems at school with their friends and families and employ reflection to cope with varying work conditions (Hawk & Martin, 2011; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000). Coping mechanisms found at the institutional level, on the other hand, are centred on important discussions that take place among colleagues, supervisors, administrators and other formal structures found at the school. These discussions are based on specific problems that educators encounter in their teaching practice. This is seen as a common coping mechanism among educators (Brackenreed, 2011; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000), as it gives them the opportunity to share common experiences and find solutions to problems (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014).

Support Systems and Resources in Schools for Remedial Teaching

Mashau (2000) asserts that it is incumbent upon schools to create learning environments that are conducive to and support the promotion of effective learning. It should be an environment where learners feel appreciated and valued. The curriculum and teaching strategies employed complement the educational readiness of each learner and educators understand the uniqueness of each learner in their classroom. Support services in education are key in addressing the challenges that teachers and learners face; these services must therefore be strengthened become the heart of the teaching-learning process (Department of Education,

2001). In addition, these services assist in helping schools to recognize and address many of the students' learning difficulties. In so doing, students' academic performance can be improved and their social and psychological well-being enhanced (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla, & Sylvester, 2014).

The term "support" has many nuances of meaning, especially in the educational arena. Mittler (2006) views support as something that is added to what already exists in the school setting, such as the provision of extra funds, extra equipment or additional staff. Steyn (1997) defines support, however, as a set of specialized functions that are aimed at improving teaching and learning. These functions are not inherently educational in nature, but can improve the quality and effectiveness of educational activity in the school setting (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008).

Education support may be human, material, or it may consist of other resources (Department of Education, 1997). It may be directed to the learners, teachers, or teaching activities and structures established within a school (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). The focus of education support services is on the strategies employed at the institutional level to overcome barriers to learning and promote academic success (Department of Education, 2001; Smith, 2010; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

At the heart of the school are the teachers, as they are the ones who make contact with the students on a regular basis with the aim of catering to their specific needs and assisting in improving their academic performance. It has been found that the actions of teachers, especially in the classrooms, are key institutional efforts that enhance the success of learners (Tinto 2006-2007). Teachers provide support within a framework of social systems that integrate activities and resources directed towards enhancing student learning into an existing daily class routine (Coleman, 2001; Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2002).

Support services that are designed to assist teachers in their instruction are not limited to pedagogy or teaching practices, but also include the use of varied curricula, differing types of assessment and feedback, and the infusion of technology into teaching practice (Reyneke, Meyer, & Nel, 2010).

Summary of Literature Review

This literature review sought to explore three topics: remedial streaming and tracking, coping mechanisms for remedial teachers and support systems and resources in school for remedial teaching.

In looking at remedial streaming and tracking, researchers confirm that it is a practice that is widely used by teachers, as it attempts to make the planning of curriculum easier as learners of perceived similar ability are grouped together for particular classes and/or particular subjects in order to cater to their educational needs. Others argue, however, that streaming and tracking of any kind assists in widening the educational gap between students, as many times students in a higher level stream or track advance faster than those of a lower stream. The quality of content and the quality of teaching strategies differ vastly in the higher and lower streams in many cases. Educators are also apt to treating students in the remedial stream differently, since there seemed to be a greater risk of behavioural problems arising in remedial streamed classes. It was also felt that in using streaming for the placement of students in a class or group, there was a stronger possibility of unequal treatment between higher and lower tracks. One researcher reported that there was a reduced risk of inequality when students are placed in streams or tracks that are subject-specific.

Research also revealed that educators used many kinds of coping mechanisms to help them to deal with the problems they face in the remedial classroom. It was found that teachers

are faced with daily decisions in determining the level of access each child receives of the curriculum. They, however, must deal with a lack of resources, an increasing demand for public services and the lack of realization of their own individual goals. These realities cause them to devise ways of coping with the stress of the workplace as well as assist them in implementing and enacting the curriculum and educational policies. One group of researchers has been able to classify teachers' coping mechanisms as personal, professional, social and institutional.

The review of the literature also brought some enlightenment to the areas of support systems and resources that are found in school to assist with remedial teaching. It was felt that the school should be responsible to provide support that would aid in promoting effective learning environments that would contribute to students' academic improvement and success. These supports are integral in addressing the challenges of teachers and students in the school setting. Support is defined as additional provision to what already exists in the school and as a network of functions that are aimed at improving teaching and learning. Support can come in different ways: through people, materials, resources and educational or non-educational strategies and tools.

Methodology

Introduction

In order to explore this topic in greater detail, the researcher felt that the issue described above would be adequately addressed using a qualitative approach to research, since the issue delves into the subjective experiences of remedial tutors at a high-risk government secondary school, a reality that is "socially constructed" (Merriam, 2009, p.8). The aim of qualitative research is to explore multiple realities, values, and the perspectives and understandings that people make in constructing social meaning in a given social environment. This study, therefore,

would seek to explore the realities of the teachers in the natural setting of their schools to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences.

In undertaking this qualitative research, certain philosophical assumptions will be drawn upon. The ontological facets of the research deal with the nature of the reality that is being discovered. The researcher then seeks to document that reality accurately through his/her own eyes and through the eyes of the participants as they experience it daily. In this study, the researcher will seek to delve into the daily experiences of the remedial teachers at this high-risk secondary school, to explore their realities, to “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). The researcher will be looking for the varied and multiple realities experienced by these teachers and seek to construct meaning as it exists for them in the social environment of the school. It hopes to discover what experiences, if any, these teachers draw upon in making sense of the unique school culture to which they have been introduced and how they are able to interact with students and other teaching colleagues in the given context.

Epistemological assumptions presuppose that the researcher would try to get as close as possible to the participants under study (Creswell, 2007). The researcher will attempt to feel what the participants are feeling and to view the situation through their eyes. These are also being met in this study, since the researcher is herself a teacher at the high-risk government secondary school, understands to a degree the daily conditions under which these teachers work, has herself been a young, inexperienced teacher and knows the challenges of a new teacher in such an environment, also having had the opportunity to teach students in need of remediation. Indeed, there is a minimization of the “distance” or “objective separateness” (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p.44) between herself and those under study.

In axiology, the researcher's values are being made known to his or her reading audience (Creswell, 2007). This research is extremely value-laden in its approach as it seeks to present a position in favour of resources and support for teachers of remedial classes in high-risk secondary schools. This researcher also supports the view that teachers who are earmarked to teach remedial students should not be placed in a high-risk secondary school without extensive training in specialist pedagogy. Additionally, these teachers should have the opportunity of working in a welcoming, caring and nurturing school environment as well as collaborating with teaching staff that would assist in facilitating their teaching experiences. Further, the study acknowledges that these teachers have their own values and beliefs, which are likely to influence, among other things, how they function in the classroom and cope with what has the potential to be a volatile and hostile teaching and learning environment.

Research Design

Given the nature of the topic under study, the researcher chose to use a case study research design. Smith (1978) describes a case study as a bounded system; it is a "single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 2009, p.40). Merriam (2009) explicates that a case study is characterized by a unit that is under analysis, rather than a topic of investigation. In the case of this study, the unit of analysis will be the remedial tutors, who are case examples of tutors who are employed by the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago to teach remedial students in government secondary schools.

Punch (1998) states that case studies "will be studied in detail", with the objective of developing "as full an understanding of that case as possible" (p.150). The researcher was interested in "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 2009, p.42). The focus in this study is on the phenomenon of teaching remedial students in a

high-risk government school. It hopes to produce a rich description and literary exploration of the experiences of the remedial tutors in this school environment. It hopes to broaden the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study and possibly lead to the discovering new meaning, extension of the reader's experience and the confirmation of information that may already be known (Merriam, 2009). Readers can learn from a vicarious encounter with the case through the researcher's narrative description (Stake, 2005).

Sampling Procedures

In this case study, the researcher used convenient purposeful or purposive sampling. Purposive sampling (Chein, 1981) or purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) assumes that an investigator who seeks to gain insight, understanding, or embark upon further discovery of a chosen phenomenon should choose a sample from which the most can be learned about that phenomenon. Since this research is focused on the experiences of remedial tutors in a high-risk government school, the researcher chose a sample of two remedial teachers who work on a contractual basis in a particular government school, having only been trained by the Ministry of Education for one week before being employed to teach remedial students in the secondary school system.

In addition, this was a convenient sample since they were selected "based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents, and so on" (Merriam, 2009, p.79). The researcher is an educator at the school in which the study is being undertaken and choosing the sample from this particular school facilitated the time being spent in research in terms of travelling to a school site and conducting the research, as it can be conducted at times that are convenient to the researcher and the participants with minimal disruption. The participants were

readily available and could be easily contacted by the researcher, as they were all employed at the high-risk government school where the study was being conducted.

Data Collection

In order to gather information for this study and to answer all three research questions, interviews were used as the method of gathering qualitative data. The interview, according to deMarrais (2004), is a “process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p.55). It is considered an important method of data collection as it seeks to delve into the participants’ attitudes, experiences, values and motivations on particular subjects of interest (Gill et al., 2008).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the two participants in the sample, since the researcher desired to ask key questions that would help to answer the research questions, while allowing the participants to pursue an idea or engage in further discussion of the questions or issue (Britten, 1999). The semi-structured interviews were of a conversational nature in order to put the participants at ease in the interviews and encourage them to share as much information as possible on the given topic. They were conducted in the school setting, but done in a quiet, comfortable place so that the participants would feel comfortable in sharing information. The interviews were done face-to-face in order to establish cordial relationships between the researcher and the researched, as well as to facilitate the audio-recording of the interviews. These interviews were then transcribed after they were conducted.

To this end, an interview protocol was formulated. This protocol, adapted from Creswell (2007), will contain the following components: a heading (date, place, interviewer, and interviewee); instructions for the interviewer to follow so that standard procedures are utilized from one interview to another; the key questions for the interview based on the research

questions; time for probes or follow-up questions; and a final thank-you statement to acknowledge the time that the participant spent during the interview (see Appendix A).

Ethical Considerations

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) stress the importance of researchers taking careful account of the ethical issues that may arise in the conduct of research, as research involves the collection of data from people, about people (Punch, 2005). Isreal and Hay (2006) state that researchers should protect their participants, develop a level of trust with them, promote the integrity of research, and guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on the organizations or institutions to which they are affiliated and, additionally, must be able to cope with new and challenging problems that may arise in the conduct of the research.

In the conduct of this study, the researcher was concerned about keeping the information revealed in the study confidential and keeping the identity of the school and the participants anonymous. To this end, the researcher then developed an informed consent form with a cover letter attached. This form acknowledges that the rights of all participants in the research would be protected during the data collection stage. According to Sarantakos (2005), some of the elements of this form included the identification of the researcher and her university affiliation, indication of the purpose of the research and the research questions, identification of the level and type of participant involvement, notation of risks to the participants, assurance of confidentiality to and anonymity of the participants, assurance that the participants can withdraw themselves or the school from the study at any time and the provision of names of persons to contact if any questions may arise. These forms were issued to the principal and to the two remedial tutors assigned to the school in which the study is being conducted (see Appendices B and C).

The researcher also needs to respect the research site and ensure that it is left undisturbed after the study has been completed (Creswell, 2009). There was need for the researcher to be cognizant of the impact that she had on the environment. Therefore, much effort was made to interview the participants at times and at a location on the school which were not only convenient to the participants, but also in an environment where the participants felt comfortable to disclose information pertinent to the study, with an aim to minimizing the disruption of the physical school setting and the conduct of normal classes.

In terms of formulating the interview questions, there was an emphasis on ensuring that the interview schedule was not laden with questions that implicitly or explicitly revealed the biases or values of the researcher. Every attempt was made to ensure that the interview protocol included questions that were not skewed in any way. There was also an understanding that the information revealed in the interviews would be of a sensitive nature and may cause undue emotional stress to the participants. Although it can be difficult to try to plan for such eventualities during or after an interview, according to Patton (2002), the researcher decided that in cases of participants suffering breakdowns of any kind, the researcher would then stop the interview and attend to the well-being of the participant, giving him or her choice to continue when he or she is composed.

Ethical issues also arose in the data analysis and interpretation sections of the study. In terms of keeping the anonymity of the school and the participants, the data collected was kept in a secure location. The researcher disaffiliated the participants' names from their responses during the coding and recording processes and used pseudonyms for other individuals, the school and other places mentioned in the interviews to protect their identities. This was stated in the informed consent forms mentioned above (see Appendices B and C). Additionally, in

interpreting the data, participants were also assured that they would be allowed to check and verify the accuracy of the data and that what was being reported was exactly what they meant to say.

In the writing of the report, other ethical issues were considered. The researcher was careful not to use words that were biased against persons based on “gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age” (Creswell, 2009). There was a conscious effort in this study to release the details of the research along with the study design so that the readers can determine for themselves the credibility of the study. The researcher also refrained from falsifying, suppressing or inventing findings to meet the researcher’s or the audience’s needs, which would be considered scientific misconduct (Neuman, 2000). The researcher must also be prepared to provide the research site with a preliminary copy of any future publications from the research (Creswell, 2007).

Conduct of the Study

This study was conducted over a period of seven months. Although the topic and the nature of the research were conceptualized before that period, some changes were made, firstly, to the topic as the research project progressed. The topic was narrowed to focus on an in-depth case study analysis of the remedial teachers in one secondary school and the topic would only be focused in Trinidad, rather than Trinidad and Tobago, since the school under study is located in the island of Trinidad.

Three months into the research, the research proposal for the study was presented to an academic audience. Based on the questions asked and insights gained from this exercise, the methodology of the study was altered under the guidance of academic supervision. The original plan was to use interviews, classroom observations and journals as methods of data collection. It

was then advised that all research questions could be answered with the use of interviews. In addition, one of the topics for the literature review was indicated, with the others to be worked out by the researcher.

In the sixth month of the project, interviews were conducted with the participants. As indicated before, these interviews were conducted in the school only after written consent was granted from the administrator and participants of the school under study. The interviews with both participants were conducted on two consecutive days in the school's library. The collection of data in the two interviews took place in the space of an hour, with the first interview taking approximately forty minutes and the second lasting about twenty minutes. After this, the interviews had begun to be transcribed, but were not completed.

Upon the request of the researcher, a month's extension was granted. Within the space of that seventh month, the transcripts of the interviews were completed, data analysis had taken place and the findings, discussion and recommendations were written. There was constant and consistent review of the literature undertaken throughout the entire seven months of the study.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2009) describes qualitative data analysis as a process that “involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data..., representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (p. 183). The researcher was responsible for organizing all the data collected into a form that was easily identifiable and retrievable when needed. Furthermore, the researcher engaged in an ongoing process which involved “continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study” (Creswell, 2009, p. 184).

The researcher engaged in the following steps, outlined by Creswell (2009), to analyze the data for this study.

Firstly, all the data collected from the interviews were organized and prepared for analysis. All interviews held with the participants were transcribed verbatim.

The raw data were then read through in order to gain a general sense of the information gathered. In this stage, the researcher reflected on the overall meaning of the data. The researcher attempted to gain an overall sense of what each participant was saying and made some preliminary notes of these ideas in order to make initial meanings of the data.

The third step in analyzing data in the case study research tradition involved an in-depth line-by-line analysis of the data using a manual coding process. Coding is described as the process by which data is organized into chunks or segments before meaning is brought to it (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Segments of the data were coded using words or phrases that capture the meaning of what was said, known as descriptive codes, or using words and phrases as they were recorded in the participants' own words, known as *in vivo* codes (Saldaña, 2009). This manual process was done in pencil. The data from each transcript were re-read several times in order to clarify understanding and to refine codes where necessary. The codes from the data will then be used to generate a description of the setting or the individuals (Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1994). Creswell (2009) defines description as “a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting” (p. 189). The researcher will seek to generate codes from the interviews in order to make an accurate and detailed description of the setting and the individuals in this case study.

The researcher then looked for key issues and emerging themes or categories from the interview data, using the codes that corresponded. These categories or themes were used for data

analysis. The themes were grouped together in a separate table. The interviews were also compared to see if any similar themes or if any differences or inconsistencies emerged (Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1994). The themes or categories generated were used to develop the major findings in this study. They sought to display the multiple realities of the participants, which will be supported by numerous quotations and evidenced from the data collected.

Subsequently, the researcher then attempted to interconnect the themes or categories found in order to construct different layers of more complex data analysis. This was done through the use of descriptive narrative. The themes from the interview data of each individual case were analyzed and shaped into a broader and more intricate discussion, “complete with subthemes, specific illustrations, multiple perspectives from individuals, and quotations” (Creswell, 2009, p. 189), with a view to making rich and meaningful connections with the themes that emerged.

An additional step in the data analysis process included the researcher’s making an interpretation of the meaning of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher attempts to advance the lessons learnt in the conduct of the research. These lessons were based on the researcher’s interpretation of the data along with insight from the literature on the topic that either confirmed past information or diverged from it. The data interpretation also sought to suggest new questions emerging from the data analysis process that were not addressed in the earlier part of the study (Creswell, 2009).

Finally, the data were represented and displayed in the findings through the use of qualitative narrative. All major categories emerging from interviews were expounded upon in exploratory and rich detail through the use of literary devices and techniques and descriptive narrative.

Limitations

Some of the limitations that were encountered in this study were the time that was available for the conduct of the study, finding times that were convenient to both the researcher and the participants for the conduct of the interviews and possible school disruptions which would delay the conduct of the study in a timely and efficient manner.

Delimitation

This study will be limited to the experiences of the two remedial tutors employed by the Ministry of Education in one high-risk secondary school.

Summary of Methodology

Over the period of seven months, research on this topic was conducted using a case study qualitative research design, as the research sought to delve into the experiences of people and their subjective realities in a given school setting. A convenient, purposeful sample of two participants was used in this study. These two participants are the two remedial teachers who are employed by the Ministry of Education to work in the high-risk government school highlighted in this study. Interviews were used as the method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the guidance of an interview protocol that was prepared beforehand.

Throughout the conduct of the study, ethical safeguards were employed. Written consent to conduct the research was granted from the principal and tutor/participants of the study. The principal and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and that all data collected would solely be used for the purpose of research. The researcher refrained from using language that was biased in any way. Participants were also given assurance that they could withdraw from the study at any time, as well as have access to the findings of the study so that they could verify that what they truly wanted to express was accurately captured in the research.

Data analysis was conducted using the following steps: transcribing and organization of data, reading through the data, line-by-line analysis using a coding process, the formation of categories or themes, the interconnection of those themes, the interpretation of the data, and the display of the data in the findings section of the study.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

Introduction

In accordance with the qualitative research tradition, the findings for all three research sub questions in this study were analyzed by the researcher and displayed using narrative techniques. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that narrative text has been the most frequent form of data display for qualitative research. The focus in displaying these findings was to provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of the experiences of the two participants in this study and communicate a holistic picture of these experiences. The results of the data analysis will therefore be presented below using supporting quotations from the two interview transcripts (see Appendices D and E), using the themes that emerged from the data analysis process (see Appendices F and G) in rich, thick, and descriptive narrative rather than the use of graphs and charts. Through the use of literary devices, readers would be able to vicariously experience the challenges these tutors encounter daily and view their world through the lens provided for them in this research.

Remedial Tutors' Perceptions of Challenges in Teaching Remedial Classes

The first research sub question was: What are some of the tutors' perspectives of the challenges faced in teaching remedial classes at the school?

Data analysis revealed that the two participants reported some similar challenges in teaching remedial students at the school. Both reported challenges in dealing with the students in

the classroom in terms of the subject content. Remedial students do not progress as fast as a class of average students:

“...a simple topic a usual class will understand in like, fifteen to twenty minutes, it will take them probably about three classes to do...”

“...you normally can't use the ordinary forecast for like an average Form 2, Form 1, or whatever class...”

Both participants express the need to choose the subject content carefully and simplify it so that the students can understand it further or choose topics that they know the students can understand:

“I have to simplify it, I have to break it down... I will break it down and explain it to them...”

“I kind of know the level they at so I know the topics that they will be able to understand and not understand... I usually go back to real, real, basic, basic stuff...”

Both participants reported that because their students' progress is at a slower pace than other classes, they must always be prepared with their lessons and activities. They must always be looking for things to do with their students to make sure that work is done for the stipulated period and that the activities keep them interested in the lesson:

“I does write down exactly what I going to do, how I going to do it...and, well, the resources I going to use.”

“I... try to get them interactive in the class and ask them...to explain it back to me... Like as soon as I finish..., I cover a topic, I give them assessment, like activities to do.”

One participant expressed a challenge in not knowing the particular approach to use with the class in order to get them to remember what they have learnt. She has difficulties in helping her

students to retain the information long after the class, especially since her students do not like writing and do not revise their work at home:

“Sometimes, I does worry because I don’t know if the approach will be right for them, because they say “Yes, I understand, Miss”, but when time to put it into practice or when is exam time, I don’t know if they will get it... my concern is that they wouldn’t remember if they don’t go through back their notes, their readings.”

She is fearful that the students have a lack of material with which to go home and study or revise from, so to help in this area, she resorts to distributing handouts to her children.

The other participant expressed another challenge with his students: their “saturation point”. According to him, this is the point where they no longer wish to pay attention to the academic work being done in the class and they therefore turn their attention to other things: *“The attention span here is... probably ten minutes and you need to find fun ways after ten minutes to bring across your topic, because we have the students in the morning for, I think, a hour and twenty minutes and in the evening for a hour. So, after... and in the evening, is even worse. In the evening, if you can get them to settle for five minutes...yeah, five minutes, they don’t want to do more work...”*

This same participant also expressed other challenges that occur outside of the classroom and that deal with the school’s infrastructure and resources. He stated, in his interview, that at first he had no access to the resources of the school. There were very few manipulatives for his students to work with, although he was assured at his teacher training that every school was outfitted with such resources:

“Maths is a practical thing and the students usually not exposed to the practical part of the Mathematics, but the curriculum officers in the training assured me that the manipulatives were

readily available in each and every single school. They supposed to be there, and when I came here, I asked, and well, I got one manipulative.”

Another challenge that he encountered at the school was the lack of information about the resources that were available at the school. He had only recently found out about the Mathematics Remedial Room which was full of resources, but they were underutilized:

“So recently, um... another teacher told me about the remedial Mathematics room in the school, that I had... nobody told me about... So... the room was dusty, really, really dusty and I asked the security to clean it out and what not, so that I could start using the room as soon as possible... I dealt with that and as soon as I have the Form 1’s again I am going to take them up to the room and I’m going to start using the manipulatives that they have there that are all in their sealed boxes.”

Classroom management is another issue for this tutor, as he has expressed issues with getting the remedial class to settle down, especially when there is one particularly troublesome student in the class. He has identified the need to develop this skill as he believes it would help him to deal with troublesome classes in the future:

“Form 1 is out of control for me, and like, the more you talk to them... they don’t listen at all... I’m really talking about one student in particular; don’t listen at all and it’s really, really hard when he is in a classroom to teach the class because continuous disruptions... So, the classroom management skill I say I probably have to work on...”

Coping Mechanisms of Remedial Tutors

The second research sub question was: What are some of the coping mechanisms of these tutors?

In order to gather data for this question, the researcher looked at the strategies that each tutor used, what they do when a class is difficult and the teaching methods that they employ in their teaching.

After the data analysis process, it was revealed that both tutors employ different strategies and methods of dealing with their classes. In terms of the strategies that they use in the classroom, one participant stated that she used what she calls the “individual approach” with her students. She calls them up one by one to explain the work to them in an effort to help them to understand the content being taught. She explains that this “approach” is very time-consuming for her and drains her of her energy, but she is willing to do this to assist the students:

“...some of them slower than the others. If they don't understand, each one of them, I will let them come up... it does take a lot from me, yeah, because it seems like only fourteen...they say it's fourteen children, but it's multiplied when you have to give them that time.”

On the other hand, the other participant uses the manipulatives in the classroom to assist in coping with the challenges of teaching the students. He also tries to give the students links to online resources and activities that would, as he says, “spark more interest in the topic”.

When asked about their coping with difficult classes, the two tutor/participants also expressed different ways of dealing with their students. In the case of the first participant, he refers disciplinary issues to the relevant authorities, who he deems as better able to handle these issues. He refers to these individuals as the “higher heads”:

“I realize he's (a student) a problem in the class, so I spoke to the Vice Principal, the Safety Officers and they um, took it to the next level... So, usually if it cannot be handled by me, if it's out of my control and the student isn't responding to me at all, I hand it over to higher heads that could possibly make a difference.”

The second participant has noticed, however, that her students operate differently in school from at home. So she has decided that she would make herself available to her students whenever they were ready to learn:

“Every day I try to go and just try to do my best. I try to explain it to them. If they want to learn, I will be there. I’ll make myself available to them. If not...I wouldn’t tell them, “Ah tired, I don’t want to hear from you.” And even if he comes, the trouble one, I will sit down with him and explain to him and do the work with him.”

The teaching methods that each participant employs are also different. The second tutor/participant, who teaches Remedial English, uses a variety of teaching methods to assist her in teaching her students. This consists of the use of cue cards, word games and class participation, with an aim to sharpening their writing skills:

“I use cue cards. I stick it on the board. I try to get them to participate, to come up on the board and write, cause the more I emphasize writing is the better they will understand. So, yeah, I use it like that. It’s like a Scrabble and you just place the words on the board and they formulate. They come up and they formulate it. They formulate the simple sentences...”

Participant 1, the Mathematics Remedial Tutor, revises a lot of the basic concepts with his students and constantly relates Mathematics to the fields and careers in which the students are interested. All this is done to show the students how important Mathematics is to their world and to their future aspirations:

“Like there are students in the class that like Welding, they like Mechanics... So I would like...just think about examples... just to keep a little interest because Mathematics is a subject, what I always say, is irrelevant and is the most relevant at the same time. Like, it’s unimportant and important... You really need to draw reference to what they like and what they enjoy.”

Support Systems and Resources for Remedial Tutors

The third research sub question was: What support systems and resources are in place at the school to assist these tutors in their instruction of the students?

With this question, the researcher wanted to look at the various support systems that the tutors found to give them support at the school and the resources that were in place to assist them in their teaching. This question also aimed at investigating whether the tutors would receive the support of the school in purchasing any new materials, equipment, or resources that would have assisted them in their teaching of the remedial students.

Analysis of the data revealed that the two tutors have received some support from the administration of the school. Participant 1 reported that he was able to get help from the administration in terms of disciplining the students, as was stated earlier. There was, however, an issue in terms of the divulging of necessary information that he felt was needed as a young teacher in the Teaching Service. He wondered if this was so due to the busyness of their jobs: *“...it’s just sometimes, like if you don’t...well, there are some things that need to be told to you and... nobody would tell you until probably is...you know, it have consequences or whatnot. So, is just ... I don’t know if people busy, everybody have their own job to do...”*

On the other hand, the English Remedial Tutor has received some help from the Vice Principal of the school and shares that she does not want to take advantage of the support that has been extended to her on a few occasions:

“I go to Ms. Little (Vice Principal) sometimes, who gets things done, not all the time. I don’t want to take advantage of her good nature.”

She adds, however, that because she only teaches a few students, she has this perception that the requests that she would make in order to assist her class in some way would be rejected by the

administration. She is of the perception that the administration would not spend a lot of money on resources for a small handful of students:

“I don’t think they will focus on them because I don’t know. I don’t want to say they not significant. They significant to me, because I will like to go and try to help them, but I don’t think they will do it because of the numbers, the number of students, to be honest with you.”

This same perception of insignificance also seems to cause her to be reluctant to make use of the specialized rooms to do her work with the students:

“I wanted to make use of the little videos you could see online, but... I don’t think...I don’t know they will allow me to do that, because I know that there is an English class to carry the students to English, but I don’t know if they will allow me to use the class, to utilize it... because of the small amount of students, because is only like 3 for the most sometimes will come to the class.”

The reluctance to ask administration for resources seemed to have been stemmed from an occasion where there was a system of waiting for photocopying for two days. After this, this tutor took a decision to use her own personal resources to get material for her students:

“To be honest, I really didn’t take advantage of any of the resources here because one time I had like an experience where I had to get copies done for the literature section with the IW’s and they said I had to put it in for the 2 days. So I decided that from now on I will print stuff for them personally and I will give them things personally ‘cause anything I did with them, was printed from me because it would take too long and they need the work, they need the attention so I need to prepare.”

Overwhelming support from the teachers of the school has been reported by both participants. The Mathematics Remedial Tutor has revealed in his interview that the teachers gave him insight into the school that aided him in his transition to teach in a school of which he

had no knowledge prior to his appointment there. The teaching staff was willing to share information and resources, as well as give tips on how to deal with the students and to effectively bring across one's lessons in the classroom:

"They (the teachers) give me a lot of strategy. When before, when I now came here, they, you know, they let me know what really to expect in the school. It was just like getting, like, a little insight, a little inside information about the school before you actually teach the students. Very supportive, you know, always willing to help. Really... really supportive, nice bunch of teachers that really, genuinely, want to make a difference, I would say."

The English Remedial Tutor echoed these sentiments by expressing that she got support in the team teaching of her remedial class. She singled out one particular teacher who was extremely helpful in giving her activities, handouts and other strategies to try with her classes:

"...there is Ms. Mohan, she give me material, she give me approach...she tells me like how to approach certain topics and if it doesn't work, I will go back and ask her and explain it to her and tell her, "you know, it didn't work. I don't know what else to do", and she will show me other things to do and she give me, like little strategies to like, to get them active. So if they get involved and active, that's a good thing, 'cause once I capture their attention, that's it. So she helps me a lot. Ms. Mohan helps me a lot. And apart from that, there's my co-worker, staff, yeah. So she helps out a lot. She takes them sometimes."

In terms of the resources found at the school, it was reported earlier that there are resources, reading material and specialized rooms for both Mathematics and English remedial teachers to have access to. Due to the reluctance of the English Remedial Tutor, she has not made full use of those resources that were available to her due to the small size of her class. The Mathematics Tutor has reported that he has also been given access to a computer room in the

school, where he can carry students to use the computers. He is, however, not able to use the room because the school has not been receiving internet facilities to service the entire school with a quick and reliable internet service. This has hampered him from using this resource with his students:

“...it wasn't necessary for me to use the computers with them because I would need internet to do what I have to do with the students and the computers, they don't get...because I checked out the computers to carry up the students already and the computers, the internet, it... well, it don't work at all.”

This tutor is unsure if the school will provide the internet service that he needs to do his work with the remedial students. He is reluctant to ask because he knows that the administrators are working on the problem and seems to be content to work with what he has found at the school:

“...if I ask for the internet, well, I will just work with what I have for now, which is the manipulatives that we have and I will tell them... I will give them links and whatnot to go home and check it...”

Summary of Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

According to the findings presented above, both tutor/participants reported common challenges in teaching their students. Due to the fact that they take a longer time to grasp the concepts that are being taught to them, the tutors must choose their topics carefully and break them down in manageable chunks for the students to grasp. They have also expressed that they must plan their work carefully, as the students are reported to have a short attention span and do not respond well to written work. Other challenges faced by the one of the tutors came from the lack of access to the resources of the school, information about the resources of the school, and classroom management skills.

The tutors' coping mechanisms in the classroom come from their classroom strategies, teaching methods and what they do in difficult class situations. Both tutors use different classroom strategies: one tutor deals with her students on a one-on-one basis and focuses her energies on giving individual attention to her students. The other uses manipulatives and other computer resources available to teach his students. When classes are difficult, one of the tutors calls for help from the higher authorities of the school to assist in student discipline, while the other has decided to make herself available for her students if and when they are ready to learn. In teaching the class, one tutor relates his subject to the students' interests and future careers in an attempt to make the subject relevant to his charges. The English tutor, however, uses a variety of activities and games to keep the students interested in her lessons.

Analysis of the data concerning the resources and support systems that are in place to assist remedial teachers showed that the school has resources for both teachers to use, yet one tutor is reluctant to use those resources because of the small size of her class. She perceives that administration would be unwilling to help and so relies on her own personal resources to help her students. The other tutor has found resources and is making use of some of them, yet one major infrastructural problem hampers him from using computer technologies with his students. Both participants have received great support from the teaching staff of the school in giving strategies to deal with students, sharing resources and providing insights into the school, but only a modicum of assistance was received from the administrators of the school, who may be too busy attending to other duties or who are seen to be reluctant to spend money on a small group of students. Both participants seemed unwilling to approach their administrators to purchase resources for the teaching of their students.

Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This study sought to explore the experiences of remedial teachers in a high-risk government school in Trinidad. It sought to gain a fuller understanding of their perspectives on the challenges they face in teaching remedial classes, the mechanisms they use to cope in the classroom, and the support systems and resources that exist to assist them in classroom instruction. Based on the findings that were discovered in the previous chapter, the issues that arose in each finding would be discussed in light of the literature presented throughout this study.

Discussion on Remedial Tutors' Perceptions of Challenges of Teaching Remedial Students

The focus of the first research question was to elicit the tutors' perspectives on the challenges they face in teaching or working with remedial students. Data analysis revealed that the remedial tutors face many challenges in teaching the remedial students. Some of these challenges, according to the participants, came from dealing with the students themselves, from the school infrastructure, and from the inexperience of the teachers. This study seems to support Gamoran's (2000) observation that low streamed classes are plagued with interruptions and student misbehaviour. There is evidence from the participants' interviews to support this theory. Although Mason and Good (1996) claimed that teaching was more complex and challenging for those teachers whose classes were composed of children of varying abilities, it still seems, therefore, that teachers who are faced with students of similar ability in their classes also experience their own challenges. It cannot be determined whether the challenges are more or less complex in this study, since Mason and Good's (1996) study was not undertaken in the local context or under the same conditions.

Additionally, the findings for this research question cannot prove Slavin's (1990) claim that streaming widens the gap between students of diverse abilities, since this was not investigated in this study. What is clear from the two participants is that lesson delivery for remedial students happens at a slower pace than that for students who are considered to be of average ability in this school.

Furthermore, Gamoran (1993) and Boaler (1997 (b)) have argued that the nature and quality of teaching differs in higher and lower streamed classes. This can be argued in the case of these tutors, since they are new to the teaching fraternity and have not had much teacher training. It can also be argued that with increased training and teaching experience, the challenges that they expressed in their interviews could have been avoided, as they would be better equipped to manage their classes and to use a variety of approaches in their instruction that would capture the students' attention and assist them in retaining information that was taught in the classroom.

Discussion on Coping Mechanisms of Remedial Tutors

In answer to this research question, the two participants revealed that they use different strategies and methods of coping with the class when they are difficult. One participant gives her students individual attention, while the other uses manipulatives and other computer resources to keep his students interested in the lessons after they have reached their "saturation point". When classes become difficult, one participant remains committed to teach her class and makes herself available to her students. The other participant, who experiences class disruptions, calls upon the "higher heads" to give assistance to him in helping to manage his classes. Thirdly, both tutors use a variety of teaching methods. One participant speaks about using word games and other activities to keep the class interactive. The other, however, breaks down the content for his classes and relates his subjects to things that students like and enjoy.

Consistent with Lipsky's (2010) theory of the "street-level bureaucrat", the remedial tutors choose the subject content and determine the learning outcomes and experiences of the students in their classroom. Additionally, the tutors decide what strategies and teaching methods they wish to employ in their classes and determine the relevant tools and skills that their students need to become better learners.

The challenges that these tutors face in carrying out their daily duties have caused them to devise coping mechanisms to deal with their subjective realities (Lipsky, 2010). Both tutors were able to devise coping mechanisms that make them more comfortable in the workplace, aid them in managing the stress of the workplace and assist them in the implementation and delivery of educational curriculum and policies (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014). Evidence of this can be found in the participants' responses in their interviews. Their coping strategies and mechanisms can be classified in similar categories as stated by Murray-Harvey et al (2000). Referral of troublesome students to higher authorities can be classified as an institutional coping mechanism, since it deals with a specific problem that the participant dealt with in his teaching practice. Seeking for help as a coping mechanism was also identified in a study done by Mansfield et al (2012). The teachers also have employed professional coping mechanisms, according to Yeung (2012) and Brackenreed (2011), which speaks to the preparedness of the tutors to execute their work. This has also been evidenced by the tutors' use of educational materials and games in order to keep the learners' interest in the classroom activities. The findings also revealed the use of personal coping mechanisms, which according to Murray Harvey et al (2000), are developed due to an increased understanding on the part of the teacher about the nature of the work and are able to devise strategies that help them to function in the environment. The "individual approach" and the relation of subject content to the learners' interests were coping mechanisms

developed by the tutors themselves as a result of the insights and observations they made about their students.

Discussion on Support Systems and Resources for Remedial Tutors

The findings have shown that the school under investigation in this study have support systems and resources that were available to both remedial tutors. The resources came in the form of reading material, manipulatives, specialized remedial rooms and computer rooms. The support systems identified by the teachers were that of administration and the teaching staff. The tutors reported that they received excellent support from the teaching staff, yet the administrators were seen as reluctant to help in some areas.

Literature in this field has identified that support has different meanings for different researchers. Similar to Mittler's (2006) definition of support, the school can definitely be seen as having facilities that have been added to the school setting to enhance what already exists. The materials and infrastructure found by the remedial tutors in this school is something that was added to what was there before, based on the identified needs of the students. Steyn's (1997) view of support is more about the systems and functions that improve the teaching-learning process. According to this definition, the systems that can be identified in this school are the teacher support system and the administrative support systems. Steyn (1997) also stresses that these functions should improve teaching and learning. The remedial tutors have expressed the view that the teachers have been great facilitators of teaching-learning process at the school and are effective in giving them assistance wherever possible. On the other hand, the administrative support systems seemed to be somewhat helpful in the eyes of tutors. There seems to be some barriers still, as both tutors have expressed reluctance in approaching their administrators for resources that they may need.

According to Reyneke et al (2010), support services to teachers can also include pedagogy or teaching practices, as well as the use of varied curricula, assessments and feedback and the infusion of technology into teaching practice. The support system identified that is congruent with this definition is the infusion of technology. While both tutors wish, however, to infuse technology into their instruction, the barrier has become the internet problem that exists currently at the school. Educational support services are an integral part of assisting teachers to address the challenges that learners face (Department of Education, 2001). The importance of support services to the teaching-learning process was quite evident in the tutors' reflections of their teaching experiences at this school. These services helped them to adjust to their new environment, make their transition easier and facilitated the work in which they had to engage in bringing their remedial students to the required standard of academic proficiency.

Recommendations

In light of the discussion presented above, the following recommendations were made:

Remedial tutors who are sent into government schools to teach remedial students should be adequately prepared and equipped to face their charges. It is recommended that training for these tutors should be longer than a week and there be a continuous training and feedback sessions where the tutors can receive expert training and support from more experienced fellow educators in the field. It is highly recommended that the bulk of the training is done before entering the service for a suggested period of one to two years, with continuous training done in-service.

An important component of teacher training is teaching practice. Remedial tutors should be exposed to many practical teaching experiences, where they can be trained to develop lesson plans and execute a series of lessons to remedial students in different schools. It is believed that

the combination of ongoing training and teaching practice will assist in developing coping strategies, teaching methods and classroom management skills that will not only empower them to deliver the best quality of education possible to their charges according to best practice, but will improve the quality of classroom interaction between tutors and students and assist educators in incorporating teaching methods that are best suited for the local context and for their peculiar teaching environments. It is recommended that teaching practice be an integral component of pre-service remedial training and that the training programme should involve an internship/mentorship period where a teacher trainee is assigned to a secondary school with remedial students for the minimum of a term. The trainee will accompany an experienced teacher, but will also be given the opportunity to teach several remedial classes under the supervision of the head of department or experienced master teacher.

In addition, the support services of every school should be strengthened to give assistance to all students and all teachers. In high-risk school environments, the needs of the teachers, especially the new, inexperienced teachers are often overlooked. In addition to the provision of supplemental resources and finances to enhance the services that schools offer in the classroom setting, other non-educational support is needed to cater to the emotional, physical, social and psychological needs of every learner. In many instances, tutors are not equipped to deal with the emotional needs of each learner. Principals and other staff members give yeoman service in these areas, but there is need for a greater presence of professionals in other areas who are trained and certified to deal with students' social, emotional and psychological needs. It is recommended that the load of the principal be shared and that other paraprofessionals be employed on a full-time basis and be stationed in every school to give full-time assistance to these students and teachers who face frequent class disruptions while the curriculum is being delivered.

Summary of Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion on the major findings of the paper was highlighted in this chapter in relation to the larger body of literature and research conducted in similar areas of focus.

Based on these discussions, it was recommended that a pre-service training programme be developed for remedial teachers with a major component being teaching practice in schools with remedial students. It was felt that this programme would assist in preparing new teachers to deal with the challenges of working with these students and ensure the best quality of pedagogy is delivered in the classroom.

Another recommendation is to strengthen the education support services in every school. This would be geared not only towards providing the ample number of resources that would aid the teacher in classroom instruction, but also would share the load of the administrator in providing the emotional, social and psychological care that the students need and prevent or curb frequent classroom disruptions due to student indiscipline.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Research Participants

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: A. Mills

Interviewee:

- **Welcome and Extension of courtesies to Participant.**
- **Reminder of Interview Protocol: Anonymity; Confidentiality; Freedom to drop out of research at any time; Recording and note-taking of interview; Subsequent access to findings.**
- **Reminder of research topic – Experiences of Remedial Tutors in a High-Risk**

Government Secondary School

- How long have you been a teacher at the school now?
- How did you come to be employed at this school?
- Have you had any formal teacher training?
- What is your job position in this school?
- What are the duties you perform at the school?
- What are some of the perceptions that you had about the school before you came to teach?
- How would you describe the children you teach?

Tutors' perspectives of the challenges faced in teaching remedial classes at the school

- What are some of the challenges that you have in teaching/working with the remedial students?
- Tell me some instances of this. / Could you give specific examples of this?
- Tell me about how you prepare for a remedial class. What does your routine consist of? What do you do?
- What would you say makes teaching a remedial class difficult?

Coping mechanisms of the tutors

- What strategies do you use to help you in your teaching?
- What do you do when a class is extremely difficult?
- Do you use a variety of teaching methods to assist your teaching?
- What are those methods?

Support systems and resources that are in place at the school to assist the tutors in their instruction of the students

- What kind of support do you get to assist with the teaching of your class?
- What kind of support do you get from administration to assist with teaching a remedial class?
- What kind of support do you get from other teachers to assist with teaching a remedial class?
- What resources have you found in place at the school that helps you in your remedial teaching?
- Would the school fund the purchase of resources that you may need for your remedial class?
- **Probes/ Follow-up Questions**

- **Close of Interview; Extension of thanks and other courtesies.**

Appendix B

Sample Letter of Informed Written Consent to Participant

1 Vierra Drive
CHAMPS FLEURS

18th April 2015

Ms. Beatrice Adams
Remedial Tutor
Peaceful Secondary School
Beaulieu Avenue
Peaceful

Dear Ms. Adams,

I am a student of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, pursuing a Master Degree in Education, with specialization in Curriculum. One of the requirements that I must meet for the fulfilment of this Degree is my conduct of a research project. I am asking you to be a participant in this project.

I am interested in learning about the experiences of remedial tutors in a high-risk government secondary school.

Your participation in this study will entail one or more interviews, lasting no more than an hour each. The interviews will be recorded. The general questions I want to explore are the tutors' perspectives of the challenges that they face in a high-risk government secondary school, the tutors' coping mechanisms, and the support systems and resources that are in place at the school to assist these tutors in their instruction of the students.

I will protect the identities of the participants and the school in the study by the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publications or presentations. Participants should understand that they may be quoted directly, but that their names will not be used in any part of the report. All data will be kept confidential and stored in a secure location. You are free to have access to my findings or any data that I have gathered from you. Please understand that if you choose to, you can withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice.

I appreciate your willingness to be a participant in and to give your time to this project so that I can learn more about the experiences of remedial tutors. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 687-8967 or alanamillsb4a@gmail.com. If you consent to all you have read and discussed with me about the study and you agree to participate, please give your written consent by signing the consent form attached to this letter.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Alana Mills

This is to certify that I have read the letter attached to this form. I have discussed the project with the researcher. I understand the general nature of the study and agree to participate.

_____ (signature)

_____ (date)

Appendix C

Sample Letter of Informed Written Consent to School Principal

1 Vierra Drive
CHAMPS FLEURS

18th April 2015

Mr. Stephen Kelshall
Principal
Peaceful Secondary School
Beaulieu Avenue
Peaceful

Dear Mr. Kelshall,

I am a student of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, pursuing a Master Degree in Education, with specialization in Curriculum. One of the requirements that I must meet for the fulfilment of this Degree is my conduct of a research project. I am asking you to allow the school to be a part of this project.

I am interested in learning about the experiences of remedial tutors in a high-risk government secondary school.

To this end, I intend to ask the two remedial tutors in your school to participate in this study. I will be conducting interviews with them, lasting no more than an hour each. The interviews will be recorded. The general questions I want to explore are the tutors' perspectives of the challenges that they face in a high-risk government secondary school, the tutors' coping mechanisms, and the support systems and resources that are in place at the school to assist these tutors in their instruction of the students.

I will protect the identities of the participants and the school in the study by the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publications or presentations. Participants would understand that they may be quoted directly, but that their names will not be used in any part of the report. All data will be kept confidential and stored in a secure location. You are free to have access to my findings. Please understand that if you choose to, you can withdraw the school from the study at any time, without prejudice.

I thank you in advance for your willingness to allow the school and your teachers to be a part of this project so that I can learn more about the experiences of remedial tutors. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 687-8967 or alanamillsb4a@gmail.com. If you consent to all you have read and discussed with me about the study and you agree to the participation of the school in this project, please give your written consent by signing the consent form attached to this letter.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

.....
Alana Mills

This is to certify that I have read the letter attached to this form. I have discussed the project with the researcher. I understand the general nature of the study and agree to allow the school and its teachers to participate.

_____ (signature)

_____ (date)

Appendix D

Coded Transcript of Interview with Participant 1

Date: Thursday, May 7, 2015

Place: School Library

Interviewer: Ms. A. Mills

Interviewee: Mr. Joseph Vincent

Researcher:	How long have you been a teacher at the school?	
Participant:	Approximately four months. A little more than four months.	
Researcher:	Okay. And how did you come to be employed at the school?	
Participant:	Ok, well, the Ministry of Education... well, they started a few years ago a remedial programme in which the people who applied to the Teaching Service to become, to actually join the Teaching Service to be a teacher, well, what happened... they have a backlog in the system that they taking long to interview and place the people that apply, right? So they decided to call out, um, people who waiting to be called for interviews and people who waiting to be placed also because of this same backlog. So they decided to give the younger people who applied and waiting an opportunity to get exposed and enlist into the teaching system. So they placed us, they trained us for a week and they still have training sessions for the Mathematics remedial tutors so we can get some experience and see what going on just in the schools before we actually join the Teaching Service.	Backlog of applicants for Teaching Service Employment after waiting for interview Younger people given opportunity to teach One week teacher training
Researcher:	Okay. Good. Have you had any formal teacher training before this?	
Participant:	We had one week...um, formal teaching training...remedial teaching training at um, UTT in which they had these numeracy and literacy coaches teaching us. They also had curriculum officers lecturing us on the ICT infusion into the system cause they want to infuse technology into the academia because that's what the youths...in especially the high-risk schools, they said, respond to. They respond more to that as opposed to on a blackboard... and remedial students also. It's very hard to teach a remedial student on a board. They don't respond to that. So they had... that was a day at the lecture...they had that. They also had this...in the training session, they	One week teacher training Activities and concepts taught at training session

	<p>had a, is Student... it's SSS? Student Social Services? Support Services? Right. Student Support Services. They had somebody representing and there they showed us how a student will feel if you single them out in a class and victimize them, but they show us in a way where we didn't know that's what they actually was doing. So they put us in a room and have us...they say they're going to give us an exam and on the exam, they gave people an essay, written in different...oh, and this was both English and Mathematics remedial tutors. They gave them an exam. Everybody...we couldn't talk at all. It was strict exam conditions and... but at this point in time we didn't know anything that was going on. They just say we going to get an exam. This is how she came in, she introduced herself, she say who she was and she shared it out and then after she told us to flip over the paper and she called out people at random to read out what they had, right? So some people on the essay had an essay that was missing a lot of words in between. Some people had with plain gibberish and some people had a whole essay, beautifully written out. So...and also, before she did that, she selected, like about ten to fifteen people from the group because it was a big group... about, probably about more than 150 teachers there and um, she selected a few of them just to like supervise what was actually going on, but like they were in on the...okay, I wouldn't call it prank, I would call it lesson. They were in on the lesson that was going on. So she told them what she was going to do. So then after, when she called... she sectioned it off, like she knew who she was giving what section, what essay to do, right? So she called...first she start with the moderately...the one with like some words, which was the one I happened to be in, and she...when she called people to read they started reading what they were seeing, which wasn't making sense obviously. And um, she, well, she, you know, just exactly how a teacher will react, how not to react. They show you how a teacher should not react, that's what she did to the person and basically, you know, make them feel bad about themselves, tell them a lot of mean, horrible things. And then after she proceeded to go on to the people who had the full essay and like it was a lesson; like she victimize you to show you how a student will feel if you ever do that to them. And that's a lesson, that they... to show you what not to do to a student, basically. It's something that you... like from the time... because you see all kind of things...like right now... these</p>	<p>Activity at training session: victimization of students</p>
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	<p>Form 1's you seeing all kind of thing and it does come to your head, so you like know, "this student really need a reality check". But it's like, you know, it's in your head how the student will feel if you pull them aside, single them out, victimize them, so you know exactly what not to do. So that was another experience that we had at the one-week training. Also we have training every month, one day every month, they have a training session with us, with two coaches. One is Dr. Allison Forde, and one is Mrs. Katy Surin. They are... they author a lot of Mathematics books that they use in the system... Form 1 to 5. They also have a new software that they implemented with the RSC International which they distributed to all the schools and they set up through... It is a CXC Maths computer software that they use to, um, that they are supposed to give the students, but the students say they didn't receive any, but the school receive it through me, so it is in the computer lab if the children want to use it. So they taught us how to use the software in one of the training sessions. They also showed us...lesson plans... they introduced us to lesson plans and how to bring across the topics that you're doing. So all these was just a little... some... I'm probably leaving out some things, but these are some of the things they did in the training sessions with us. Yeah, so with the Maths remedial tutors we have one training session every month. So we already had for this month, we had for every single month, we have one training session per month, just to keep... and they have like a portfolio they make us keep so everything we do in the training sessions you document it so you could always go back and look at it and see what going on. So the training session overall...is very good. It helps a lot.</p>	<p>Ongoing remedial teacher training</p> <p>Training in use of software</p> <p>Training in lesson planning</p> <p>Ongoing teacher training</p> <p>Documentation of activities from training</p>
Researcher:	So what is your job position at the school at this moment?	
Participant:	This position? I'm a Remedial Mathematics Tutor.	
Researcher:	And what are the duties that you perform at the school?	
Participant:	<p>Okay. Well, the duties I am supposed to perform and the duties I am performing at the school are two different duties. So I will just elaborate a little on both of them. So the remedial programme was initially intended by the Ministry of Education and the Chief Education Office to target the Form 4 and Form 5 students who are about to write CXC. So we supposed to work with the Form 5's as a remedial group, like, usually what most schools do, pull</p>	<p>Difference in stipulated duties and actual duties</p> <p>Remedial education targeted for upper school students</p>

	<p>out the remedial students from the class and I am the Remedial Tutor, me, work one to one with them and this is how it's supposed to be done. But when I came to the school, the Principal indicated that I will be placed where I am needed, which was the remedial classes from Form 1 to 5. So I had one Form 5 class, which was not officially a remedial class, but at the time their teacher was on leave or something, so I hold on to that class for the time. But they also said that the school normally said the results that they produce, the... generally most of the school is remedial. So I just went along with it. So, um, the... it was 5Q that I got and well, I worked with them. I implemented some of the stuff that they teach us with the manipulatives and all the numeracy and literacy stuff that they taught us, I implemented it while I was teaching them. Also they gave me a Form 1W, which is desperate; well the 1W...the W's class is, you know, the slowest. So they for sure remedial, and well, I work with the Form 1's also and I also hold on two classes for a teacher who can't make it on those two days, which is a Form 3 and a Form 4 class. So it also...it gives me a lot of experience into the Teaching Service, if one day, you know, I want to join the Teaching Service, so ...yeah. So that's the different...the official duty I am supposed to be doing was working with the Form 4's and 5's and I just tell you what actually...(laughs).</p>	<p>Change in duties due to school needs</p> <p>Compliance with administrative instructions</p> <p>Implementation of strategies taught in training session</p> <p>Learning experience for teacher</p>
Researcher:	So what are some of the perceptions that you had about the school before you came to teach?	
Participant:	<p>Perceptions about the school. Okay, well, at first, I didn't know about the school Peaceful Secondary...like, okay, from... when I heard about Peaceful Secondary was probably a little more than two years ago when I had a friend from UWI who was placed here as a remedial tutor. That's how I heard about the school first. I did not know there existed a Peaceful Secondary until then. So that's where I first heard of it and then eventually she left and they called me. So...and the area is, you know, a bad area and all that, but that didn't stop me; I wanted to, you know, get experience in the teaching and...yeah. So I didn't really have any...yeah, 'cause this area, I not really affiliated with it much, so I didn't have any insights as to the school and Peaceful Secondary...yeah.</p>	<p>No prior knowledge of school</p> <p>School in a "bad area"</p> <p>No prior knowledge of school</p>
Researcher:	And how would you describe the children that you teach?	
Participant:	<p>Children? In terms of what? Like, general behaviour? Academia? Like...?</p>	

Researcher:	Well, generally... in terms of the remedial students that you deal with... how would you describe them? Generally or academic wise...how would you describe them?	
Participant:	Well, academic wise...in the bunch...well, right now the class I deal with the most is 1W. 1W is like... is the only class I'm teaching full-time right now because the other...at the start of the term I had 5T and 5Q, but they went home, so the one official class I teaching is 1W right now and the class...well, what I notice with them, they not responding anymore at all to the blackboard, the blackboard writing in your notebook ...they not responding at all to that, like last term it was okay. They responded. Last term was okay, but now it just, I don't know... they fed up, they saturated, I don't know what it is. So, what I notice is...that tends to affect their behaviour, so if they not following the work, that is when they going to lash out and behave bad. That's what I notice with them. But the level of work they doing, is below the level, a lot below the level they should be at, and the scheme that is presented for me to do with them is a lot higher than they would be able to understand and conceptualize because is the level where they supposed to be at, but they obviously not at the level, so you have to do work where they could cope with what they would be able to understand because they're remedial students. But behaviour -wise...I would say it's generally okay, except for like, just like one or two in the bunch, does like spoil the whole bunch and give them a bad name. But it's not as bad as people make it out to be.	Unresponsive to blackboard work "saturation" of students Pace of work is below average A few problem students in class
Researcher:	Okay. You used a term where you said that you found that the students were saturated. What do you mean by that?	
Participant:	Is like ...well, how, I find the attention...everybody have an attention span. Like my attention span is a hour. I can't go more than an hour. After a hour, I have to get up, walk about, do something. The attention span here is... probably ten minutes and you need to find fun ways after ten minutes to bring across your topic, because we have the students in the morning for, I think, a hour and twenty minutes and in the evening for a hour. So, after... and in the evening, is even worse. In the evening, if you can get them to settle for five minutes, that's...yeah, five minutes, they don't want to do more work, because what I notice...like I would write one board of notes and that is like so, so much. They up to the throat in work. They	Saturation of students/ Extremely short attention span

	<p>I don't know. And I visited the room recently, that's like, yesterday or two days ago or something and the room has a lot of resources that is not being used and they could be used and could probably, you know, create more interest for the students and them. So um, the room was dusty, really, really dusty and I asked the security to clean it out and what not, so that I could start using the room as soon as possible. So yesterday I dealt with that and as soon as I have the Form 1's again I am going to take them up to the room and I'm going to start using the manipulatives that they have there that are all in their sealed boxes. I'm going to open them up and try to make the best out of that. So that was the lack of resources part. That was one of the challenges and um, well...me, also another challenge for me being a new teacher, like this is the first time actually teaching students to, um...I will admit that I have some difficulty in classroom management. It is an issue for me because, the students, well, the younger students... in the school, well, I have no problem. I teach Form 1, 3, 4 and 5. The 3, 4 and 5, I could control them. Form 1 is out of control for me, and like, the more you talk to them is the... they don't listen at all. I don't know if it is just with me or if it is in general with all the teachers or if it is just a particular student, but they, they don't listen, well...I'm really talking about one student in particular; don't listen at all and it's really, really hard when he is in a classroom to teach the class because continuous disruptions...you could never ever get him to actually settle down and when he is not in the classroom is a different story. The class is an angel; they do so much work. Nice. So, the classroom management skill I say I probably have to work on...eventually, I guess, probably take a next direction the next time I get a class that, well, a disruptive, you know, misbehaved class, 'cause you don't know which classroom, classes you does get, you know, the bad ones. So I guess I will take a next approach so you could set down the ground rules from the start so they will know what, you know, what not to do, what not to do, so...but it was the first time, you know, the first time, is a learning experience, I learn from that so I know what to do in the future. So the classroom management, I guess, is a next challenge with that one Form 1 class. Other than that the classroom management is not a problem.</p>	<p>Underutilization of Maths remedial room</p> <p>Classroom management issues</p> <p>New approach with setting of ground rules</p>
<p>Researcher:</p>	<p>Ok. Great. So tell me about how you prepare for a remedial class. What types of things do you do?</p>	

Participant:	<p>Right. Well the remedial class, Form 1 right now, I could tell you what I'm doing with them right now. The scheme work that they gave me, we doing geometry, well... introducing them to algebra, and we have like, you know, little... decimals and stuff. So, what I do when... I have the scheme in front of me, the work to do with them... I pick out the topics that... well, dealing with the 1W class, I teach them a term now, so I kind of know the level they at so I know the topics that they will be able to understand and not understand. So first I will pick out the topics that I will focus on with them, because a simple topic a usual class will understand in like, fifteen to twenty minutes, it will take them probably about three classes to do because first there's the saturation point I was speaking about before. They only focus for a certain amount of time; after that, you probably have to do something else with them, you have to give them a break. So, that is why usually, is just like a little... the bulk of the work is done in about fifteen minutes with them. After that, you have to, you know, you does have to, well I will use the term, like kind of outsmart them to do more work. That is what I does do with them. I have to outsmart them to do it because it does just become real complaining. So I will prepare from the... like, all the stuff I'm going to do. I'll write down, well, we have new lesson plans that we do... well, my lesson plan not officially written up. I have it in my own notes on a little diary. I does write down exactly what I going to do, how I going to do it, so that's, yeah...and, well, the resources I going to use. So, we have the textbook we use and if... uh, research about the manipulatives that I could use, also the ICT's, as I was telling you about, there are a lot of computer software and well, these websites that they could go on. I will tell them about it because the school doesn't have a internet...well, we have an internet problem, as you would be well aware of. So, is, we have computers that the students could use, but they can't browse the internet using the computers. So I would tell them they could check out this, they could check out that, based on the topic that we doing. Sometimes, some of them, they check it out, the ones who really interested, you know, 'cause they... some of the students really like the Mathematics and they want to do good, so they will check it out. And that's just like some of the...what you call them? The virtual manipulatives. There's a world of virtual manipulative sites online that they could use. I tell</p>	<p>Choosing of subject content from scheme of work</p> <p>“Saturation” of students</p> <p>“outsmarting” students</p> <p>Lesson planning</p> <p>Informing students of digital/online resources</p> <p>Internet problem at school</p>
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	<p>them where to go check it, like when they doing fractions and stuff, they will go and check it. Um...so, yeah, then, so I will write out what exactly what I want to do, finish with them at the end of the topic and what was...well, I write up the records, what was completed, what was intended to be completed and the exercises. I also give them exercises to do with it, which, for now, is just written exercises, and sometimes I do it practically in class, 'cause it's really difficult, as I was saying before, to actually get them to write in their book. So I usually write them on the board and call them up individually, each person, I write... If there's ten students in the class, I do ten questions on the board and call them up individually and talk them. That's what I say it usually takes like a simple topic that could be done with a normal class that is up to the level in about ten minutes, would take me three classes to do. Because the, the... as a class looking on the board, they's really, really... hard for they to actually understand... I don't know if is fright or what, but usually one on one, they understand it better, because I would teach the topic generally to the whole class and then nobody would understand still until I call them up individually on the board and teach them it. So I practice, uh...the timing, I work out the timing before I go to class, like how much time I would spend on like, to do one person, so I could finish out like two periods and do a question with everybody. So I time out...I fix up all the timings before I actually go to class, and...yeah, that's about it for the preparing part for the classes, and well, the Form 5 classes, I, um... do past papers with them, every topic, 'cause the Form 5 class that I got, 5Q class, they didn't have a teacher for a while, so for the CXC syllabus, they didn't do about three to four large topics, like broad topics and I only had like about, just a few weeks with them and I managed to complete two of them with the class. So what I did, while I taught them the two topics, which was Functions, Relations and Graphs and um, Matrices and Vectors, I um...I went to the past papers, copied all the past papers for about the last six to seven years and I would go to the past papers and tailor out the questions based on the topics that I taught them and I would give them the topics right after we teach them...right after I teach them it, so they would get some past paper practice in the Mathematics and well, yeah. I did that for the both topics I did with them, yeah. So that was preparation for them. I used the past papers and well,</p>	<p>Write-up of records</p> <p>Preparation of exercises</p> <p>Individual student work</p> <p>Lesson planning</p> <p>Revision with past papers</p>
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	it was the Form 4 and the Form 5 and the Form 1 was my main focus and the Form 3 and 4 was a class that I was just holding down once a week for Ms. Cole, usually she would tell me the week of the class what to do with them, just to review what she did before, etc. So that wasn't really my primary focus. My primary focus was the Form 1 and Form 5 which was given to me to teach full time. Yeah.	
Researcher:	So what would you say makes teaching a remedial class difficult?	
Participant:	Ok, well, I kinda answer that before. Um... it's just the level of the student...okay. Well, it goes back to the attention span of the students. They very, very... well, they teach us to deal with this because all these... everything about remedial students is research, that they know exactly how the students respond to what, how long they could respond to something, so this is why you just deal with them slowly, really really slow you have to go with them. So is just the attention span is what would make it difficult.	Short attention span Slow pace of student progress
Researcher:	So what strategies do you use to help you in your teaching?	
Participant:	Um, strategies, right? Well, the strategies basically is just the stuff that I tell you that I did with the manipulatives, the... all the computer stuff that I try to introduce them to just get more...spark some more interest in the topic with them. The...what else? Yeah, that's generally it. The computer, the manipulative stuff that they have a little interest in and they does just eventually, yeah, go haywire on, yeah. Just the stuff that I mention before is what I usually implement to help me.	Use of manipulatives Computer resources
Researcher:	Ok, great. Let's suppose you have a very, very difficult class. Your class is extremely difficult. What do you do in an instance like that?	
Participant:	Well, you mean difficult, generally difficult, like academic, behaviour, everything?	
Researcher:	Yes.	
Participant:	Ok, well...What I will do or what I have done in the past?	
Researcher:	Well, what do you do generally when the class is difficult?	
Participant:	Ok, well as I mentioned, the 1W class is really difficult, but that is usually based just on one person in the class. Is very disruptive, disrespectful, doesn't listen, etc. So, usually what I did is... I realize he's a problem in the class, so I spoke to the Vice Principal, the Safety Officers and they um, took it to the next level. They were going to	Referral to administrative personnel

	<p>call in the student's parents and whatnot, but they decided to hold up on that and um, they dealt with it by giving him community service and whatnot. So, usually if it cannot be handled by me, if it's out of my control and the student isn't responding to me at all, I hand it over to higher heads that could possibly make a difference. So that's what I did in that instance. But in the future, as I said, I will start telling them from the first class what is my ground rules, what I expect and what I don't expect which I didn't do with them, the Form 1 class. I didn't do that with them when I started to teach. I didn't tell them what I expect of them, so they just did what they wanted anyway. So, yeah, from the time I get a new class now, the goals of the class will be clearly stated so they will know exactly what I want and what I expect of them. Yeah, so usually that is if the class is difficult and it's out of my capacity to, you know, get what I want of them, I will pass it on to higher heads, higher heads that could possibly help me.</p>	<p>Referral to "higher heads"</p> <p>Setting of ground rules</p> <p>Referral to "higher heads"</p>
<p>Researcher:</p>	<p>Okay, and um... What, um... teaching methods generally do you use when you are teaching the remedial class?</p>	
<p>Participant:</p>	<p>Okay, teaching methods, well, this is not really a method, but... well, it's not a method at all, but the topics that I teach them, I try to go back to real basic, basic stuff, although they don't like it. They think that, um, that... they too big and whatnot, but it doesn't matter to me because they have a lot of talk and they can't back it up with...because they will say they know how to do this, they know how to do that and when you ask them a question, they don't know it. So I usually go back to real, real, basic, basic stuff and like... bring in examples of practical things that they would like. Like there are students in the class that like Welding, they like Mechanics, they like this... So I would like, think about, just think about examples to give them that... just to keep a little interest because Mathematics is a subject, what I always say, is irrelevant and is the most relevant at the same time. Like, it's unimportant and important. It's just something that's...I came up with that myself, because... and that's what I tell them. I does be like, "You will think it unimportant, but it's the most important thing you will do. Every single thing you will do will have Mathematics in it, but you don't know that." So that's what I keep telling them and I always, like... refer to things. I will know this student interested in Mechanics, this one</p>	<p>Revision of basic topics/concepts</p> <p>Relation of Maths topics to students' interests</p> <p>Unimportance and importance of Maths</p>

	<p>interested in Plumbing, this one want to be a lawyer. So I will draw references to the stuff that we doing, like if we doing shapes and perimeter and whatnot, I will tell the one who want to be a welder, “You need to know how to measure this. If you have to measure a triangle, this, that, you have to know how to measure the angle, so, so, so.” The one who doing woodwork, he would need to know the angles, the... I just go back to the things that they want to do because most of the students I teach, they already know exactly what they career path is, what they want to do, what they don’t want to do, so I know them, like, I’m on a more personal level with them now. I know them, and the class is very small, so I know the students fairly well. So I can just, like, encourage them to, you know, do the Mathematics because it will help them in the future in the career path that they actually want to get into. So that’s a approach that I take with them so they will be... they will keep interested, they will be motivated and you know, they generally... ‘cause getting them to like Mathematics, and what the Mathematics that the curriculum expect them to do is really hard. You really need to draw reference to what they like and what they enjoy.</p>	<p>Relation of Maths topics to students’ interests</p> <p>Relation of Maths to students’ career choices</p>
Researcher:	So what kind of support do you get to assist you in teaching your remedial class?	
Participant:	Support from the school?	
Researcher:	Yeah. Any type of support. What type of support do you get?	
Participant:	<p>Okay, well, um... well... before I was mentioning about the unavailability and the... I wouldn’t say misinformation, the...well, yeah, is misinformation about the remedial room, etc., I wasn’t informed properly about it, but generally with the behaviour-wise, the school... the behaviour problems with the students in that particular class, the school is very helpful. They try their best to... um, you know, help the situation. They, yeah...the school generally helps out a lot with the students’ behaviour, if I having any problem, resources, like markers, etc., all these things, you know, the stuff, the... geometry stuff that you need to use, you know, everything readily available, so is a good support system academically, it just that, it just have little... one or two little flaws in between that could probably be swept out. So it’s generally, it’s okay. I get, uh...support.</p>	<p>Misinformation about remedial room</p> <p>Support from school in disciplinary issues</p> <p>Academic support from school</p>
Researcher:	What kind of support do you get from the other teachers to assist you in your teaching with the	

	remedial class?	
Participant:	<p>Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, they supportive. They give me a lot of strategy. When before, when I now came here, they, you know, they let me know what really to expect in the school. It was just like getting, like, a little insight, a little inside information about the school before you actually teach the students. Very supportive, you know, always willing to help. Yeah, yeah. Really, yeah, really supportive, nice bunch of teachers that really, genuinely, want to make a difference, I would say. So they will, you know, tell you what to expect, what not to expect, what to do, just little, you know, hints that could probably enhance your bringing across your message to the students, because, the students here, they... not...well, compared to the student I was, when I was... and the students that I was exposed to, is like... total different, different... atmosphere. Everything is different. It was almost like culture shock, it was almost like culture shock to me, but they made me aware of what to expect, what not to expect, like, so you know, because like a school like this, things that's been happening, things that students would do here would be like "Wow!" in a other school and in this school is just like something that happen on a day-to-day basis. It's normal here because of the environment, the area, the type of students, etc. So this, all this was made aware to me when I first came here by the staff members who were very nice. They always willing to help in any way they could to lend you stuff, to... any kind of resources, whatever you need. So they are very helpful and supportive, I would say.</p>	<p>Strong teacher support</p> <p>Teachers' willingness to share information, strategies</p> <p>"Culture shock"</p> <p>Helpful and supportive staff</p>
Researcher:	And what kind of support do you get from administration to help you with your teaching?	
Participant:	<p>Administration. Well... okay, administration? ...well...The stuff I ask for, I would get it, yeah, I would get it. Everything I ask for I get it; it's just sometimes, like if you don't...well, there are some things that need to be told to you and you wouldn't... nobody would tell you until probably is...you know, it have consequences or whatnot. So, is just ... I don't know if people busy, everybody have their own job to do, But sometimes just... 'cause I am young , I don't know everything about the Teaching Service, I don't know everything, so some things you just need to be... you need to tell me so I could, you know, um... organize, adjust to suit, so, yeah... to just prevent repercussions and whatnot. But administration is generally...</p>	<p>Supportive administration</p> <p>Perceived unwillingness of administration to share information</p> <p>Ignorance about Teaching Service</p>

Researcher:	Now you said that you recently found out about the use of the remedial room. So have you found any other resources in place at the school besides the remedial room that helps you in your teaching of the remedial students?	
Participant:	Well... okay, yeah, they gave me access to the computer...the computer room. The computer room, they gave me access to the computer room, but it wasn't necessary for me to use the computers with them because I would need internet to do what I have to do with the students and the computers, they don't get...because I checked out the computers to carry up the students already and the computers, the internet, it... well, it don't work at all. Basically you might get internet probably a little, little bit, it's not enough for you to carry... to finish your lesson what you would plan with them, so I didn't think that it was...it was, um... it would make sense for me to actually carry them to use the computers if they don't have any internet. So I just use what is available to me, which was the classroom and the blackboard and any kind of manipulatives that I could find. I could make... I usually make stuff too and carry for them like the palette stick stuff that help them with directed numbers and whatnot I use with them, so yeah, that's what I usually... that's what I usually do with them. I don't like...I don't think it have anything else, any other kind of resource that is exposed to me or that I would need other than those. Yeah.	Access to computer room Internet problem Use of classroom, blackboard and manipulatives Teacher creativity and resourcefulness
Researcher:	Do you think the school would fund the purchase of resources that you will need for your remedial class?	
Participant:	Well, the only thing that right now that I probably would need is internet for the computers to um...for the students to be able to go on the internet, browse and whatnot, and well... I actually have no idea, but from what I understand, that they...they had work done with the trying to get the internet on the compound and whatnot, but I think if I personally ask, they will...I mean it's... it's clearly a general problem with getting the internet into the school, so if I ask, I would probably be told what they will tell everybody, because they are working on it, is just the internet... it have a problem, a bigger problem that is beyond their control. So that's the only, um... yeah, that's, yeah ... if I ask for the internet, well, I will just work with what I have for now, which is the manipulatives that we have and I will tell them... I will give them links and whatnot to go home and check it... well, at least, those	Internet problem Unsure of positive response from school Willingness of school to work on problems Willingness to use available resources

	<p>who have their computers and what I wanted to do too is, give them the stuff on a flash drive, but the thing is I only have a personal flash drive and these children computers, God alone know what they have in them, so I wouldn't put my personal flash drive into it. So, um... I could probably in the future ask for a flash drive and if I'm able to get it, I will let you know. Maybe it wouldn't be a problem. I don't think it would, but I will let you know. Yeah.</p>	<p>Unsure of positive response from school</p>
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Appendix E

Coded Transcript of Interview with Participant 2

Date: Friday, May 8, 2015

Place: School Library

Interviewer: Ms. A. Mills

Interviewee: Ms. Beatrice Adams

Researcher:	How long have you been a teacher at the school now?	
Participant:	Four months. Since January.	
Researcher:	How did you come to be employed at the school?	
Participant:	I applied to be assessed for teaching and they called us out because they do like checks to see who applied and that is how I got the position.	Employment after waiting for teacher assessment
Researcher:	Have you had any formal teacher training before this?	
Participant:	No. We did the workshop the week before we attended the school to teach and that's it.	No formal teacher training
Researcher:	And what is your job position in the school?	
Participant:	In this school? I am supposed to help the remedial students, like the weaker students. I am supposed to sit down with them and get...give them individual attention into reading, writing, you know, formulating sentences, all those things.	Helps remedial students Individual attention
Researcher:	So your duties are to help the students at the school, to better their English?	
Participant:	Right. Yes.	
Researcher:	What are some of the perceptions that you had about the school before you came to teach here?	
Participant:	Um, honestly I thought the children would have been like more frustrated, like if you're trying to teach them and they didn't know or they didn't know how to pronounce the word or they didn't know the word they would react differently towards me. But some of them are really nice. Some of them, they try a lot. The ones who are weaker...it have one student especially who...he is weak, but he try a lot. He tries a lot and I'm glad for that, you know, because I really thought that they would vent out their frustrations knowing that they can't read or understand certain things, yeah. So I try again. So my idea I thought that it would have been bad.	Perceived "frustration" – hostility to teacher "really nice" students, "they try a lot" Perceived hostility to teacher due to ignorance

Researcher:	And how would you describe the children that you teach in your remedial class?	
Participant:	In general? Because I don't think I could generalize them and each one of them is individuals. Um, I think like if one of them comes, sit down and talk, it will be different from the other. Some of them, they are more receptive, they understand. They're not that there is really remedial, it's more that they are lazy and then some of them who are willing, they are remedial. They take time. They...he take a longer period of time to write work, to understand certain things, so...yeah. I wouldn't generalize them. I would put them like separate individuals. I can't generalize and say that the experience is bad or good.	Each student as "individual"
Researcher:	What are some of the challenges that you have in teaching or working with the remedial students?	
Participant:	The challenges...is knowing like what to teach them, because you normally can't use the ordinary forecast for like, an average Form 2, Form 1, or whatever class. The approach, even if I'm doing a topic, or like a similar topic from the Form 2's, I have to simplify it, I have to break it down or it might take a longer period of time and sometime they get frustrated with that. They say, "Miss, you're taking too long to do this topic." But I need them to understand and...well, most of the time I do activities with them to see if they understand what they did, if they could apply it. I keep saying the same thing over and over, so they would try to remember, 'cause like the more I say it and they more they try to write, the more they will remember. So I think it's the time. It wouldn't be covered like in a short space of time, like, okay...if an average Form 2, if we could cover a topic in one day, in two periods in the week, you have to take like a whole week with them to do one topic. And I does, like, break that down into sub-topics, so it take a longer period of time.	Choice of topic(s) to teach Simplification of subject content Repetition of subject content More time taken to cover subject content Simplification/breakdown of subject content
Researcher:	Tell me about how you prepare for a remedial class. What types of things do you do?	
Participant:	Um, most of the time, I do activities, like after I cover a topic, I try to get like, activities from online, like, there are other teachers, other co-workers, she help me... Ms. Mohan, she give me like little activities to do with them right after I finish or cover a topic. I will use the textbook... the textbook that	Collection of classroom activities from various sources Resources from teachers

	<p>they provide for us and I will break it down and explain it to them, what it is about and see if they understand and try to get them interactive in the class and ask them, and ask them to explain it back to me, especially the shy ones, because a couple of them would be really shy and they are the ones who're really willing to learn. For like reading and thing...I try to emphasize reading because, well the same one in 2W? I don't want to call it 2W. He tries a lot, but he replaces words and I don't know if it is the fear or lack of confidence with him.</p>	<p>Engages in interactive classroom activities</p> <p>Emphasis on reading</p>
Researcher:	He replaces words?	
Participant:	<p>Yeah, he replace the word. Like if he sees, um, "duty", he will replace it with a other word that starts with <u>d</u>. He wouldn't recognize that it is the word or he wouldn't break it down. I don't think he understands how to break it down because I don't think, um...to be honest with you, uh, the Form 2's? They are more regressive. They need more time. The Form 1 grasping better. With the Form 1's I take a different approach, a faster approach. Like as soon as I finish the uh..., I cover a topic, I give them assessment, like activities to do. They don't like it, but I give them it and I try to ask them like if they don't like it, like what to implement to make it more fun. Because they have a good relationship with me and I try not to break that bond, because they talk to me really well and they receptive whatever I teaching. That's the main thing I want them to understand, that they could come and talk to me...they don't understand something and I don't mind explaining it a hundred times to them, once they get it. At the end of the activity, I need to know they get and understand what we do, right?</p>	<p>Student difficulties with word recognition</p> <p>Comparison between Form 2 and Form 1 remedial classes</p> <p>Good relationship with Form 1 remedial students</p> <p>Teacher makes herself available for students</p>
Researcher:	So what would you say, in your opinion that makes teaching a remedial class difficult?	
Participant:	<p>My opinion? Lack of material, because they are not ordinary students and I don't know. Sometimes, I does worry because I don't know if the approach will be right for them, because they say "Yes, I understand, Miss", but when time to put it into practice or when is exam time, I don't know if they will get it. Because you see, is one thing if I cover the topic, but if a time pass and they don't read back their notes and they don't like to write, even if I put notes on the board...one board, one whiteboard with</p>	<p>Lack of material</p> <p>Unsure of correct teaching method to use</p> <p>Lack of revision by students</p> <p>Students dislike writing</p>

	notes is too much. So I print out stuff, handouts for them. Um, my concern is that they wouldn't remember if they don't go through back their notes, their readings. So I think that's the most difficult, because I try to... if I doing ... I go to a fresh topic, I try to come back to the other topic and revise it back, ask them if they remember what we did. Some of them does remember, and very few, no more. So I have to keep reinforcing, all the time. Yeah.	Handouts given to students Constant revision/reinforcement of topic
Researcher:	What strategies do you use to help you in your teaching of the remedial class?	
Participant:	The strategy is...I take a... individual approach, because, like I say, some of them slower than the others. If they don't understand, each one of them, I will let them come up. If I give them... If I've covered the topic and they get an activity to do, and they say "Miss, I don't understand", each one of them, I will explain it over and over and over. I will let them come and just sit down and explain in detail what I need them to do. It takes time, it takes a lot of time, and sometimes it does take from me. It does take a lot from me, yeah, because it seems like only fourteen...they say it's fourteen children, but it's multiplied when you have to give them that time. It does feel like...yeah.	"individual approach" Time and energy consumption
Researcher:	And what do you do when a class seems to be extremely difficult?	
Participant:	Um, well so far, is only 2W's is difficult. I don't know...sometime I really don't know the approach, how to deal with them because there are a couple of them, their background isn't that good and is one thing to have them here and to hold on to them and try to mold them and when they reach home, is a different story. There's one student in 2W, and I try so hard and a couple of times he did sit down and he did try to do some work, but like, I don't know. It's when he goes home, there does be a difference and when he comes back is a difference. So sometime...it's unexpected. I don't know...sometime you don't know how to approach them. Every day I try to go and just try to do my best. I try to explain it to them. If they want to learn, I will be there. I'll make myself available to them. If not...I wouldn't tell them "Ah tired, I don't want to hear from you." And even if he comes, the trouble one, I will sit down with him and explain to him and do the work	Teacher unsure of correct approach to use with students Difference in students' behaviour at home and at school Teacher unsure of correct approach to use with students Teacher gives of her best, makes herself available to students

	with him. Yeah.	
Researcher:	Do you use a variety of teaching methods to assist your teaching of the class?	
Participant:	Yeah. I use cue cards. I stick it on the board. I try to get them to participate, to come up on the board and write, cause the more I emphasize writing is the better they will understand. So, yeah, I use it like that. It's like a Scrabble and you just place the words on the board and they formulate. They come up and they formulate it. They formulate the simple sentences, whatever it is, yeah.	Cue cards Class participation in activities Word games
Researcher:	So what kind of support do you get to assist you in your teaching of the class?	
Participant:	Support? I don't understand. Be more specific. I don't understand.	
Researcher:	Well, do you get support from administration to help you teach the class?	
Participant:	Um...well, the class is co-taught, because I will take them two days...well one especially is co-taught, the 2W's, because they are less children but they are more difficult to deal with. It seems that some of them are trouble children. So um, I will co-teach it with one of my co-workers. Um, there is Ms. Mohan, she give me material, she give me approach...she tells me like how to approach certain topics and if it doesn't work, I will go back and ask her and explain it to her and tell her, "you know, it didn't work. I don't know what else to do", and she will show me other things to do and she give me, like little strategies to like, to get them active. So if they get involved and active, that's a good thing, 'cause once I capture their attention, that's it. So she helps me a lot. Ms. Mohan helps me a lot. And apart from that, there's my co-worker, staff, yeah. So she helps out a lot. She takes them sometimes.	Team teaching Troublesome remedial class Support given from teachers Tries to capture students' attention
Researcher:	So you're saying that the staff has been very helpful?	
Participant:	Yeah.	
Researcher:	So what resources have you found in place at the school that helps you with your remedial teaching?	
Participant:	To be honest, I really didn't take advantage of any of the resources here because one time I had like an experience where I had to get copies done for the literature section with the 1W's and they said I had to put it in for the 2 days. So I decided that from now	Reluctance to use school resources Delays in accessing school resources

	<p>on I will print stuff for them personally and I will give them things personally 'cause anything I did with them, was printed from me because it would take too long and they need the work, they need the attention so I need to prepare. Yeah, so I didn't use much of the resources. The only thing I really use is the reading material, the workbooks, the reading skills book that's in the remedial cupboards, but other than that to make use of the printers and the other rooms, I really don't make use of it. Yeah.</p>	<p>Uses personal resources to assist students</p> <p>Use of school's reading materials</p> <p>Reluctance to use printers, specialized rooms</p>
Researcher:	So do you think that the school would fund any purchase of resources that you may need for the remedial class?	
Participant:	<p>To be honest with you, no. I don't think so, because, you see, they are remedial, and I don't know, they get tired. At the beginning they might say, "yes, we want to do this", but, in the end, it would be like a task. I don't think they will focus on them so much, because they don't seem like much and I think... the 1W is only like what? 5 students. It's total 7 students and if I lucky, is 3, 4 of them will come to class. So I don't think they will focus on them because I don't know. I don't want to say they not significant. They significant to me, because I will like to go and try to help them, but I don't think they will do it because of the numbers, the number of students, to be honest with you.</p>	<p>Perceived unwillingness of school</p> <p>Perceived insignificance of students by school</p>
Researcher:	So you feel that because it's a small number of students that you feel that they wouldn't get the kind of resources that they need?	
Participant:	<p>Yeah, I don't think so, yeah, because I don't think they would want to put that out for them. Me personally, I does try my best, because I was looking at, like, little phonics, like little kits. I was looking for... and I was going to tell them "Make use of the laptops", but they say that the laptops as well, they not working, that they used them for a couple of months and then... they just stopped working.</p>	<p>Teacher takes initiative</p> <p>Non-functioning students' laptops</p>
Researcher:	And this is with the Form 1's?	
Participant:	Yeah... the Form 2's.	
Researcher:	The Form 2's?	
Participant:	<p>Yeah. The Form 1's, they usually have their laptops sometimes, but the Form 2's, like when I ask them if they could bring their laptops their selves to hear the words, like you know, it have the option you could</p>	

	<p>press... the... I think it's the voice... and you type in a word and you hear it, right? I wanted to make use of these things. I wanted to make use of the little videos you could see online, but, um... I don't think...I don't know they will allow me to do that, because I know that there is an English class to carry the students to English, but I don't know if they will allow me to use the class, to utilize it, yeah, because of the small amount of students, because is only like 3 for the most sometimes will come to the class. Yeah.</p>	<p>Teacher's willingness to use technology in the classroom</p> <p>Unwillingness to use specialized room</p>
Researcher:	All right. I want to go back and talk to you about administration. Um...do you really feel that you...do you get any kind of support from administration?	
Participant:	Um, administration, like...?	
Researcher:	As in the Principal, Vice Principals...	
Participant:	<p>I think I would get it, to be honest with you. I would get it, but, um...the idea that, like I say, is just a little bit of students. So, focusing on them and I'm focusing on CXC students and then you remember the Form 4's and 5's and I know they're preparing for exams. So my class you might say is insignificant. So I think if I go to them, I might get...'cause I go to Ms. Little (Vice Principal) sometimes, who gets things done, not all the time. I don't want to take advantage of her good nature. But, um...I just think that how there's just like, a small class? They wouldn't like, pay attention to it, as much as other classes.</p>	<p>Perceived insignificance of students in eyes of administration</p> <p>Support from vice principal</p>

Appendix F

Emerging Themes: Analysis of Interview with Tutor/Participant 1

Note: Codes in inverted commas are *in vivo* codes.

Codes	Emerging Themes/Categories
Backlog of Applicants for Teaching Service Employment after waiting for interview Younger people given opportunity to teach One week teacher training	Circumstances of Employment
Activities and concepts taught at training session Activity at training session: victimization of students Ongoing remedial teacher training Training in use of software Training in lesson planning Documentation of activities from training	Details of Teacher Training Experiences
Difference in stipulated duties and actual duties Remedial education targeted for upper school students Change in duties due to school needs Compliance with administrative instructions Implementation of strategies taught at training session Lesson planning Willingness to use available resources	Description of Role of Teacher
Learning experience for teacher No prior knowledge of school School in a “bad area”	Tutor’s Perception of School
Unresponsive to blackboard work “saturation” of students/short attention spans Pace of work is below average A few problem students in class Slow pace of student progress “culture shock”	Description of Remedial Students
Lack of access to resources “saturation” of students/short attention spans Misinformation about resources at school Underutilization of Maths Remedial Room Classroom management issues Choosing subject content from scheme of work “outsmarting” students Lesson planning Informing students of digital/online resources Internet problem at school	Challenges of Working with Remedial Students

<p>Write-up of records Preparation of exercises Individual student work Revision with past papers Slow pace of student progress</p>	<p>Challenges of Working with Remedial Students (continued)</p>
<p>Use of manipulatives Computer resources Referral to administrative personnel/ "higher heads" Revision of basic concepts Relation of Maths topics to students' interests</p>	<p>Coping Mechanisms of Teacher/Tutor</p>
<p>Support from school in disciplinary issues Academic support from school Strong teacher support Teachers' willingness to share information Helpful and supportive staff Supportive administration Perceived unwillingness of administration to share information Use of classroom, blackboard, manipulatives Computer resources/access to computer room Internet problem at school Willingness of school to work on problems Unsure of positive response from school</p>	<p>Support Systems and Resources at School</p>
<p>Setting of ground rules</p>	<p>New Approaches with Classes</p>

Appendix G

Emerging Themes: Analysis of Interview with Tutor/Participant 2

Note: Codes in inverted commas are *in vivo* codes.

Codes	Emerging Themes/Categories
Employment after waiting for teacher assessment No formal teacher training	Circumstances of Employment
Helps remedial students Gives individual attention Engages in interactive classroom activities Good relationship with Form 1 students Teacher makes herself available for students/ teacher gives of her best Time and energy consumption Tries to capture students' attention Uses personal resources to assist students Teacher takes initiative Teacher's willingness to use technology in the classroom	Description of Role of Teacher
Perceived "frustration" /hostility to teacher "really nice students" "They try a lot" Each student as "individual" Student difficulties with word recognition Lack of revision by students Students dislike writing Difference in students' behaviour at home and at school Troublesome remedial class	Description/Perceptions of Remedial Students
Choice of topics to teach Simplification/breakdown of subject content Repetition of subject content More time taken to cover subject content Collection of classroom activities from various sources Emphasis on reading Student difficulties with word recognition Comparison between Form 2 and Form 1 remedial classes Lack of material Unsure of correct teaching method to use unsure of correct approach to use	Challenges of Working with Remedial Students

<p>Lack of revision by students Students dislike writing/ Handouts given to students Constant revision/reinforcement of topic Time and energy consumption</p>	<p>Challenges of Working with Remedial Students (continued)</p>
<p>“individual approach” Time and energy consumption Teacher makes herself available/ gives of her best Cue cards Class participation in activities Word games Team teaching Support given from teachers</p>	<p>Coping Mechanisms of Teacher/Tutor</p>
<p>Reluctance to use school resources/Uses personal resources to assist students Use of school’s reading materials Team teaching Resources from teachers Support given from teachers Reluctance to use printers, specialized rooms Perceived unwillingness of school Perceived insignificance of students by school Teacher takes initiative Non-functioning students’ laptops Teacher’s willingness to use technology in the classroom Perceived insignificance of students in the eyes of administration Support from Vice Principal</p>	<p>Support Systems and Resources at School</p>