

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND  
EVALUATION**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

**REMEDIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

**D.E.R.E.**

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This report was made possible through the hard work of the following persons who comprised the evaluation team:

|                     |                            |                    |
|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Andra Salandy       | Evaluation Officer         | <b>Team Leader</b> |
| Arlene Emmanuel     | Research Officer           |                    |
| Rosaline Mendez     | Research Assistant         |                    |
| Mervyn Sambucharran | Testing Officer            |                    |
| Peter Smith         | Testing Officer            |                    |
| Veda Arthur         | Clerk III (Ag.)            |                    |
| Selby Ann Augustine | Evaluation Officer         |                    |
| Keith Clarke        | Education Research Officer |                    |

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The evaluation procedures for this evaluation were conducted according to the Programme Evaluation Standards as set out by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation ( Joint Committee on Standards, 1994).

The report was prepared with reference to the requirements included in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* American Psychological Association (APA) 2000.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|      |   |
|------|---|
| ALTA | Adult Literacy Tutors Association               |
| CEE  | Common Entrance Examination                     |
| DERE | Division of Educational Research and Evaluation |
| MOE  | Ministry of Education                           |
| SEA  | Secondary Entrance Assessment                   |
| SEMP | Secondary Education Modernization Project       |

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

## **REMEDIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

### **SECTION I**

#### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this programme evaluation is to provide the programme developers with information to ascertain the extent to which the programme is achieving the objectives for which it was designed. The findings could also be used to determine whether the programme should be continued, improved, expanded or discontinued.

This report is organized in six sections. Section 1 provides a summary of the paper. It includes some of the major findings and recommendations. Section 2 presents background information of the Remedial Education Programme; Section 3 explains the purpose of the evaluation and provides a description the evaluation method used. Section 4 describes information on the data collection process; Section 5 outlines the evaluation findings, analysis and recommendations. The appendices can be found in Section 6.

As of May 2003, 9788 students are enrolled in the remedial education programme in 93 schools.

The objectives of the Remedial Education Programme are to develop in students:

1. the ability to comprehend reading material and apply information to the solution of complex problems;
2. the ability to write and speak clearly;
3. the ability to understand mathematical data and use math and technology as problem solving tools;
4. the ability to work effectively in teams;
5. the competencies to master the Form One Promotion Test to proceed to Form One. **(Document produced by The Division of Curriculum Development)**

Sixteen schools were used in the sample. Using a mixed design of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect information, the evaluation focussed on the operations of the Remedial Education Programme in the selected schools. The qualitative component examined the perceptions of administrators, teachers, parents and students concerning the value, strengths, and weaknesses of the programme. Thirty students from each of the selected schools were also used as part of the study in the quantitative component. Parent interviews were done at one school.

The evaluation involved the following general strategies: case studies i.e. an in- depth study of particular schools, interviews, surveys of key informants in programme schools, site visits, artefact analysis i.e. analysis of records and documents, analysis of existing test scores for a selected sample of students, analysis of data collected from students' questionnaire.

## **1.1 EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

The main evaluation questions were therefore:

1. Are students benefiting from the programme?
2. Are teachers able to implement the programme successfully in the classroom?
3. What is the perception of the programme in terms of effectiveness and success, among the stakeholders?

## **1.2 MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There was no common organisation model for remediation among the schools surveyed. Each school had a distinct way of organizing its programme. Some of the models that existed were:

1. Students are timetabled for remedial mathematics and Reading in separate classrooms.
2. Students are placed in permanent remedial classes

3. Students are sent to the remedial teacher when the class teacher identifies a problem during teaching.
4. Students work in the mainstream class with a remedial teacher present in the class to give assistance where needed.

In one school none of the students with special educational needs had been promoted over the three years, while in the other schools, students were promoted each year. These students were in Form three at the time of the evaluation. The principals reported however that the majority of students was not promoted based on ability.

Perusal of the work programmes at schools showed that they did not reflect the components of remedial programmes. The tutors seemed not to be aware of the requirements for a remedial programme based on competence.

There were no standardized objectives and every school had different sources from which they developed their work. Some used the SEMP programme, primary school curriculum, textbooks, ALTA programme, and the original secondary school curriculum while some used their experience of the primary school curriculum to determine what should be taught and how it should be taught.

The teachers generally showed a very humanistic approach to dealing with the students. Some classroom environments had reflected rich learning environments while some were very bare and bore no resemblance to an appropriate learning environment. Discussions with some tutors revealed that they were putting much effort to get the students to learn. Some of the evidence was: print rich environment, games and work corners, work sheets. Teachers generally claimed that the students were still struggling in most instances. In one class observed, some students were sleeping during instruction.

The teachers were using teaching methods, which were not efficient. It was found that not all schools had the appropriate resources for instruction; nor did all the teachers have the correct approach; 'chalk and talk' prevailed. The general approach was whole

group teaching and teacher dominated classrooms, no matter the size of the class. In all of the classes observed, students were exposed to transmission learning. Individual attention was rare, with the exception of the identification of students for spontaneous questioning. Interaction among students was also non-existent among the classes observed.

The ratio of students to teachers varied across all the classes sampled. The range was from 1 teacher to 8 students assigned, to whole group teaching of 25 students to one teacher in one session. In some schools where team teaching was implemented, there was an average of 15 students to a team of two teachers. The recommended maximum class size for remedial teachers should be 15.

It must be mentioned that there was not an instance found where all the students who were on the class register would have been present on any one day. A high level of absenteeism existed.

Teachers also reported that they faced some difficulties with the students. Most students had irregular attendance at school while there were students who would be at school but would not attend classes. "They liked to play hide and seek with the teachers." Teachers regularly would have to search for them. Students also came to classes without books and writing instruments. Some teachers also indicated that some of the students were very aggressive towards them. They also mentioned that low motivation existed among the students. The PM shift teachers reported that students on the evening shift responded very poorly after 2 o'clock.

Record keeping was found to be inefficient. Only three of the schools sampled had substantial records of students' profiles. These records provided some quality information on students' performance.

The principals and teachers however, perceived the programme to be working well and gave it some very positive comments. They highlighted some success indicators as:

“making students better off”

“it allowed students to demonstrate improved reading levels”

“increased attendance”

“less discipline problems”

“integration into mainstream classes and performing exceedingly well in their class ”

“students are developing positive relationships with tutors, an ingredient that is absent in the wider school community”.

Mention must be made that there was no evidence to support their claims.

The teachers also gave some weaknesses of the programme. These included implementation difficulties.

Some parents of Form one students were also interviewed. These parents could not provide concrete evidence of the programme’s success, but were quite happy that the MOE was making an intervention. A parent also recommended that the MOE should give teachers more authority to discipline students.

Many of the students in the programme expressed their dissatisfaction about being teased and taunted by other students and resented being labelled **S** students.

## **Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended that:

- 1) There is a review of the policy for the hiring of Remedial Intervention Teachers.
- 2) Teachers carry out accurate assessment of students who are identified for **1S** classes to determine their special needs. SEA data does not provide all the necessary information that would determine the programme for each child’s needs.
- 3) Written reports of students’ progress should be submitted to the Student Support Services Unit.

- 4) Research should be carried out by the Student Support Services Unit in collaboration with DERE to ascertain the factors which impact on these students' learning/ performance and thus to determine appropriate actions to nullify the negatives and support the positive impacts. For example, research shows that labelling affects students' self esteem (Lindenfield, 1995).
  
- 5) Action research should be the norm in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is also recommended that the teachers who work on the programme be called tutors. *Tutoring is a method of teaching in which one student or a small group of students receive personalized and individual instruction.*

## **SECTION II**

### **2.0 Introduction and Background**

With the introduction of Universal Secondary Education in 2000, many students who previously would not have had a place in a secondary school now have this opportunity. It has been found however, based on the results of the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) and the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) that many of these students lack basic skills in literacy and numeracy, which are necessary for them to benefit from secondary education as it is offered. Students who obtained less than 30% of the composite score were identified. As a corrective measure, a Remedial Education Programme (R E P) has been implemented in selected secondary schools. The major goal of the programme is to provide remedial literacy and numeracy so as to ensure academic success at the secondary school. As of May 2003, 9788 students are enrolled in the programme at 93 schools.

#### **2.1 Programme Description**

The programme came into effect in 2000 and is now in its fourth year of implementation. It focuses on remediation in mathematics and Reading/Language Arts. It embodies a framework within which instructors are expected to learn the students' preferred and predominant learning styles and cooperatively plan learning experiences to help students improve their literacy and numeracy levels as well as develop life skills. Instructors are therefore given the freedom to set realistic short and long term goals with students after first determining students' levels of performance.

#### **2.2 The objectives of the Programme**

The objectives of the Remedial Education Programme are to develop in students:

1. the ability to comprehend reading material and apply information to the solution of complex problems;
2. the ability to write and speak clearly;
3. the ability to understand mathematical data and use math and technology as problem solving tools;
4. the ability to work effectively in teams
5. the competencies to master the Form One Promotion Test to proceed to Form One. **(Document produced by The Division of Curriculum Development)**

Instruction must therefore be provided to:

- (i) accelerate students' reading growth
- (ii) help students apply decoding skills as they read
- (iii) help students develop strategies to comprehend and construct meaning
- (iv) develop in students critical thinking and mathematical skills
- (v) help students develop a strong sense of self
- (vi) help students to work effectively in teams

School and classroom learning activities are to be characterized by teaching which incorporates a variety of methods and strategies.

It is imperative that the programme's effectiveness be evaluated. The objective of the evaluation is therefore to determine the overall effectiveness of the **Remedial Education Programme**.

## **SECTION III**

### **3.0 Evaluation Method**

#### **3.1 Purpose of the programme evaluation**

Evaluation is the process of determining the merit or worth of a product, process or programme (Scriven, 1991). In 2001, an evaluation was done of the Remedial Intervention Programme. From this evaluation, some findings and recommendations were reported. As a follow up to this evaluation, there was a need to conduct further evaluations so that a more comprehensive picture could be developed. The purpose of this evaluation was therefore to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the programme. This picture will aid all the stakeholders in making decisions concerning continuation, expansion or termination of the programme.

The following were therefore reasons for conducting the evaluation:

- To determine the effectiveness of the programme for participants;
- To document that programme objectives are being met;
- To provide information about the delivery of the programme that could be useful to tutors and other audiences;
- To enable the programme developers to make changes that can improve the programme's effectiveness.

#### **3.2 Evaluation Questions used to focus the study:**

The main evaluation questions were therefore:

1. Are students benefiting from the programme?
2. Are teachers able to implement the programme successfully in the classroom?
3. What is the perception in terms of effectiveness of the programme and its success among the stakeholders?

### **3.3 Evaluation approach:**

The evaluation focussed on the operations of the Remedial Education Programme. The aim of the Evaluation Study was to determine the effectiveness of programme processes. The evaluation therefore looked at a broad range of questions related to implementation, progress and its outcomes.

The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative component examined the perceptions of administrators, teachers, parents and students concerning the value, strengths, and weaknesses of the programme. The quantitative aspect of the evaluation examined the students' perceptions of the programme's activities.

## **SECTION IV**

### **4.0 The data collection process**

#### **4.1 Sample, data collection and instrumentation**

For the study, a sample of the population was used. This sample included a cross section of schools across each educational district, two schools per educational district and one in Tobago, giving a total of sixteen schools. Thirty students selected randomly from each of the selected schools were also used as part of the study. Parent interviews were done at one school. Sixteen parents of students from one school were interviewed.

The evaluation involved the following general strategies: case studies i.e. an in-depth study of particular schools, surveys of key informants in programme schools, site visits, artefact analysis i.e. analysis of records and documents, analysis of existing test scores for a selected sample of students, analysis of data collected from students' questionnaire.

The following sources were also used to collect the needed information:

- overall characteristics of classrooms currently implementing the programme
- principal interview
- teacher interview
- current implementation of the programme compared to programme guidelines
- progress report analysis- Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- examination of test data
- student perceptions
- observational data
- class records

## 4.2 Sub – questions

To answer the main evaluation questions, a number of preliminary sub- questions were constructed. After carrying out the preliminary analysis of data, new questions emerged. The findings will be organized according to the sub - questions.

The sub-questions used were:

- Are tutors working according to remedial guidelines?
- What type of activities are students engaged in?
- Are participants satisfied with what they are gaining from the programme?
- Is there evidence to suggest that the remedial programme is effective?

It must be noted however that the original evaluation plan was very comprehensive and had to be modified because of the many constraints that impacted on its full implementation.

## 4.3 Limitations

The evaluation proposal as conceptualised was not carried out in its entirety for many different reasons .Two of the major constraints in this evaluation worth documenting were the small number of officers who were readily available to conduct the evaluation during data collection and analysis period and the time frame for data collection.

- Time constraints. The exercise of data collection could have been only done over a two-week period although the proposal was prepared long in advance.
- The end of the term and the number of school activities that were taking place at the time, thus scheduling of activities was problematic.
- The visit to Tobago had to be postponed several times because of the bureaucratic process. Officers eventually paid for their return fare and are still awaiting refunds.
- Limited human resources for data collection. All officers were involved in other activities, which were highly prioritised, leaving little room for this evaluation.
- No standardized testing of students was done.

## SECTION V

### 5.0 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

After each data collection session, all officers wrote a narrative summary to give a clear picture of what the programme's offering was like in each school. The data were then analysed according to the questions and sub questions identified and the findings categorised. The following were findings generated from the data.

#### 5.1 Teaching Models

There was no common remediation model among the schools surveyed. However different distinct models could be identified.

- Students are timetabled for remedial mathematics and Reading in separate classrooms. These students do not do the Language and the mathematics with the rest of the group to which they belong. However, they do all of the other subject areas with the rest of the group to which they belong.
- Students have been placed in permanent remedial classes. The curriculum of the school is modified to meet their level of learning. They are timetabled for the most of the subjects as the other students not receiving remedial intervention in mathematics and Reading.
- Students go to the remedial teacher when the class teacher identifies a problem during normal teaching. These students later return for mainstream instruction. Most of these students however, it is reported, do not report for special teaching. The policy in most schools is to promote these students at the end of the academic year. Teachers report that the students are not able to cope with the work and workload.
- Students work in the mainstream class with a remedial tutor present in the class to give assistance where needed.
- Some students do two sets of mathematics and English, which are not closely related, remedial and mainstream. Different teachers teach the subjects.

- The students go to the remedial teachers, indicate what their problem is and receive remediation, then they return to the mainstream class to continue their work.
- In some schools there are two sets of students who receive remedial instruction a) those who have been identified as 1S and b) those who the teachers identify from the mainstream group at times, as in need of remedial instruction.
- In one school, no special students had been promoted over the three years. They occupy slots on the timetable at Forms 1, 2, 3. The level of work does not reflect the class level to which they are assigned.

The limited data collected however could not state how effective each of the models was. Further data have to be collected.

## **5.2 Assessment processes and procedures**

- In three schools, there was evidence of record of fortnightly assessments together with item analysis reports. Generally there was not much evidence of this in the other schools with the exception of term test results- viz “marks” only. The only method of assessment used was paper and pencil tests, which included worksheets from primary school texts. Perusal of the test items showed that there was limited relation to probes used for the assessment of students in remedial classes.
- All schools kept a collection of students work in ‘work folders’. However, not all the teachers in every school did so. These were in the minority however. The male teachers did less record keeping and were less methodical in their approach.
- No mastery evidence. The marks seen could not give any indication of which objectives were tested and mastered for individual students or for the class.

## **5.3 Conclusion and Recommendation**

Remedial sessions should be designed to help students overcome specific identified problems which they are experiencing. Therefore there is much to be done in

the area of assessment. A strong assessment system must be put in place to support the remediation process. Assessment in this case is also used to motivate students.

Recording and reporting procedures must be improved as they are important tools that provide evidence of student achievement in the psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains. Individual Education Plans must be developed based on students' strengths and weaknesses. This will not only ensure accountability, but will also provide evidence for the effectiveness of the remediation programme.

#### **5.4 Professional competence/ development**

- Classroom observations and interviews at all the schools in the sample revealed that teachers were not very aware of the difference between remediation and developmental work. They were carrying out their practice with no observable differences in strategies or approach.
- The Language teachers stated that they were called out to in- service training, but the mathematics teachers indicated that they never had any supplementary training to enable them to work efficiently with the group of students.
- In one school, teachers indicated that they paid for special programmes with their money.
- Discussions with some teachers revealed that they were exercising much effort to get the students to learn. There was evidence of this in the majority of classrooms – print rich environment, games and work corners. There were many teachers however, who did the basic - keeping their students occupied.
- The majority of teachers had retired for more than five years, and seemed not to be up to date with current teaching strategies or familiar with the peculiar characteristics of their present group of students.
- Teachers had stated that they were not given any prior training before starting the tutoring and as such were not too sure if they were actually doing what was required of a programme of this nature.

- All teachers indicated that they were engaged in a lot of counselling activities with the students.

## **5.5 Conclusion and recommendation**

The results point the evaluator to conclude that the professional capacity of the teachers is not adequate for a programme of this nature. Teachers must come into the programme with a required level of competence and this must be built up with on-going professional development.

## **5.6 Students engaged time/ Classroom instruction**

- The average number of students per class among the sample ranges from eight to thirty students per session. However records showed that on average, only about 75% of the class would be present on any one day.
- Some schools have 35 minutes per period while some have 45 minutes. Attendance at remedial classes ranges from twice per week to four times per week.
- The general approach is whole group learning and teacher dominated classrooms. All the students are exposed to transmission learning with the exception of the identification of students for spontaneous questions. One to one social interaction was absent in most schools. Drills and regurgitated learning are very commonplace.
- The organization for instruction was one in which the teacher transmits some information with spontaneous questioning to a few students for about 50% of the time, students engage in independent seatwork for approximately 25% and then work is corrected and evaluated for the next 25%.
- Although classes are small, individual attention to students was very limited, monitoring of student' learning therefore was very low.
- Interaction among students was non-existent among the classes observed.

- There also seemed to be a mismatch between the instructional strategies used and the ability/ age of the pupils.
- The ratio of students to teachers varies across all the classes sampled. The range is from 1 teacher to 8 students assigned, to whole group teaching of 25 students to one teacher in one session. In some schools where team teaching is implemented, there is an average of 15 students to a team of two teachers.
- In six schools there were no form three classes, since they were mainstreamed after one year. Teachers however claim that these students are still struggling.
- Several schools did not have the appropriate resources for instruction. Special technology such as manipulative and other instructional resources was generally absent. While some schools had a few resources, only three seemed to be well supplied. One teacher boasted of “walking with his own resources and gave an example of bringing one’s own resources as ‘an orange to cut up’. This proved the point that this teacher needed some training on identifying the appropriate resources for teaching concepts.
- Some teachers however are putting a lot of effort into planning by preparing the necessary resources for implementing instruction. In one of the schools visited, the Language teachers were creating an abundance of games and manipulative for students to use. They were taking a keen interest in what they had to do for their students. It was very professional and impressive
- Average daily attendance at each school was calculated at 70% of the students.
- In one class observed, there was disruptive and aggressive behaviour. Students were fighting in the class.
- In one class observed, some students were sleeping during instruction.
- The instruction in one class observed was found to be above the students’ level of understanding.
- In one school, special software called **Success Maker Software** was used for the reading programme.
- Although the programme was in existence for three years at the time of the evaluation, in thirteen of the schools, the students from the first cohort could not be identified as receiving remedial instruction since they were mainstreamed.

Both principals and teachers reported however that these students were performing below the accepted level. Some principals reported that this was so because the MOE had taken too long to send Remedial teachers to the schools.

## **5.7 Conclusion and recommendation**

The teachers generally showed a very humanistic approach to dealing with the students. Teachers exhibit a high level of enthusiasm for the programme and great camaraderie among themselves. This was exhibited through the sharing of knowledge, ideas and resources. What was very obvious was the wealth of experience in teaching that they possessed. However, there was a clear mismatch between their experience and the required knowledge and skills required for conducting a remedial programme.

The recommended maximum class size for remedial teachers should be 15. Because of the number of students who are placed in the programme, a smaller number will require a substantial amount of teachers which will not be economically feasible. The level of remediation required will determine if the group should be smaller and should be evaluated on a case basis. The key to successful remediation will therefore depend on how the teacher organizes instructional time.

## **5.8 The curriculum**

- All schools used different sources for their curriculum. The SEMP programme, primary school curriculum, textbooks, ALTA programme, the secondary school curriculum and personal experience of teaching in the primary schools were the sources from which the teachers derived their content. In terms of organisation, different formats existed. The curriculum was either put out in general objective form, or just a listing by topics or following the ALTA programme for the Reading programme were the ways in which the teachers had organized their work. The content areas had some similarities across the board however.

- The programme of work in most instances was therefore an agglomeration of different ideas. There was a total absence of defined content and performance standards.
- There was little evidence of diagnosis of students' areas of specific difficulty in the Reading area only before they began instruction.
- It must be noted that no Individual Education Plans (IEP's) were found in any of the subject areas of the schools sampled.

### **5.9 Difficulties faced by teachers**

In an effort to translate the programme into actual classroom practice, the teachers have encountered several difficulties.

- Some teachers indicated that some of the students were very aggressive.
- High level of absenteeism - Some students had irregular attendance at school while there were students who would be at school but would not attend classes. Teachers generally reported that oftentimes they had to go searching all over the compound to locate students who were hiding.
- Students come to classes without books and writing instruments.
- There are frequent timetabling clashes.
- PM shift tutors report that students' ability to stay on task or be engaged decreased by 2 p.m.
- Teachers lack clarification of their duties because there is no job specification, which defines their duties/ roles/ responsibilities.
- There is low motivation among students.

### **5.10 Record Keeping**

The quality of record keeping was found to be very low.

- Only three of the schools sampled had comprehensive records of students' work. The records provided qualitative information on students.

- Recording in the other schools in the sample ranged from work folders that had evidence of children's work, checklist of skills, test papers, attendance registers, progress records and anecdotal records to instances where tutors did not even keep a class register.
- Generally tutors were unable to give comprehensive reports on the progress of each individual student since they relied on memory. Class Registers were not found in all schools. There was one instance where the register was a bit of 'rolled up scrap paper'.
- Evidence of multiple worksheets formed the basis of the tutor's record keeping.

### **5.11 Classroom environment**

Across the sample there was much variation in the learning environment. Even within schools there were variations among the classroom environment.

- Some classes were individual rooms.
- Some shared with the mainstream teachers at the back of the class.
- Teams of teachers shared classrooms.
- Some tutors had no rooms of their own and had to search on a daily basis for vacant rooms in which to conduct their classes.
- Some schools had special rooms set aside for remedial classes.
- Three who had individual rooms had air-conditioned classrooms.
- There were also classes that were situated in very noisy environments with dilapidated and very untidy environments and furnishings that were not very conducive to learning.
- There are some classes where there was a deliberate effort to provide a print-rich environment for students, a key ingredient for learning especially for remedial classes. However, there were very many instances where the walls were bare. The following reasons were given for this: lack of storage facilities, destruction by students, sharing of rooms by two shifts.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers and administrators need to pay attention to the instructional environments.

### **5.12 Indicators of success as outlined by the teachers and principals**

The Remedial Programme received some very positive comments from teachers. Teachers saw the programme as “making students better off”. In one school, a teacher reported that a student who was mainstreamed after remediation was in the top place in term test.

The teachers gave the following as indicators of success, although they had no evidence to share with the evaluator.

- Improved reading levels
- Growth in oral language
- Increase in test scores
- A general willingness to complete tasks
- Some students have increased attendance
- Increased self- confidence
- Integration into mainstream classes with good performance.
- Students are developing positive relationships with teachers, an ingredient they claim that is absent in the wider school community.
- Decrease in indiscipline among students.

### **5.13 Teachers suggested the following as weaknesses of the programme**

- The programme lack of guidelines for its implementation.
- There is an absence of proper mechanisms for integrating students with special needs into mainstream classes.
- Teachers are unsure of how to manage the special needs of students.

#### **5.14 Conclusion and recommendation**

The teachers are not qualified to work with the children who have special needs. There is need for support from the Student Support Services in terms of assisting the class teachers in developing their programmes.

#### **5.15 Implementation difficulties as perceived by teachers**

The teachers also had some very strong concerns about the programme. These were as follows:

- They felt that the MOE was not aware of the extent of the problems facing students. Nevertheless, they had no records of problems to send to the MOE.
- Inadequate facilities - Some schools are still in the process of providing suitable accommodation - Principals expressed their intention of modifying rooms to accommodate remedial classes.
- Lack of proper structure in the programme. They found that the MOE has not provided guidelines or standards to follow and there is no supervision.
- Lack of support from the MOE - They were appointed and never got further correspondence with personnel nor visits from the MOE.
- Students were restless and disrespectful to teachers.
- Students display frequent aggressive behaviour.
- Some students had low levels of motivation.
- High absenteeism of students.
- Little assistance from home. Parents did not ensure that students had school requirements.
- They felt that the labelling of students "1S" was posing difficulties.
- Some teachers and principals reported the absence of basic resources .eg. manipulables, reading texts.

## 5.16 Administrative problems

Some problems experienced by administrators were:

- The staff in some schools did not readily accept the older remedial teachers.
- Unkept promises from the MOE and the Tobago House of Assembly. A Principal referred to the Tobago House of Assembly as “only talk and promises”. The principal said that she was promised a number of things but never received them. It was not very clear to the evaluator exactly what was promised.
- Inadequate infrastructure – all schools do not have suitable accommodation for the classes.
- About the teaching staff, responses here were mixed. Some principals found that some of the teachers were not equipped to cope with the students, nor were they adequately qualified to work with the students. One principal labelled them as “dribbling geriatrics” since he found that they were very weak and did not possess the strength to carry out a programme that made so much demands. On the other hand, some principals while concerned about the ‘age’ of the teachers found that they were a source of support for school activities and described them as “good people with sound judgment”. Some principals were of the opinion that “the experienced teachers are better able to cope with the social challenges to be faced when one has to relate to students.
- They also experienced timetabling problems.
- Understaffing in two schools caused some teachers to be deployed to teach regular classes.
- In Tobago students were labelled as attending the ‘Fail School’. This they reported was causing many discipline problems as well as affecting their self esteem.
- The school in Tobago is staffed by a number of inexperienced and unqualified teachers.

**5.17 The teachers/principals made the following recommendations/suggestions based on their perception of the situation:**

- They felt that the students should be scheduled for more practical subjects
- There must be the on-going training of teachers involved in the programme.
- There must be workshops based on actual problems faced in the classroom.
- The schools' resources should be upgraded.
- The MOE must develop specific guidelines for the implementation of the programme.
- The students should be allowed to write the School Leaving Examination.
- Younger teachers must be assigned to the classes since they may be more competent with modern technology.
- Classes in the August vacation period should be introduced by the MOE for students to uncover the required knowledge and skills for their year levels.
- TTUTA must develop a policy on remedial education which will be linked to the Continuous Assessment Process.
- Intervention should begin at the primary school.

**5.18 Parents**

- Sixteen parents of Form one students were interviewed. They found that the initiative to provide help for their children was a very good one and had very high praises for the MOE. Some parents indicated that their children related better to remedial teachers than with the mainstream teachers.
- When asked about indicators of success of the programme, while they were aware that some work was being done, they could not say exactly what it was being done. None of the parents interviewed reported any remarkable improvement in their child's ability to read. Some parents indicated that their children were not very interested in the academics and would much prefer that they enrol in vocational

programmes and sports. A parent also recommended that the MOE should give teachers more authority to discipline students.

### 5.19 Students' Responses

367 students were asked to respond to an open ended question about their concerns and feelings about the programme. The following are some of the qualitative findings:

- Generally, most of the students were happy with their teachers who they found were quite helpful in the learning of mathematics and English in particular. However they noted some important concerns.
- Most of the students complained about the stigmatisation of being called “S” students and they felt that the “S” should be removed. They would like to be considered as normal students. Many of the students expressed their dissatisfaction about being teased and taunted by other students.
- Quite a large proportion of the students would like computers to be introduced in their classrooms because they felt it was important to their future. They lamented the fact that there were no computer facilities for them too access at their school. (In the schools where there were computer facilities, these students were not part of the programme.)
- Additionally some felt that the work they got at school was too easy, making reference to it as ‘baby work’. They stated that they would like to get ‘normal work’ to do and more variety in the work.
- The students also wanted more sporting facilities and a wider variety of sporting activities to choose from such as football, basketball, badminton and netball.
- Many students stressed a great interest in doing craft subjects such as welding, mechanics, electronics, woodwork and plumbing which are not offered to them.
- In one instance, the students felt that they needed smaller classes so that they could obtain more individual attention. They also felt that the present classrooms were too small to accommodate the number of students that were present during sessions and they usually felt “crowded”.

- In addition many students indicated that they would like to have more co-curricular activities at school. They feel they need more activities at lunchtime and free periods so that they can use their time more wisely. They felt that various clubs could be introduced at the school.
- Some students complained that they were not using the books that their parents had bought for them.
- Four of the students in one class indicated that there were some teachers who showed absolutely no interest in their well-being.
- Students have also expressed serious concerns and anxiety as to whether they will be ready for 14 plus exams while others were concerned about whether they will be ready to write the C.X.C exams. They wanted to know when they will be mainstreamed.

The students also responded to questionnaires. These questions gathered information on their feelings about their class and the work they did and also about their teachers and the quality of instruction that they provided.

A rating scale was used to determine students' responses from strongly agree, agree, disagree to strongly disagree. 34% (125) of the students agreed that they felt very comfortable in their classes, while 50% (184) strongly agreed. The data also showed that the programme was having a greater impact on their self-concept than their self-esteem since a higher rating was found on how they felt about their work. They also agreed that their teachers were always well prepared and were easy to communicate with. These teachers were also reported as having a high influence on their motivation 80% (294) and rated them highly as very helpful and very interested in what they did.

The students strongly agreed that the work was too easy and too much the same and too little, but contrary to this finding, 83% (305) of the students found that the pace of instruction was too fast.

## 5.20 Conclusion and Recommendations

The students are generally not very satisfied with their status. Labelling of these students must be avoided. Careful consideration must be given as to how these students could be identified for special attention without the use of labels.

The students have many concerns regarding the curriculum which should be addressed with urgency. The curriculum to be offered to these students must include a heavy emphasis on subjects that require learning by doing and sporting activities as co-curricula. Consideration must also be given to the use of technology in developing the curriculum. Also, these students should not be given the general school booklists if they do not attend classes that require them.

What was very evident too is that teachers were not giving the students individual attention although the classes were very small. The general approach to teaching is not matched to the students' level of maturity. What also is very clear is that there has been no goal setting with the students since these students did not know where they were headed.

## 5.21 Recommendations for hiring of teachers

The issues of selection and preparation of teachers were common. Specifically, minimum qualifications should be established. Consideration should be given to the provision of training both prior to their employment and as part of their ongoing development. Systems for continuously monitoring job performance should be developed and implemented. The tutor's age, background, and time of leaving the system should also be taken into consideration.

It must also be recognised that the instructors should be regarded as tutors and not teachers since the terms have different connotations.

*Tutoring is a method of teaching in which one student or a small group of students receive personalized and individual instruction.*

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the schools surveyed, there was no common organisation model and because of this 'loose' organisation, students' benefits were not maximised. There is a need to establish specific guidelines for programme implementation and a system for monitoring should be developed. In addition, all teachers who are hired to teach should be trained in specific remedial methods since this seems to be a major problem. From the findings it is evident that the programme is not doing what it was designed to do.

The overall conclusion of this evaluation is that the programme as it now operates provides little evidence to conclude that it is effective in its present form. There were no data to provide evidence of students' growth. However, the analysis of the data provides a comprehensive picture of the operations of the programme processes. It must be noted also that the findings cannot be generalized. They can however be used as evidence of what happens in some schools where the programme is in operation.

Policymakers may want to consider policies that do the following:

- Select qualified personnel for the position of Remedial tutor and provide ongoing professional development for those hired.
- Clarify the appropriate roles of tutors
- Require accurate assessment of students who are identified for 1S classes to determine their special needs. SEA data do not provide all the necessary information that would determine the programme for each child's needs.
- Require schools to determine the extent to which students who are receiving remedial intervention are benefiting from it.
- Require all teachers to complete courses in the Teaching of Students with Special Education needs. These courses should include a heavy practicum component, which focuses on remedial intervention and is supported by a continuous assessment programme.

- Adopt some other means of identification of these students since the labelling affects their self-esteem.
- Written reports of students' progress should be submitted to the Student Support Services Unit.
- Research should be carried out by the Student Support Services Unit in collaboration with DERE to ascertain the factors which impact on these students' learning/ performance and thus to determine appropriate actions to nullify the negatives and support the positive impacts. For example, research shows that labelling affects students' self esteem (Lindenfield, 1995).
- Action research should be the norm in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

**SECTION VI**

**6.0 APPENDICES**

**LIST OF SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE**

- Couva Junior Secondary
- Sangre Grande Junior Secondary
- Belmont Junior Secondary
- Mount Hope Junior Secondary
- Princes Town Junior Secondary
- Debe Government High
- Siparia Junior Secondary
- Marabella Junior Secondary
- Scarborough Secondary Centre
- Russell Latapy High
- Valencia High School
- Point Fortin Junior Secondary
- Brazil High School
- Mucurapo Junior Secondary
- Tableland High Junior Secondary
- Chaguanas Junior Secondary