

Evaluating the Implementation of The Remedial Education Programme In Zimbabwe Urban Primary Schools

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Abstract

This study intended to evaluate the implementation of the remedial education programme in Zimbabwe urban primary schools. The population consisted of 120 urban primary schools and simple random sampling was used to come up with a sample of 30 schools. Structured interviews were carried out with all the thirty school heads and all the 60 remedial teachers who were purposively sampled from the selected schools. The study established that teachers and school heads effectively practised the whole school approach although they were aware of the requirements of Chief Education Officer Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987. It was also established that the selection of learners into the remedial programme was mostly based on classroom performance and teachers used the methods that they considered to be suitable. The major challenges established were lack of proper guidance and supervision by the remedial tutors from Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education (SPS & SNE) Department and the large numbers of children requiring remedial education. The study recommended that school heads should influence the attitudes of teachers and parents towards remedial education. It also recommended that remedial tutors should be more involved in the supervision of remedial programmes and that Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 be revised in light of inclusive policies.

Key Words: Remedial education, Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education (SPS and SNE) Department, clinical remediation, whole school approach, hot-seating

Introduction

In Zimbabwe before independence, learners with specific learning difficulties were not formally identified and put on a remedial programme, (Magwaza, 1993). The common practice then was to make a learner repeat a failed grade in order to be adequately prepared for the primary education public examination. Continual failure in a grade at any level often resulted in the learner dropping out of school. The 1987 Education Act effected after Zimbabwe gained independence advocated for Education For All policy and ushered in the concept of universal primary education, resulting in an increased access. With the accelerating trend towards

inclusive education (Salamanca Statement, 1994) the number of children with specific learning disabilities or those with less marked or no clearly definable impediments but for whom learning was for one reason or another difficult, disrupted or delayed also increased in regular schools (Grubb and Chair, 2001). Such learners required more professional help than others in the form of remedial education in order for them to experience success in school. With school standards and accountability being prominent features of the educational landscape, schools could not afford to be complacent about the high incidence of learners who could not perform basic skills, particularly since inclusive education had brought more children with specific learning difficulties into the regular classroom. Educators therefore, often relied on remedial education programs to help low achieving students meet the minimum academic standards (Jacobs and Lefgren, 2002, Grubb and Chair, 2001). Commenting on the Grade Seven 2009 pupil failure rate, The Editorial of The Herald 30 April 2010 expressed the view that Zimbabwe was in danger of producing a generation where the majority of school leavers would be functionally illiterate. The fact that some children were non-readers at grade seven level directly contributed to their poor performance in the examinations. In light of the foregoing the purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of the remedial education programme in an effort to improve remedial practice in primary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

- find out how the implementation of the remedial education programme in Zimbabwe urban primary schools compares with the requirements of CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987;
- establish the challenges associated with the implementation of the remedial education programme in the urban primary schools; and,
- come up with recommendations for improving the implementation of the remedial education programme in urban primary schools in Zimbabwe.

Conceptual Framework

Remedial education is an instructional programme that is designed to assist learners of average ability who are at least two years behind in a subject to match the level of achievement realized by their peers (Smith & Wallace, 2011). The learners should be cognitively average or above average in intellectual ability and should therefore be able to quickly assimilate the missed concept and relate it to the rest of the topic or area of study (Chakuchichi and Badza, 2004). Some learners may need remedial education because they attended schools of poor quality and did not receive adequate grounding in Mathematics and Languages. Others may have transferred

in and out of school a lot, resulting in gaps being created in their education and contributing to lack of knowledge in core subjects (Kaur, 2006). Learning disabilities which impair the learner's ability to master mathematics and reading skills also constitute reasons why learners may need remedial education. The remedial programme therefore provides an individualized basic skills instruction.

In Western countries like the United States of America the remedial education programme is offered to students in grade 6-12 (Barge, 2011). It is offered in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. All remedial education teachers must meet the requirements as defined by the Professional Standards Commission and be fully qualified to teach the subjects. Barge (2011) also outlines the models under which the remedial education programme is practised. In high school the Reduced Class Size is a model where the class size is reduced to 18 if there is no paraprofessional to assist and 24 if there is one. Under the augmented class model an additional state certified or remedial education programme augmented teacher works in the same classroom with the regular classroom teacher and provides instruction for 50 to 60 minutes per segment a day to not more than 15 remedial students. The parallel block scheduling requires that heterogeneously grouped students receive direct instruction daily in two hour blocks in the extension or homerooms. The middle school provides remedial services under such models as the pull-out extension or during the connection blocks.

While remedial programmes are common in the United States, they are less common in Europe (Attewell, Lavin, Domina and Levey, 2006). The authors allude that several European higher education institutions offer remedial education programmes that are meant to assist foreign students to effectively start a degree programme. In India the 'Balsakhi' remedial programme hires tutors to teach learners to read. These learners attend after school reading camps. Research by J-Pal Affiliates has shown that providing remedial tutoring for learners who have fallen behind academically can improve learning outcomes. The researchers cite a figure of 33 million children who benefitted from remedial education between 2008 and 2009 (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab).

In Zimbabwe, apart from remediation offered in schools at both primary and secondary school levels Speciss College runs short term remedial courses in all subjects during school holidays at its Chitungwiza and Chitepo campuses. The focus of remedial education in these campuses is mainly on educational problems faced by individual learners in schools (Tooley, 2000).

Grubbs and Chair (2001) assert that remedial education is not a single kind of programme. The same authors are of the view that anyone who looks at remedial education systematically can notice the diversity of organization, staffing and

function which exists within schools. In some schools remedial education may be given in full or on part time units, or to groups of children extracted regularly from normal classes (Golby, Gulliver and Devon, 1979). In full time units, a whole curriculum package is normally offered to extracted groups, with the focus mainly on the basics. While some schools have remedial advisory services which guide and support the work of schools, others may be subservient to educational psychology services.

In Zimbabwean primary schools, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to ensure that remedial education is carried out in all primary schools, a move which is part of efforts made to fulfill the national goal to have education for all. An affirmation of the Zimbabwe government's commitment to the remedial education programme was the release of the Chief Education Officer's Circular Minute number 12 of 1987. This circular highlighted the essence of the remedial education programme as a detection and assistance measure to address children's reading and mathematical problems by the time they completed primary education (Urombo, 1999). The programme originally targeted grade four learners of average and above average educational competence in all schools but later the programme included learners from all the other grades except grade one (Urombo, 1999). The reason for targeting grade four level was that learners would have covered adequate basic numeracy and literacy skills which would enable them to reveal their strengths and educational needs in the selection tests administered by the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education (SPS & SNE) Department. Within six months to a year the learners could discontinue the programme if they had successfully recovered from the 'risk of failure'. Those who continued to lag behind would remain in the programme until they acquired adequate skills to cope with the demands of school learning. The minimum expected outcome of this move was functional literacy and numeracy for all learners by the end of primary school (Chief Education Officer Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987).

The overall supervision of the remedial programme is the responsibility of the educational psychologists at the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture's regional offices. The remedial tutors are appointed, one in every district, to carry out the duty of planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating tutorial and in-service programmes for the district schools that they serve (CEO Circular Minute number 12 of 1987). They also carry out consultative and advisory roles and are accountable to the Provincial Education Director (PED) through the Educational Psychologist. The SPS & SNE Department develops learning centres in a cluster of schools. At school level the school head asks two teachers to volunteer to teach in the remedial programme, one for mathematics and the other for reading per 500 pupils in the school. These teachers use the learners' performance on the regular curriculum to determine the area in which clinical instruction is needed (Mpofu, in Peresuh and

Nhundu, 2001). Learners served through clinical remediation, therefore, take the full curriculum in the regular classroom and receive clinical remedial instruction separately for two hours a week. Chosen remedial teachers visit the learning centre and be trained about materials production, remedial teaching and remedial testing (Dzapasi, 2000 in Chireshe and Mapfumo, 2002). Occasionally, the teachers get assistance in terms of diagnostic attainment and testing by the remedial tutors from the SPS & SNE Department (Oakland, Mpofu Glasgow and Jumel, 2008). It is the responsibility of the remedial tutor to collect reports on the progress of the remedial programme from schools. Commenting on such a practice Kaur (2006) asserts that it often requires school professionals who should be working with children to spend mega hours with forms and more forms which rarely provide the classroom teacher with usable information, and in most cases no one reads the forms. The same author also views this type of remediation as reinforcing the belief that regular classroom teachers are not sufficiently capable of working with exceptional children and provides ground for them to make the child someone else's problem.

There are some schools that are no longer offering clinical remediation to grade four pupils as prescribed by CEO Circular Minute number 12 of 1987 (Dzapasi, 2000 in Chireshe and Mapfumo, 2002). Such schools have adopted a whole school approach where all grades except grade one receive remediation from their class teacher. The same author says that there is no specifically laid down instrument from the Ministry of Education, Sports, Art and Culture to back up such a practice, making it an unwritten product of the Head of the SPS & SNE Department. Records and remedial exercise books are evidence of programme implementation and it is not clear how initial identification of children with remedial problems is done. In support of such an approach, Kaur (2006) is of the view that teachers see the galloping academic and social diversity of their students every day. They know that there are children in their classrooms who need extensive help if improvement is to be accomplished, Some teachers therefore handle the demanding differences by building within their classrooms accommodating, multi-level, multi-grade workstations that more accurately match and push each child's capability (Kaur,2006).

Though research in countries like India (J-Pal Affiliates) has shown great success in the improvement of children's learning evidenced by the 33 million children who benefitted between 2008 and 2009, in Zimbabwe the remedial programme still faces some challenges. Some schools, for example, do not submit the annual remediation returns to the SPS & SNE department as per requirements (Dzapasi, 2000 in Chireshe and Mapfumo, 2002). The same author notes that the situation is worsened by the fact that the SPS/SNE department is 'toothless' to schools that are not implementing the programme according to what is expected. The above

view concurs with comments made by the Post Correspondent (The Manica Post, 11 March 2005) who acknowledged that the poor pass rate in some of the schools was due to maladministration. Chireshe and Mapfumo (2002) express the view that the remedial programme is sometimes coordinated by an educational psychologist who is not usually a teacher, resulting in failure to assist the remedial teacher with delivery strategies. The implementation of the clinical remediation programme in schools is also seriously hampered by high turnover of experienced remedial teachers, limiting the continuity of the programme as some teachers may lack the necessary skills to run the programme. There being no policy for the whole school approach makes it difficult for the remedial tutors to in-service and supervise all the teachers. Lack of supervision subsequently compromises the effectiveness of the programme and compounded by the perennial critical shortage of such resources as transport at the Regional offices of the Ministry of Education, Sports, Art and Culture (Dzapasi, 2000 in Chireshe & Mapfumo, 2002).

Although the remedial programme in Zimbabwe is faced with some challenges, the need to assist children with specific learning disabilities remains a crucial task that schools are faced with if pupils' performance is to be improved. In The Herald of 18 February 2005, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe expressed concern at the low pass rates recorded in some schools and commented that the country would be literally digging graves for pupils if it allowed them to continue failing. He also expressed the need for teachers to know all pupils as individuals and to know their weaknesses so that appropriate help can be given.

Although some research in Zimbabwe has focused on the slow learner (Chireshe and Mapfumo, 2002) and factors affecting teacher attitudes towards placement of slow learners into special classes (Chireshe and Ndlovu 2002), to the researches' knowledge not much research has focused on evaluating the implementation of the remedial education programme in Zimbabwe urban primary schools. The need to continuously evaluate the implementation of the remedial education programme in primary schools with a view to improving practice cannot be overemphasized if the goal to maintain the highest literacy and numeracy rate that Zimbabwe earned among other African countries is to be maintained (Mutasa, The Herald, 30 April 2010), and if the millennium development goal of universal primary education is to be achieved.

Methodology

The study was mainly qualitative in nature (Creswell & Clark, 2010) and it was carried out in primary schools in the five main urban centres in Zimbabwe namely, Harare, Masvingo, Mutare, Bulawayo and Gweru. Out of a total of 120 urban primary schools 30 were randomly selected (Merrian, 2009). All the 30 school

heads and 60 remedial teachers from the selected schools were purposively sampled (Creswell & Clark, 2010) and participated in the study. The inclusion of school heads and remedial teachers enabled triangulation of data. The semi-structured interview was the main data gathering instrument, chosen because it enabled the researchers to collect rich information that could not be attained through classical experimentation (Creswell, 2007). The semi-structured interview also made data collection systematic for each respondent. The interview questions were pre-tested at an urban primary school that was not part of the sample to find out if they would solicit the required information. Analysis of data collected led to the development of themes along which the concerns of the study were addressed. Marshall and Rossman (2010) assert that qualitative research draws on methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study. The researchers obtained clearance letters from the head office of the Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture and the regional offices of the same ministry before collecting data in the schools. The participants' informed consent was also sought before the interviews were conducted and pseudonyms for names of schools and participants were used to preserve anonymity and safeguard confidentiality.

Results and Discussion

The findings obtained in this study which sought to evaluate the implementation of the remedial education programme in urban primary schools in Zimbabwe are presented according to the following themes: type of remedial programme effectively practised in the school, selection of learners into the programme, methods of remediation used, successes of the programme implemented in the schools and challenges associated with the implementation of the programme.

Type of Remediation Practised in the School

Asked about the type of remediation that they effectively practiced in their schools the school heads gave the responses shown in Table 1

Table 1: Table showing type of remedial programme in the school. (n=30)

Type of remedial programme in the school	Frequency	Percentage
Whole school approach	30	100
Clinical remediation at Gr4	12	40

As indicated in Table 1 all the school heads (100%) responded that they were effectively practising the whole school approach where all teachers offered remedial lessons to their classes. Only (40%) of the school heads indicated that they were also offering clinical remediation at grade four level as required by CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987.

Asked to give reasons why they had resorted to the whole school approach more than the clinical type of remediation some school heads gave the following comments:

School Head A: *We have classes that have up to 50 children or more, most of whom need remediation at one point or another. We therefore decided that each teacher should carry out remedial lessons with his or her class. It's much easier that way since every teacher takes responsibility of his or her own pupils.*

School Head B: *In most cases there are no teacher volunteers to take remedial classes. If the school appoints teachers to do it they complain that they do not get extra remuneration for teaching dull pupils from other classes, leading to them not doing it properly. With the whole school approach teachers carry out remediation without any complaints because they feel responsible for their own classes.*

School Head C: *Clinical remediation is on paper and the teachers are there but in effect it is non-existent. With hot-seating it is difficult to carry on with remedial cases from the classes that attend the morning session. We just do not have the space. Those who attend the afternoon session finish late so it is difficult to timetable clinical remediation.*

School Head D: *We find it easier to carry out the whole school approach because it is easy to monitor at school level. As for the SPS/SNE remedial tutors ever since I was appointed to head this school in 2004 I have never seen them here.*

Asked whether the school had ever made an effort to invite the personnel from the SPS & SNE Department school head D replied:

At whose expense? Why should they wait to be invited to do their job? It is obvious that every school has children who need remedial education. They should actually cover all the schools in town. After all Regional Office is less than 20km away from this school.

School Head E: *The whole school approach is practical and effective. We do not have to wait for SPS & SNE personnel to come and assist in the selection of pupils because they always cite transport problems but ask for returns from schools.*

On further probing about what the school does if asked to submit returns the school head replied:

We send them the returns that we base on our type of remedial programme. After all I doubt if they ever read the reports because they have never acted on them.

School Head F: *Both programmes are fully operational in our school. Whenever we need the services of the SPS & SNE Department we invite them and we go to collect them and they always assist us.*

The other responses given for practicing the whole school approach are summarized in table 2

Table 2: Table showing reasons for practicing the whole school approach. (n=30)

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Relatively easy to monitor	30	100
Overwhelming numbers of children requiring remediation	30	100
Every teacher makes an effort to improve performance of own class	27	90
There is no effective monitoring of clinical remediation by the SPS/SNE department	25	83
Too much beaurocracy associated with the clinical type of remediation	24	80
Filling in return forms is time consuming and poses an extra work load for the remedial teachers	20	67
Teachers complain that they are not paid for teaching remedial cases from other classes	7	23

From the responses it was evident that the school heads strongly favoured the whole school approach although they were aware of the requirements of CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987.

Responding to the question on which type of remedial programme they practised in their school all the sixty (100) remedial teachers indicated that they had both

the clinical programme and the whole school approach however the whole school approach was practised more as shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Table showing type of remedial programme practised in the school. (n=60)

Type of programme	Frequency	Percentage
Clinical remediation at Grade 4 level	24	40
Whole school approach	60	100

The reasons why they favoured the whole school approach the are summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Table showing reasons for practicing the whole school approach. (n=60)

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Not enough classrooms because of double sessioning (hot-seating)	54	90
Too many children in the class resulting in many children requiring remediation	52	87
Time constraints in view of the packed timetable and hot-seating	50	83
School Heads are very supportive of this programme	40	67
No effective monitoring of the clinical approach	40	67
Parents complain if their child is pulled out of class and placed in the remedial class	30	50

In addition to the reasons summarized above the following were additional justifications given by teachers:

Teacher A: *Vana vemazuva ano havachina shungu nechikoro. Ukatomuisa muremedial group anobva atorega kuuya kuchikoro kwacho, kana kuto performa zviru worse.* This literally means 'Children nowadays are not serious about education. If you place them in the remedial group they will either deteriorate in performance or will not come to school at all.'

Teacher B: *Ini I once attended a workshop organized by veku psychological services vacho long back tikambozvitevedzera ndokubva tazozvirega patakaona ivo vasingamboteveri muzvikoro. Nekamari katinopiwa ndakaona kuti better ndinetsane namadofo angu pane kuti nditiche madofo echikoro chose. Meaning*

'I once attended a workshop organized by the SPS/SNE department long back and implemented the programme. After we realized that there was no follow up from them we discontinued. Considering the paltry salary that we are getting I decided to carry out remediation with my own class rather than with remedial children from other classes in the school.'

Teacher C: *Taimboita maremedial lessons pasi pomuti maclassrooms atorwa neve hot-seating saka taingoita kana kusinganayi. Meaning, 'We carried out the remedial lessons under the tree since our classrooms would have been occupied by children attending hot-seating sessions. As a result we only carried out remedial lessons when it was not raining.'*

Teacher D: *Programme iyi taiita nguva yemasports saka vana vanga vasingamboifariri. Vamwe vaitiza vachienda kumasports. Vamwewo ndivo vaiita zvokukumbirwa especially if they were good kumasports kuti vanotraina seteam. This means 'The remedial programme was carried out during sports time so it was very unpopular with most children. Some would abscond and go for sports but some who were good at sports had to be excused from remediation so that they would go and train.'*

Selection of Learners into the Programme

Asked about the methods that they used to select learners into the remedial programme all the school heads indicated that teachers relied on the children's performance in classroom exercises and tests. The 20% who practiced clinical remediation indicated that they also used the children's score in classroom exercises and tests although they sometimes used tests from the SPS & SNE Department. Responding to the same question on the methods they used for selecting learners into the remedial programme all the teachers said that they used classroom based exercises and tests. Commenting on why they did not use standardized tests from SPS & SNE Department some of the teachers expressed the following views:

Teacher A: *Classroom exercises and tests are easy to administer and they provide a true picture of how the child performs.*

Teacher B: *Tests from the SPS & SNE Department are not good. Children are not machines where you can point to a malfunctioning part and replace it. There are too many contributing factors that may make a child perform poorly and I as the class*

teacher can observe the child and try to find out what is wrong and then carry out remediation.

Teacher C: *Some of the items on the test are not very suitable for our children. Moreover children can panic and perform badly and we may end up picking children who should not be in the programme and leave out those who should be included. With classroom exercises and tests they take them when they are more settled.*

The views expressed by the teachers indicated that they were sceptical of the use of tests from the SPS & SNE Department because they were developed overseas and therefore they were not seen as suitable for Zimbabwean children.

Methods of Remediation Employed by Teachers

When asked on the methods of remediation that they used all the school heads replied that it was up to the classroom teacher to come up with suitable methods as long as they managed to help the child. One school head was quoted as follows:

School Head A: *The teachers use the methods that they find suitable. My duty is to see to it that the remedial record books are up to date and to take note of the number of children who fail in each class at the end of the term.*

School Head B: *It is difficult to say that teachers use such and such a method because they carry out the remediation at the times that they find suitable in their classrooms.*

In answer to the question on the methods employed during remedial lessons the teachers' responses indicated the strategies shown in table 5.

Table 5: Table showing strategies used by teachers during remediation. (n=60)

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Use of concrete media and manipulation of objects	60	100
Use of praise and encouragement and rewards	60	100
Re-teaching the concept and allowing the child more time and practice	60	100
Allow child to proceed at own pace	35	58
Use of mixed ability grouping where fast learners help their colleagues	20	33

From the table, the majority of teachers (100%) revisit the concepts and allow the child more time and practice. Use of concrete media and allowing the child to manipulate the objects was also a popular strategy as reflected by the 100% response rate. All the teachers (100%) made use of praise, encouragement and rewards. From the responses not many teachers make use of the mixed ability grouping strategy as reflected by the 33% response rate.

Commenting on the strategies that they used, teachers were quoted as follows:

Teacher A: *I as the class teacher know the problems that the child is facing and I use the methods that make the child grasp the concepts and enable him or her to move on.*

Asked to elaborate the methods the teacher responded:

It is difficult to pinpoint the methods because it actually depends on the child's problem and how the child learns best. You may find that where one child can understand by getting an explanation the other may require demonstrations.

Teacher B: *Sometimes I use mixed ability grouping where the more able ones help the remedial cases, and it works.*

Asked on how often she used mixed ability grouping as a remedial method and what her role as a teacher was the teacher explained:

I use the mixed ability grouping very often because some children learn better from their peers than from the teacher and I always monitor the activities to make sure that the remedial cases are taking part. I also make follow up exercises to make sure that the remedial cases have grasped the concepts.

Teacher C: *I concentrate on the remedial children and re-teach the concept during the time when the whole class will be writing individual exercises. I also give them work to do at home as homework.*

Asked on whether the children always did their homework the teacher explained:
Children whose parents are there at home always do their homework and bring it for marking but there are cases where the parents are not there. In such cases I encourage the children to do the work with the help of their older siblings.

In response to the measures that the teacher took in cases where the homework was not done the teacher explained that she always insisted that the child does it before proceeding to the next task although she added that time was always a limiting factor.

Challenges Associated with the Remedial Programme

When asked if there were any challenges associated with the implementation of the remedial programme as required by CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 the school heads cited hot-seating resulting in shortage of space in the school, teachers' lack of commitment to the programme, lack of parental support and lack of follow up from the SPS & SNE Department.

The teachers also expressed the same sentiments but added that too many children needed remediation. One teacher was quoted as saying: *Some children miss school a lot because of illness or other reasons, resulting in no continuity in their learning. The levels at which the children operate are also varied because of automatic promotion. This creates a situation where almost every child needs remediation.*

Discussion

Both the school heads (100%) and the teachers (100%) expressed the view that they effectively practised the whole school approach though some (40% from each group) indicated that they also had the clinical type of remediation. This suggests that primary schools in the main urban centres in Zimbabwe favour the whole school approach, a view held by Dzapasi (2000) who commented that some schools in the country were no longer offering the clinical type of remediation as prescribed by the CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 in favour of the whole school approach. Schools that were offering the clinical type of remediation explained that they sometimes got assistance with the selection of learners into the programme from the SPS & SNE Department even though the schools had to provide transport to the remedial tutors.

The reasons given by both school heads and teachers for favouring the whole school approach were similar where both groups cited among others large numbers of children requiring remediation, remedial teachers' unwillingness to carry out remedial lessons after school because of poor remuneration, hot-seating inconveniences, and lack of supervision from the SPS & SNE Department and time constraints. This shows lack of commitment to the remedial programme by the department that is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the programme in primary schools, resulting in schools settling for the type of remediation that they can easily administer and monitor and that, according to Jacobs and Lefgren (2002), ensures the maintenance of academic standards in their schools. Teachers were also not in agreement with the stipulations of CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 that learners should receive clinical remedial instruction separately for

two hours a week after school. They argued that pupils would be disturbed by the co-curricular activities that would be taking place concurrently, resulting in them not paying attention, particularly if the remedial lessons were being conducted under a tree. In addition teachers expressed discontentment at the time they spent in filling the returns which the SPS & SNE Department never acted upon. Kaur (2006) contended that school professionals often spent mega hours with forms that rarely provided teachers with usable information. In addition teachers explained that some pupils did not like being pulled out for the remedial programme because of the negative labels they got from their classmates. Such pupils would either abscond from the lessons or miss school altogether. This shows that the clinical type of remediation was also unpopular with the pupils who were supposed to benefit from it. Considering that inclusive education is being effected in primary schools one wonders if pull out programmes are in tandem with the spirit of inclusion.

All the remedial teachers (100%) responded that they relied on classroom based assessment for selection of learners into the remedial programme, a view shared by all the school heads. The reasons they gave for using such a method included the fact that it enabled them to select learners who genuinely needed remediation. It also enabled the class teachers to carry on with the programme without necessarily having to wait for the remedial tutors from the SPS & SNE Department who often administered tests that were based on concepts that the pupils were not familiar with. The reliance on classroom based assessment is contrary to what is stipulated in Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 that testing should be done by the remedial teachers with assistance from the remedial tutors from the SPS & SNE Department. Magwaza (1993) also noted that proper diagnosis should be carried out for learners to be included in the remedial programme. The teachers however, argued that careful assessment of a learner's performance over a long period of time enabled them to give the learner an individualised type of remediation than the one he or she would get after a once-off type of testing. This view concurs with the one expressed by the Bulawayo correspondent (The Herald, 18 February 2005) on the need for teachers to know each and every pupil's weakness so as to be able to give appropriate help.

From the responses given by both school heads and remedial teachers it was evident that class teachers used their discretion to come up with suitable methods for use with individual children. The main methods included re-visiting the concept and allowing the child more time and practice. Use of concrete media and manipulation of objects, praise and encouragement were also cited by teachers as popular strategies. Only 33% cited mixed ability grouping as a method which enabled the children to learn from each other. The reason for the low number of teachers using this strategy was the fact that they had not considered it as one of the methods that

they could use. In relation to the remedial methods that teachers could use, Kaur (2006) was of the view that teachers saw the galloping academic and social diversity of their students every day and therefore knew how to handle the demanding differences of their pupils by building within their classrooms accommodating multi-level and multi-grade work stations that more accurately matched and pushed each child's capability.

The reasons given by the school heads and the remedial teachers for preferring the whole school approach were indicative of the numerous challenges surrounding the clinical type of remediation. These included the problems that were brought about by the large numbers of children requiring remediation. Schools that practiced hot-seating had the challenge of space as some remedial lessons had to be taken under trees. Lack of commitment by the SPS & SNE Department and lack of commitment by the remedial teachers and parents also compromised the implementation of the programme as prescribed by Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987. According to Dzapasi (2000) in Chireshe and Mapfumo (2002) however, there is no specifically laid down instrument from the Ministry of Education, Sports, Art and Culture to back up the whole school approach. The lack of commitment to the clinical type of remediation by the different stakeholders is a reflection of the Post Correspondent (The Manica Post, 11 March 2005) who blames maladministration for being responsible for the poor pass rate in schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study sought to evaluate the implementation of the remedial education programme in Zimbabwe urban primary schools. Findings from the study indicated that teachers preferred the whole school remedial approach where each teacher was responsible for his/her class. The few schools that followed the requirements of CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 practised both the whole school approach and the clinical type of remediation. It can therefore be concluded that not many schools are still adhering to the requirements of CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987. In light of this the study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Sports, Art and Culture revises CEO Circular Minute Number 12 of 1987 and take into cognizance the current inclusive trends.

Findings also showed that teachers selected learners into the remedial programme on the basis of the learners' classroom performance except in limited cases where the schools sought assistance from the SPS & SNE Department, in which case the schools had to meet the transport expenses of the remedial tutors to administer the appropriate selection tests. This led to the conclusion that there was no standardized means of selecting learners into the remedial programme. Teachers

did what they thought was best. The study therefore recommends that SPS & SNE Department be more actively involved in the implementation of the remedial programme and in-service teachers on the proper selection of learners into the programme.

The study established that teachers used methods what they considered suitable for the pupils in the absence of proper training from the remedial tutors. Most teachers re-taught the concepts and allowed the children more time to work on their remedial exercises. Concrete media and continuous reinforcement were also widely used, leading to the conclusion that teachers were not clear on the remedial methods to use. If remedial tutors could supervise the remedial programme and equip teachers with the appropriate remedial methods, the implementation of the programme could be improved.

From the findings the major challenge faced by schools were; lack of proper guidance and supervision from the remedial tutors, double sessioning that often resulted in shortage of classrooms, lack of commitment to the programme by some teachers because of meagre remuneration and zero parental support. This showed that the remedial programme in Zimbabwe primary schools was not receiving enough support from remedial tutors, teachers and the parents. There is need for close collaboration among the SPS & SNE Department, school heads, teachers and parents in addressing issues of remediation and supporting the programme fully.

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