



PERCEPTIONS OF ZIMBABWEAN TEACHERS TOWARDS THE USEFULNESS OF THE GRADE 4 REMEDIAL TEACHING PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The remedial teaching programme in Zimbabwe has been in existence since the dawn of independence in 1980. The programme falls within mandate of the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts, and Culture through the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs (SPS&SNE) Department. The programme is meant to assist students through the identification of students who require remedial teaching through the use of psychometric tests. This study, which was developed from one of the authors' Masters research project, investigated the perceptions that specialist and non-specialist teachers have towards the Grade 4 remedial programme in Zimbabwe. Structured interview guides were administered to remedial and non remedial teachers' in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province. The study revealed that there were no notable differences between remedial and non remedial teachers' regarding the existence of the remedial teaching programme. Results indicate that the remedial programme was important in improving the educational performance of students. It was however noted that its full implementation is being hampered by the inadequacy of specialist human and material resources. Recommendations made from the study include the effective monitoring of the whole programme by the officers within the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs (SPS&SNE) Department and the provision of adequate resources to effectively implement the programme. There is also the need of reducing class sizes so that effective learning can occur with class sizes that teachers can effectively manage.

KEYWORDS: Remedial and non-remedial teachers, Grade 4 remedial programmes, Zimbabwean teachers, perceptions

1.0 BACKGROUND

In Zimbabwe, before independence in 1980, remedial programmes served white Group A schools only. In 1982 the Ministry of Education extended the remedial programme in mathematics and language reading to all schools (CEO Circular No. 12, 1987). The Circular also outlines how the programme is supposed to be run at school level. For example, the School Head is supposed to nominate a teacher in Mathematics and two others for language reading remediation for every 500 pupils in a school. The Zimbabwean remedial system addresses children's learning problems in mathematics and language reading only at Grade 4 level. However, the Head's Handbook (1990) recommends that, beside the remedial teaching understudy, all teachers should carry out some form of remedial teaching across the Grades to assist all under-performers in their classes. Kaputa (2012) asserts that when solving any problem, especially problems related to the learning of children, proper identification of those in need should be made. This is in line with the Nziramasanga Commission of inquiry into Education and Training (1999) which places identification of disabilities as the basis for intervention. Such programmes as the early childhood development and the remedial programme in Zimbabwe thus, must be premised on the adequate utilisation of resources as well as the proper identification of recipients.

The CEO Circular No. 12 (1987) stresses that selected remedial teachers should be exempted from taking any other co-curricular activities, if the circumstances warrant it. Average learners, like other pupils require enough time to learn thus readiness to learn major subjects like Mathematics and Language reading must be taken into consideration (Wilson and Cleland, 1985). Some pupils under-perform in particular subjects because they are not ready for the particular subject or Grade level (Gagne, 1967). The Grade 4 School based remedial teaching programme selects pupils who averagely under-perform in either Mathematics or Language reading (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, Pamphlet, 1996). Studies on remedial teaching reveal that teachers note that the teaching of remedial classes by class teachers is too heavy a load and that there must be exemption of remedial teachers from sporting and afternoon activities in order to prepare for the remedial classes; this however does not lessen the heavy load caused by remedial teaching (Wilson and Cleland, 1985). On the other hand non-remedial teachers view the

exemption from sports as unwarranted. Remedial teachers are viewed as educationists who spent time as they please. Non-remedial teachers therefore take remedial teaching as a very light job. Another conflicting view is that, parents do not readily agree to have their children join remedial classes. It has been noticed that some schools take remedial teaching seriously because most school heads monitor it equally like any other subject. In Zimbabwe, Heads of Schools are supposed to monitor the programme on behalf of SPS and SNE (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet, 1996).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To what extent is Grade 4 Remedial teaching a useful activity in Zimbabwean Primary Schools?

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) Are Grade 4 remedial teachers skilled to deal with Mathematics and Language reading remedial classes?
- 2) How are the remedial pupils screened for the programme?
- 3) What are the pitfalls of the programme?
- 4) How can the programme be improved to make it more user-friendly?

2.0 RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining Remedial Teaching:-

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996:4) refers to remedial pupils as pupils with specific learning difficulties in a particular area but are otherwise as bright as other average or above average pupils in their class level. These difficulties according to Waldron (1992) may manifest themselves in imperfect ability to listen, speak, read and write, spell or do some Mathematical calculations. Lahey and Ciminero (1980:437) argues that children with learning difficulties have normal intelligence (IQ scores above the cut off point for pupils with Mental Retardation but their academic achievement is significantly below the expected level on the basis of their intelligence. Meijer,Pijl and Hegarty (1995) propose that the pupils under concern often exhibit deficit in perception, conceptualisation, memory, attention, and language and impulse control.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996) described remedial teaching as being responsible for addressing specific problems of individual learners. The Pamphlet

describe remedial problems as ranging from reading problems, failure to recognise words to comprehension and writing difficulties/problems,

such as, omissions, substitutions and hesitations. Other problems include spelling difficulties and mathematics difficulties which may appear at any stage of mathematics learning from pre-number to higher computations. The Zimbabwe Education System and the remedial teaching programme therefore address specific learning difficulties of individual learners in either language reading or Mathematics (SE Minute Circular P. 36, 1990) as earlier on stated. The same Circular explains that children with less severe specific learning disabilities in all other Grades are catered for within each school's regular Remedial Education Programme. In relation to these assertions, Gagne (1967) as cited by Carranza (2001) takes remedial teaching as a supplementary instruction or compensatory education which is provided to repair the gaps identified in the pupils' learning. In addition to this, Pumpfrey and Reasons (1992) found remedial teaching matching instructional methods to the individual pupil's difficulties.

2.2 Usefulness of Remedial Programmes:-

Algozzine and Stoller (1981) stress that it is unfair to let a low achieving student learn in the 'ordinary' class without any special help. The same authors further note that, the experience of continued failure may set up unfavourable attitudes, create emotional difficulties and intensify the learning problem to a point at which it may be difficult to treat. In agreement Strang (1967) and Cleland (1985) point out that low achievers are falling through cracks of the system, hence if intensive work were provided early such students might never experience academic difficulties or need additional support in future. Algozzine and Stoller's (1981) survey on effects of labels and competence of teachers found that, teachers feel they lack time to help their regular students when they must individualise programmes for slow achievers who have been placed in their classes for portions of the day. Wilson and Cleland (1985) also suggests that attention should be given to class size because if not done, classroom teachers will likely come to resent the additional responsibility placed on them and do it for the sake of it.

In agreement Pumpfrey and Reason (1992) stress that many well designed programmes are infective due to the teachers' compulsion to teach both. On the other hand, Wilson and Cleland (1985) observed that both clinical and classroom diagnosis may be plagued by certain pitfalls like the tendency

to use total test scores without examination of the pattern of test scores and the tendency to draw conclusions before all facts are in. Such plans according to Cantone (2001) may prescribe methods not matched to the child's actual needs. It has also been noted that the threat of ridicule or failure can discourage some students from even attempting to communicate or put more effort in learning (Galloway and Goodwin, 1988). Further explanations are given by McGinni's and Smith (1982) who pointed out that some remedial treatment are developed by breaking the subject matter into component processes classifying the pupils' errors and providing special explanations. As discovered by Meijer et al. (1995), it is therefore clear that individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are needed to solve individual students' needs/problems. However, ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996) noted that group teaching may be done where learning difficulties and pace of learners are matched; however individual teaching is highly recommended as it helps in improving pupils' grades.

2.3 The Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Department, its Functions and role:-

The Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education (SPS & SNE) Department of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture in Zimbabwe is responsible for the remedial programme and support national development through facilitating the realisation of each individual's full potential (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1990). The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996) stresses that SPS & SNE Department play a central role in the establishment of special support facilities for learners who need more attention and assistance than is offered in the ordinary classroom. It further explains that the services may be referred to as resource units, special classes and learners Support Services (LSS). The CEO Circular Minute No. 12 (1987) states that in 1982 SPS & SNE Department extended the remedial Programme in Mathematics and Language reading to all schools. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Pamphlet (1984:2) suggests four main functions of SPS & SNE Department:

- a) To advise on and support the implementation of policies towards the enhancement of the Psychological well -being of learning at all levels of the educational system

- b) To promote school based programmes (like Grade 4 remedial teaching) for the benefit of all learners including those with special needs
- c) To conduct relevant research and disseminate findings for the benefit of the education sector and the general public
- d) To collaborate with all the other sections of the Ministry and other governmental/non-governmental and community organisations/agencies toward the provision and enhancement of education for all.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996: 20) states that Remedial Tutors are placed at each district and Regional offices and their roles were summarised as follows:

- ☞ Supervising remedial teachers
- ☞ Disseminating information to Remedial Teachers and Administrators through Training and Contact teaching in Learning Centres (LCs)
- ☞ Maintaining remedial records in their respective circuits
- ☞ Making consultancy visits to schools and carrying out outreach programmes
- ☞ Compiling statistics that reveal the successes and failures of the programme in-services schools.

Wilson and Cleland (1985) carried out a study on remedial reading where other roles of the remedial tutors included supplying screening and diagnostic tests, interpretation of test results and placement of screened out pupils. Gagne (1967) found that the question of how pupils differ in the rate, extent style and quality of their learning is one which has concerned psychologists for many years. In congruency, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Handbook (1993) stresses that the SPS &SNE Department is responsible for the assessment and placement of remedial pupils in Zimbabwean Schools. Gagne (1967) proposed that SPS & SNE Department emphasise an adaptation of education to the individual learner. Zvobgo (1997) carried out a survey on Zimbabwean Special Education and confirmed that SPS and SNE provided specialised services which are an important part of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture system.

2.4 Identification and Screening of Remedial Pupils in Zimbabwe:-

Meijer et al. (1995) and Carson et al. (1988)

propose that definite tests can be used to screen out pupils with learning difficulties and also diagnose the problems. To add to this, Wilson and Cleland (1985) also observed that educators can identify children with special learning difficulties through informal methods like child observation and formal methods like standardised selection tests. Some of the mentioned tests include, Mills learning Method tests, Achievement tests, Illinois tests of Psycholinguistics Abilities (ITPA), the Menro-Sherman Group Diagnostic Associative learning tests.

Research has not yet assessed the effectiveness of the above mentioned tests on the Zimbabwean child. However, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996:4) explains that the selection of remedial candidate should be done after administration of formal attainment tests. Wilson and Cleland (1985) encouraged the selection of remedial pupils by specialists. On the other hand, the Zimbabwean system as described in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996) stated that:

The same author lists selection tests as follows:

- a) English: Reading 4 and 5.
- b) Mathematics: Attainment 4.
- c) Shona: Attainment Test.

The SPS &SNE Department (1984) in the teachers Magazine mentioned that most Zimbabwean tests are adopted tests. Mpofu and Nyanungo (1998) found that imported tests are often culturally biased thus may not be as valid and reliable as they are supposed to be.

The Ministry of Education Handbook (1993) emphasizes that Heads of schools should time table Remedial Teaching Programmes (RTP) and should assign teachers to run the programme. In line with the above, the Secretary's 1987 Circular recommends that two remedial teachers should be selected for Mathematics and Language reading for every 500 pupils.

A study by Wilson and Cleland (1985) on Reading and Mathematics remedial teaching revealed that, remedial teachers should not have other tasks but they operate as peripatetic teachers unlike the above described Zimbabwean system which emphasize?? in blue print the teaching of Grade 4 remedial classes by classed teachers (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet, 1996). The formal selection of Shona Remedial pupils in Zimbabwe, which includes the following main steps:

1. Record the raw scores for Shona (on a separate sheet of paper) and convert the scores to percentage. The possible total score for Shona/Ndebele is 40 (100%).
2. Eliminate all children below 10% and those above 90%.

Table 2:1: Showing Summaries of the Selection Procedures

Percentage (%)	Plans of Action
0-10%	These children lack basic skills. They need personal assistance and belong to the teachers' special group.
11%-40%	Grey area. The children need careful observation. Some children might end up in Group A or C.
41%-90%	These are the remedial candidates. Note their specific strengths and weaknesses. Make Individual Education Plans (I.E.P). Implement Diagnostic Testing and Teaching.
91-100%	These are high fliers. They need enrichment only.

However, besides formal selection procedures other informal selection methods to be employed as supported by the Ministry of Education Pamphlet (1996) included watching children at tasks, interviewing or talking to the child, evaluating previous record books, looking through previous record books like registers, progress and social registers and looking for communication deficiencies. Research studies by Wilson and Cleland (1985) support the idea of consulting previous teachers or records but stress that, one should be alert to the possibility of interference of data that are tainted by bias.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture Pamphlet (1996) stresses that the selection or identification of remedial pupils should be followed by plans of action. Wilson and Cleland (1985) argue that these plans of action should include detailed data collection of concerned individuals, instructional plans, formulation from the strengths and weaknesses discovered specific objectives for each action, solving one problem at a time and giving diagnosis tests and then do diagnostic teaching. Bush and Waugh (1976) state that the diagnostician has a responsibility beyond just making a global diagnosis of the learning problem but should lead to remedial procedures. Furthermore it is argued suggest that, if proper remediation is to be prescribed, it is important to know all the steps required in the learning of task and to pinpoint where in the process a breakdown occurred (Galloway and Goodwin, 1988; Waldron, 1992). Waldron (1992) notes that, once teachers know where students' strengths and weaknesses lie teaching becomes less threatening and a sense of direction is developed by the learner.

2.5 Influence of the Resource Allocation to the Remedial Programme:-

Algozzine and Stoller (1981) states that remediation calls for skilful teaching, thus anyone who works in a remedial programme should be skilled teacher. A study on reading of English students by Wilson and Cleland (1985) relate that, specialists should take up remedial programmes because they are trained to administer screening and diagnostic tests and usually make correct interpretations of the results. Zvobgo's (1997) studies discovered that some colleges in Zimbabwe but not all are incorporating an element of special Education teaching in their course programmes. The importance of the issue is further stressed by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture

Waldron (1992) suggests that teachers should ask for in-service programmes and resource assistants. Morse and Wingo (1967) propose that teachers should use materials that highly suit and interest students such as newspapers, auto magazines, modal construction, cook books and extra. Supportively, Galloway and Goodwin (1988) reported that a study in 5th Grade student showed that he could not read above the 3rd Grade level but could read football articles in the Washington Post with a high comprehensive level. Emphasis is therefore put on availability of varied relevant and challenging learning/teaching material which caters for student's individual specific learning problems. Waldron (1992) also note that students learn better if, interested in what they are doing or learning.

2.6 Views towards the Remedial Programme:-

Long ago parents were denied specific information concerning diagnostic and screening test results of their children, but today parents have become aware of the need for such information (Gulliford, 1990; Farrant, 1990). Parents have a right to information on their child (Pumpfrey and Reason, 1992). Wilson and Cleland (1985) propose that at times parents are ashamed of their children's behaviour or performance in a subject(s) and often look for someone to blame when their children underachieve at school.

However, most students reveal that most parents query placement of their children into special classes and remedial groups as found out by Kapps (1991) and Farrant (1990). Wilson and Cleland (1985) carried out a study on Parental views on remedial programmes. The study revealed that three quarters (3/4) of the parents thought special classes and remedial groups were for mad pupils while one quarter (1/4) of the parents found the exercise or programme very helpful. Thus, Zvobgo (1997) expressed that parents need to be fully involved in their children's education so as to be aware of their weaknesses and seek appropriate ways of helping them. Kapps (1991) and Wilson and Cleland (1985) investigate the relationship between slow learners and their peers and found that although peers often treat them kindly, it is not uncommon for low achievers to be teased and taunted. The studies further express that classmates may not seek ideas for committee work from pupils involved in remedial activities because of their limited contributions. It was also noted by Waldron (1992) that it is this rejection that usually encourages remedial pupils to seek companionship in the out group.

Wilson and Cleland's (1985) studies discovered that, when students underachieve generally teachers sense a failure on their part as instructors, thus may react by giving up or feeling that such students are indifferent, lazy or troublesome. In agreement Gearheart et al. (1988) suggest that such reactions may be followed by punishments that usually foster a hostile between the teacher and the students. According to Gulliford (1990) and Meijer et al. (1995), the students are usually ill-equipped to accept this hostility.

Pumpfrey and Reason (1992) propose that as more and more frustrating materials are headed on low achievers, the more likely they are too busy with

non-educational activities and thus finally decide that learning is not worth the effort. Strang (1967) also found out that excessive absenteeism and complete rejection of the school programme may be investable and may lead to failure. Galloway and Goodwin (1988) suggest that strained school/pupil relationships raise dropout probabilities which eventually contribute to low performance among students.

2.7 What could be done to make the Remedial Programme a success?

McGinnis and Smith (1982) suggest that when a teacher notices that some students are experiencing difficulty an immediate instructional adjustment should be made in order to facilitate learning. Algozzine and Stoller (1981) stress that what students know is very important because what they do not know can be measured from what they do know. The same further suggest that this could be taken as the initial stage when planning the remedial programme.

In line with the above, Morse and Wingo (1967) propose that teachers must determine at which level each student can respond most effectively to instruction. In addition to this, Wilson and Cleland (1985) emphasize that at the initial stage parents should be made aware of their child's learning problems. Educators according to Lipsky (2000) must develop early in their pupils a sense of self-worth – the "I can't-do-it" attitude quickly turned to "I can do it". Meijer et al. (1995), Gearheart et al. (1981) and Linda et al. (1981) propose that when more than one educator is working with a student a successful remedial programme should establish an efficient and effective communication system with other concerned officers. The same author further stresses that without communication on what the other educator (Multidisciplinary Approach) is doing may expose students to conflicting strategies that serve to confuse rather than help. According to (Source) the success of any academic programme at school depends on the level of support that the programme is likely to get from various stakeholders that include parents as well as the relevant school authorities like the School Board or other regulatory authorities. In addition to this, Bush and Waugh (1976) found that underachievers should not be penalised for inaccurate responses but should be encouraged to respond to easy but challenging questions. The Pamphlet Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (1996) stress the importance of in-serving remedial teachers quite regularly. In support Morse and Wingo (1967) suggest that the teacher should also be up-to-date with

information and should be alert too, to changes and children's needs.

This study was guided by the following research questions: (a) What are the remedial and non remedial teachers' perceptions regarding the remedial reaching programme? (b) What are the perceptions of remedial and non remedial teachers regarding the implementation of the remedial programme? (c) What are the lecturers' challenges that teachers face in implementing the remedial programme? and (d) how can the remedial programme be improved in order to make it effective and efficient?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design:-

This study used qualitative research methods to find the views of remedial teachers who teach grade 4 classes. In selecting the methodology for this study, the researchers aimed to capture Individual experiences of these teachers in order to find solutions and strategies that could facilitate effective teaching in the future. In addition, the study intended to capture opportunities that were presented due to the teaching of students selected for remedial teaching. To achieve this intricate balance, a qualitative research design was employed through the use of questionnaires.

3.2 Population:-

The population of this study was made up of Gokwe South - Central Circuit Grade 4 remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province.

3.3 Sampling:-

The study centred on 15 primary schools out of 25 primary schools in the Gokwe South - Circuit. The fifteen primary schools were randomly selected.

The number of lecturers interviewed is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents.

Number of Remedial Teachers	32
Number of Non-Remedial Teachers	32
Number of School Heads involved	15
Total	79

Table 1 shows that a total of 94 participants took part in the study (n=79).

3.4 Instrument:-

This study used an interview guide to find the perceptions of remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers that teach remedial classes. The interviews enabled the study to probe views of these teachers. The interview guide used in this study was tested for content validity.

A pilot study was used to obtain criterion validity. The pilot study was done with replica respondents from teachers of schools that were not selected for the study. This was done as a measure of avoiding the sharing of information among would be respondents. The pilot study was a success as it allowed the researchers to amend any procedural difficulties regarding to the study.

3.5 Data collection: _

Data from remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers were collected using interviews. In this approach, a set of topics instead of structured questions were discussed in depth. The selected topics covered the following issues: (a) issues related to the management of the remedial programmes at the schools; (b) The identification and selection of students that participate in remedial programmes; (c) The various attitudes that teachers' hold regarding the remedial programme; (d) The challenges that teachers face in implementing the remedial programme; and (e) The strategies and solutions of overcoming these challenges.

3.6 Data analysis:-

The data that resulted from the interview were analysed manually. All the audio-taped interview sessions were transcribed. Similar ideas were identified and grouped into thematic a category, that is themes were put into categories based on the meaning they conveyed.

3.7 Ethical Considerations:-

This study was guided by principles that provide a generalized framework of how the research should be conducted. The study emphasised rules that are rational, objective, universal and impartial. The study addressed the following ethical considerations: (a) *Informed consent and voluntary participation*: Respondents who were remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers were given all relevant information about the risks or harm that could arise if they participate in the research. They then chose to participate or not to participate in the study. They were also allowed to pull out of the study at any point should they wish to without any penalties. A consent statement was part and parcel of research instruments. (b) *Protection from harm*: The study thrived to ensure that respondents were not exposed to any undue physical harm or psychological harm. According to Happner et al. (1992), harm can be embarrassment, anger imitation, physical and emotional stress, low self esteem, exacerbation of stress, delay of treatment, sleep

deprivation, loss of respect from others, negative labelling, invasion of privacy, damage of personal dignity, loss of employment and civil or criminal liability. The researchers tried as much as possible to be honest, respectful and sympathetic towards all participants. (c) *Confidentiality and privacy*: Respondents' information and responses shared during the study was kept private and results anonymously presented in order to protect identities of participants. All research transcripts being audio or written were destroyed at the completion of the study.

4.0 RESULTS

Interviews were held with the remedial and non-remedial teachers and they presented the following perspectives on the teaching of grade 4 remedial classes. The findings are presented following four themes driven from respondents' responses and research questions.

4.1 Theme 1: *Remedial and non remedial teachers' perceptions regarding the remedial reaching programme?*

Responses from participants:-

There were no notable differences between remedial and non remedial teachers' regarding the existence of the remedial reaching programme. Both groups found that the grade 4 school remedial teaching programme helps underachievers pace up with class mates. However, however, the minority of non-remedial teachers opposed this because they claimed that the programme does not produce outstanding positive results. This suggests that this area needs further analysis and study to determine what needs to be improved. The two groups also condemn the programme for neglecting the very backward children.

The majority of respondents (60%) stated that the whole programmes was noble and was aimed at improving the academic performance of students. There were differences in the way that the programme was being implemented within the twenty schools. While all the schools were in the same district there were notable differences in its implementation. Findings noted that although both remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers are said to be equipped with skills to teach Grade 4 remedial classes, mixed feelings were expressed regarding this notion. According to the key respondents in the study, the School Heads were the ones that selected the teachers that participated in the teaching of remedial classes. On the other hand, non-remedial teachers

complained that the selection system was not systematic, or based on any known criteria, thus they noted that the best teachers are not usually selected to participate in the programme. The same group further noted that some teachers are selected unwillingly for the programme and thus may put much effort to improve the situation.

In terms of the selection of the students that participate in the remedial programme, data obtained from investigations reveal that it is the prerogative of the remedial teachers using screening tests which are supplied by personnel from the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Services Department (SPS &SNE). Most of the non-remedial teachers felt that they should also take part in the selection test and they questioned the validity and reliability of these tests as they often fail to diagnose students that they feel may benefit from remedial classes. In most cases, average students are selected for remediation, whilst others are left out from the whole exercise. According to obtained data the tests are administered to Grades 3s either at the end of the year in October or during the first three weeks of first term in Grade 4, in order to for new recruits as well. The majority of School Heads suggested that they lacked knowledge on selection and diagnostic testing. It is however ironic that these same School Heads are expected to select, supervise and monitor the remedial teachers who participate in the remedial programmes. Almost half of the School Heads that participated in the study stated that they had not received any training in remedial teaching supervision and monitoring. The study findings indicate that 87,5% of remedial teachers and 93,7% of non-remedial teachers stressed that Heads do not frequently monitor the programme, as also nobody monitors the Heads on the programme. Both groups agreed that other teachers take it as the remedial teachers' sole business for the programme, which Galloway and Goodwin (1988) study has called, "the Remedial teachers' nuisance". That is, the programme is taken as the remedial teacher's baby.

Results indicated that in many of the schools that took part in this study, many School Heads did not even implement the remedial programme but give it lip-service. Of the 16 Schools that took part in the study, the School Heads indicated that the remedial programme existed within their schools though there were no record books, plan books, attendance registers, time tables as well as personal data for individual students.

4.2 Theme 2: What are the perceptions of remedial and non remedial teachers regarding the implementation of the remedial programme?

Responses from participants:-

Most of the non-remedial teachers felt that there was corruption and nepotism with regard to the selection of teachers who man the remedial classes. It was their belief that incompetent, lazy and politically correct teachers are the ones that are selected to teach remedial classes. While most of the remedial teachers agreed that there were no set rules with regard to the selection of teachers who teach remedial classes, they stated that only experienced teachers should teach these classes as they have the ability of assisting students unlike inexperienced teachers who often do not have the welfare of students at heart. The study also discovered that Heads lack the skills to monitor the remedial teaching programmes. The remedial teachers blamed the programme for taking as permanent remedial teachers and thus accused the programme in lacking flexibility. Another noted shortcoming was that most of the remedial work was left to the remedial teacher as his sole business.

All the teachers agreed that there was little or no coordination among the teachers who participate in the remedial programmes. Supervision is usually not done by most of the school heads and there is no evaluation of the programme to note whether the students are benefiting from these classes. Most non-remedial teachers felt that the lack of supervision and training among remedial teachers signifies that the programme is not meant to benefit students but the teachers who participate in it as they are exempted from other extra curriculum school activities like supervising students and participating in various sporting activities within the schools.

Generally the study findings indicate that the tests attempt to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the pupils. However, it was further noted that the screening tests identify both Grade 4 remedial Groups and the very backward pupils who are ignored by the programme and whose problems are left to the class teacher. This was expressed as a major shortcoming of the programme by both remedial teachers and non remedial teachers who further suggested that special classes be established at every school in order to cater for the backward pupils

4.3 Theme 3: What are challenges that teachers face in implementing the remedial programme?

Responses from participants:-

The major challenge that the teachers faced in the implementation of the remedial programmes was the lack of training in remedial teaching. While teachers' training colleges claim to equip teachers with skills to teach ordinary pupils and special needs children, it appears that most felt that they lacked the necessary skills to effectively teach students. The majority of teachers (75%) stated that they had not received any training in remedial teaching. It is important to note that most of the non remedial teachers disagreed with this view and suggest there is a need for a lot of in-service training in the teaching of remedial teaching so that teachers can effectively execute their duties. The key informants in the study, the School Heads also expressed the same sentiments, citing that teachers are coming from teachers' training colleges are not fully equipped to teach remedial classes hence they relied on more experienced teachers to man these classes.

All the respondents in the study stated that the remedial programme stigmatised the children who are selected for the programme. Students that take part in the programme end up reluctant to put any effort in learning as they were labelled "dull" or "poor performers". Consistent with this view the remedial teachers stated that when students know they cannot cope with the tasks at hand they exhibit negative attitudes and behaviours that are detrimental to the normal functioning of the whole class and the learning of others.

Another major challenge that the teachers faced in the implementation of the remedial programme was the lack of support from parents and guardians. Both remedial and non-remedial teachers revealed that parents generally view the Grade 4 remedial programme as useless and to be for retarded pupils. Having a child in the remedial programme is often seen by the parents as a sign that their child is mentally retarded or that they are not doing their part as parents with regard to the education of their child. It is interesting to note that all the respondents stated that most parents do not readily accept the placement of their children into the Grade 4 remedial classes. This is so because many parents themselves are highly literate (as observed by remedial teachers) and therefore they blame the school when their child fails to attain set goals or they may put the blame on

the teacher. The teachers noted that this view by parents is often a result of lack of information and knowledge about the objectives and rationale of the existence of the remedial programme and its benefits to students. However, the teachers noted that not all parents had negative views towards the remedial programme as some parents consult the teachers soon after their children are placed in the remedial classes, though most of these cooperative parents state that they must be noted as soon as their children's studies start to deteriorate. They argue that if they are noted in time they might work in conjunction with the teachers to improve the performance of their children and hence avoid placement in the remedial classes.

The large number of students that are placed in the remedial classes present challenges to the teachers that are selected to man these classes. The majority of remedial teachers viewed that taking up the programme was a strenuous load to their work load of 40+ students. The majority of the teachers felt that the Grade 4 remedial teacher is over tasked and overloaded with work. The large number of students that are placed in the remedial classes ensured that the teachers are not able to assist students on a one on one basis as the teachers will be overwhelmed with work. This ensures that most of the students do not benefit from the classes, which might have been different if the classes had few students that afford the teacher the opportunity of looking at the strengths and weaknesses of each and every student.

Both the remedial and non-remedial teachers perceived that one of the challenges that they face in the teaching of grade 4 remedial students is the lack of support from parents, the school authorities and the SPS & SNE Department. The same sentiments were expressed by few School Heads who stated that most of the remedial teachers are forced by the situation to be resourceful and to improvise. Most of the teachers expressed their frustrations on the teaching of grade 4 remedial students in that they are expected to produce wonderful results without any notable support from other important stakeholders in the teaching of grade 4 remedial students. Also in line with this challenge is the challenge that most of the teachers perceived that schools did not fully back them up with the necessary resources that can assist them in effectively executing their duties. The School Heads who participated in this study stated that while schools may be willing to assist remedial teachers

with the necessary resources, their budgets do not permit them to do so as their budgets are thin and cannot support the remedial programmes.

Remedial and non remedial teachers also stated that the remedial programmes are often allocated little time and this hinders the effective implementation of the whole programme. Non remedial teachers find this issue affecting children's performance and they further suggest that it should not be taught during sports time and encourage the participation in sports of both remedial teachers and the children in question. In support of this view, non remedial teachers proposed that it was also important not to feel that non-academic subjects are less important. For example, P.E. works off excess energy and trains pupils to be co-operative. Art and Music help pupils express their emotions creatively, thus may have been unable to do so in language related activities.

Results also revealed that remedial teachers also face the challenge of lack of assistance from other teachers who are not directly involved in the teaching of remedial students. Remedial teachers claim that, other staff members are generally unwilling to offer them assistance when they ask for it. However, other respondents who are not involved in the teaching of remedial students claimed that remedial teachers never seek their assistance. On further probing these teachers stated that the reasons for lack of consultation from remedial teachers may be that remedial teachers believe that they know remedial and educational matters better than the rest of other teachers. In view of this, the non remedial teachers expressed that remedial teachers who usually have strong backgrounds in Special Education tend to view other mainstream teachers as unknowledgeable, unskilled and often uncaring. It is important to note that these negative perceptions of the two groups of teachers often block any co-operative planning and assistance aimed at improving the academic performance of students. The key respondents in the study, the School Heads also echoed the same sentiments stating that there were problems between the remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers and that these conflicts often affect the welfare of students though they denied that the problems were not manageable, stating that these are normal and can be found within any setting.

Remedial teachers also stated that they often found challenges dealing with the psychological tests that are administered in the selection of students for remediation. The teachers questioned the

reliability and suitability of the tests to the Zimbabwe child. They cited that the tests that are in current use have been in use for a long time and have become a permanent feature in the testing of students. Most of the teachers cited the English test as being inappropriate and not serving the needs of the education system. Other teachers cited that there were teachers who were now in the habit of administering the tests to their students before the actual assessment sessions by personnel from the SPS &SNE Department. These teachers would have kept copies of the tests so that their students pass and are not selected for remediation, if a teacher has half of his/her students participating in the remedial programme this might reflect badly on his/her own abilities and reputation as a good teacher. The teachers also expressed that at times the students are not adequately prepared for the writing of these tests and that the significance of these tests is not articulated to the students. In many instances the tests are administered to students without any knowledge why they are writing the tests.

4.4 Theme 4: How can the remedial programme improved in order to make it effective and efficient? The Responses cited the following as ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the remedial programme:

The teachers felt that there was a need of a comprehensive document that is addressed by the Secretary within the Ministry of Education that should spell out how the programme should be implemented within the schools. There were disagreements that there was no formal policy that is specifically related to the existence of remedial classes within schools. The majority of the teachers were not aware of the existence of the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Department and that it had the mandate of assisting schools with the implementation of the remedial programme within schools.

There is a great need of ensuring that parents and guardians are informed about the merits and objectives of the remedial programme. At times most parents are not in support of the idea of their children participating in the programme. It is due to lack of information that leads most parents to transfer their children to other schools whenever they learn that their children are now in the remedial programme. The teachers cited that they are often selected for the remedial programme without any prior knowledge of their expectations and mandate, thus there is a need

of ensuring that they are trained and are assisted by the school with adequate resources so that they can effectively teach remedial students. The teachers also noted that it is important for the SPS &SNE Department to liaise with various Teachers' Colleges on remedial teaching programmes so as to fully equip teachers with remedial teaching skills before they start practicing as teachers. Such initiatives would ensure that every teacher would be fully knowledgeable on remedial teaching.

The study advocates for revision of screening and diagnostic tests that are in current use because they are imported, and are culturally biased, thus may not be as valid and reliable for the purposes that they are meant to serve. The teachers agreed that the tests are affected by many errors of measurement, thus their reliability and validity is questionable.

The timing that is advocated for remedial teaching must also be revised as it is often conducted in the afternoon when most of the pupils are tired and are not motivated to learn. The teachers noted that remediation often clashes with other activities that students love like football and netball, thus they do not concentrate much while their peers and friends are playing on the sports fields. There is therefore a need of revising the time tables so that they can accommodate all these issues, thus enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of remedial programmes.

The teachers noted that there is a need for co-operative efforts between the remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers so that work towards the improvement of the academic performance of students. The teachers must set aside their individual differences so that they can all work towards the achievement of common goals. However, to address the above issue the majority of the Schools Heads proposed that, to have teachers work together there must be a philosophy shift from isolation to integration allowing staff members to share and treat each other as equals. Thus through increased in-service, consultation in specialised teaching techniques and efficient staff conferences may lead towards solving these problems. Other issue that can contribute to the successfulness of the Grade 4 remedial reaching programme include the fostering of collaborative relationships between special teachers and regular teachers to assure reinforcement of skills and development across the curriculum.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to illicit the views of remedial and non-remedial teachers on the usefulness of Grade 4 remedial teaching programme in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study indicated that both remedial teachers and non-remedial teachers illustrated the importance and usefulness of the grade 4 remedial programme within Zimbabwean schools. The importance of remedial teaching programmes is also noted in previous research studies on the subject and various studies confirm the importance of remedial teaching programmes in improving the performance of students at various levels of their studies (Pumpfrey and Reason, 1992; Cantone, 2001; Garranza, 2001).

The present study also noted the importance of well coordinated, effective leadership structures within schools to ensure the effective implementation of the remedial programmes.

The study also noted that the effectiveness of the grade 4 remedial classes is a measured by the number of children that are in each remedial class. The teachers noted that by having more children in their classes, they end up not effectively delivering remedial classes. This point is also shared by Wilson and Cleland (1985) and Zvobgo (1997) who noted that large numbers of students hinder the effective delivery of remedial education as large numbers of students ensure that the teachers cannot effectively assist students individually. According to Lipsky (2000) if the teacher is overwhelmed by a large class, he/she cannot effectively assist these students as their effectiveness is undermined, these large classes ensure that they cannot determine the levels at which each child will be operating. These challenges ensure that the teacher cannot assist the student effectively and that they cannot effectively respond to instructions.

The use of relevant diagnostic tests was also noted to be an important component of the remedial teaching programme. The participants in the study noted that some of the psychological tests that are currently in use in Zimbabwe are foreign and are not particularly relevant to Zimbabwean students. The teachers questioned the reliability and validity of these tests in the selection of students for remediation. The same point is also shared by Mpofo and Nyanungo (1998), who noted that the tests that are currently in use in Zimbabwe are not relevant to the needs of Zimbabwean students.

The study also noted that most of the teachers cited that there were negative perceptions regarding the grade 4 remedial teaching programme among the parents of children that are selected for the programme. The participants noted that parental involvement was an important factor that can ensure the usefulness and effectiveness of the programme in meeting its objectives. This sentiment is also illustrated in classical literature on the subject (Gulliford, 1990; Farrant, 1990). Other studies also illustrate the importance of ensuring that parents must be given all the relevant information concerning any remediation that might take place within the school environment (Pumpfrey and Reason, 1992). The study also confirmed with previous studies that noted that some parents are ashamed of having their children in remedial classes due to various reasons that include lack of information, ignorance, mistrust of the school authorities and other reasons (Wilson and Cleland, 1985).

The study illustrated the importance of parental involvement in the study of their children and how this is vital in the effective implementation of remedial education within schools. The teachers as well as the School Heads noted that parents and guardians are important stakeholders in the remediation process of their children. These sentiments are also shared by Wilson and Cleland (1985) who emphasized the need of parental involvement in the initial stages of the identification of their children's learning challenges. If parents are involved in the education of their children they are more likely to assist the teachers and the school in the implementation of the grade 4 remediation programme. The findings of the present study confirm to what is documented in research that teachers feel that parental involvement is important and that it can contribute to the effectiveness of the remedial programme. Teachers noted that parental involvement is beneficial to the students as it can contribute towards the increase in student motivation and that students are more likely to consistently do their homework if their parents or guardians are heavily involved in their work. This is illustrated in various research studies on the subject (Becher, 1983; Henderson and Berla, 1994; Peña, 2000; Shumow and Miller, 2001).

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study findings reveal that, although Heads and non-remedial teachers find the Grade 4 School based remedial programme very useful, shortcomings seem to be outweighing the usefulness. For example, the School Heads lack the skills of monitoring remedial teachers and administering screening and diagnostic tests. According to this study the tests do screen out remedial pupils but are found unreliable and unsuitable for pupils with different cultural backgrounds. Different stakeholders expressed different views on the programme. Parents complained for not being consulted on their children's placement and some of them took the programme for granted. One of the major shortcomings considered in this study was lack of resources. However, although non-remedial teachers agree that remedial programmes uplift the learning standards of underperformers they express reservations on the nature of these classes in terms of the large number of students and the lack of support from parents of children placed in these classes. Classroom based remedial programmes should also be emphasised as these are more effective in dealing with immediate problems that students face as the teacher will be able to correct the student 'on the spot' rather than wait. The various screening and diagnostic tests that are currently being used in Zimbabwe for remedial purposes were found unfavourable and culturally unfair to pupils. It was concluded that there is a need of coming up with relevant, culturally sensitive tests that are applicable to the Zimbabwean context.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- ⇒ That there is also great need to reduce class sizes to teachable numbers like (25-30) in order to cater effectively for children in need of remediation.
- ⇒ The SPS & SNE Department within the Ministry of Education which is responsible for all the remediation programmes in the country should work with various teachers' colleges so that they incorporate Special Needs Education and remediation related issues in their programmes. Such initiatives would ensure that all trained teachers have sufficient training in conducting remediation before they embark on their careers as teachers.

- ⇒ That Education Officers with Special Education Qualifications be placed at District Offices where they would work with the Special Needs Tutors on the way forwarded on the teaching/learning of Grade 4 remedial pupils.
- ⇒ The Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs (SPS & SNE) Department should periodically visit schools at least once per year and advice on the implementation and teaching of Grade 4 School based remedial teaching programmes and the plight of other Special Needs children in the schools.
- ⇒ That remedial teaching is done in every class by teacher to minimise the rate of failure and abolish the Grade 4 remedial teaching programme in current use.
- ⇒ That Heads be in-serviced on how to administer test and evaluate the test results and monitor the programme in the school.
- ⇒ Those parents are fully involved on the learning problems and progress of their child.
- ⇒ Those educational campaigns are carried out in the teaching/learning of Grade 4 remedial pupils so as to suppress the negative attitudes and misconceptions about the purpose of the programme by parents.
- ⇒ That per capita grant is provided for the programme for the provision of enough resources.
- ⇒ That screening and diagnostic test be revised to suit the Zimbabwe child.
- ⇒ That at least one special class per school be established to cater for the very backward pupils in the school.

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