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PP/1981-1983/1/5.3/03

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Participation and co-operation
for development programmes

Remedial Education

by
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M A L T A

REMEDIAL EDUCATION

by James McNicholas

Report prepared for the Government
of Malta by the United Nations
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Cultural Organization (Unesco)

U N E S C O

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PP/1981-1983/1/5.3/03
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the request of the Government of Malta, the Director-General of Unesco arranged, under the Organization's Participation Programme for 1981-1983, for a consultant to visit Malta from 28 November to 20 December 1982 with the following terms of reference:

- (i) to advise on the training of personnel in remedial education in primary and secondary schools in Malta;
- (ii) to organize and run an in-service course for Maltese teachers involved in remedial education.

2. During his mission, the consultant worked in close collaboration with the Maltese Ministry of Education, and in particular with the Education Officer for Remedial Education, as well as with the Maltese National Commission for Unesco.

3. The consultant wishes to mention his gratitude and appreciation to the officials at the Ministry of Education, for their assistance and co-operation in the organization of the visits, courses and seminars. A special word of thanks is due to the Education Officer for his assistance and participation in the consultant mission.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Education in Malta

4. Universal, free education in Malta is a post-phenomenon. In 1974 the school-leaving age was raised from fourteen to sixteen years. Alongside a developing public sector has grown a strong private system largely identified with the church authorities.

5. Kindergarten education is available to all children aged four years. Primary school begins at age five, and is of six years' duration. At this level, half yearly and annual examinations may determine promotion to the next class. Secondary education is available to all children who successfully complete the primary-school course. In 1981 'Junior Lyceums' were established for the more academically able student, entry into which is by selective examination. In other secondary schools there is a differentiated curriculum for forms III to V for 'less motivated' pupils; the motivated pupils follow courses leading to the Ordinary Level of the General Certificate of Education. 'New Lyceums' provide post-G.C.E. courses for those wishing to study up to the Advanced Level. Various types of trade and technical education institutions exist, some of which are at the secondary level, while others recruit students after they have finished their five-year secondary course. Special schools for mentally and physically handicapped children began their existence in 1956. Recently attempts have been made to integrate educationally subnormal children in special classes in ordinary schools.

Remedial education in Malta

6. Attempts have been made in the past to acquire a pool of remedial teachers under the direction of an Education Officer for Remedial Education. The past ten years in Malta have seen considerable shifts in policy and these changes, together with a shortage of new teachers, have led to a reduction in both the extent and quality of remedial teaching.

7. Malta has suffered from a lack of in-service training provision, and the pressures put on the remedial service by educational changes, the raising of the school-leaving age and shortage of teachers have strained remedial provision almost to breaking point.

8. Remedial education has traditionally tended to provide a form of educational compensation, attempting to remediate cognitive deficiencies, usually just in reading, writing and number skills. Attempts to raise pupils' performances to an age norm are not helped by a system which emphasizes streaming and labelling of students from an early age, and which insists on a rigid syllabus and examination system which all must follow. This concept of remedial education, with all the problems inherent in the Maltese system of education, in fact creates more problems than it solves. Despite valiant efforts on the part of the Education Officer (Remedial Education) and some dedicated teachers, it is apparent that schools are struggling to overcome enormous difficulties. In recognition of these problems this mission was initiated by the Minister of Education.

Tasks/activities undertaken by the consultant

9. Visits were made to three primary, three secondary, and a special school, in order to observe at first-hand the provision for children with learning difficulties. Normal classrooms were visited also to provide comparisons.

Course for teachers in Valetta, 2-10 December 1982

10. This course was organized jointly by the Education Officer for Remedial Education and the consultant, for teachers interested in remedial education in primary, secondary and special schools. Over 100 teachers had volunteered for the course but the number was reduced to 50 after the Minister had insisted that participants should make a written commitment to remedial education. The final number included two teachers from secondary, six from special and the remainder from primary schools.

Seminar for head teachers in Valetta, 14 December 1982

11. The aims of this seminar were to critically examine traditional school strategies for remedial education and to suggest alternative approaches. It was attended by 96 head teachers from primary (59), secondary (24), trade (6), special (5) and other schools (2).

Seminar for head teachers and teachers in Gozo, 15 December 1982

12. The aims and programme were the same as the seminar in Valetta. Attending the seminar were thirteen head teachers and twenty-seven teachers from primary, secondary and trade schools.

Meeting with education officers

13. The principal role of the education officers is to advise teachers on the implementation of policies laid down by the Minister. Education officers are responsible for subject areas and different age sectors. Besides the officers for remedial and special education, many informal discussions took place with those responsible for guidance and counselling, English, mathematics, Maltese, science, kindergarten and infants, test construction, primary and secondary education.

14. A formal meeting with all education officers was arranged for the penultimate day of the mission when the consultant's observations were put forward and their reactions and views were called for.

Meeting with the Minister of Education

15. A meeting with the Minister of Education, the Hon. Philip Muscat, took place on the final day of the mission. Also present were the Director of Education, the Education Officer for Remedial Education and Mr G.DeMarco, Secretary of the Maltese National Commission for Unesco. This meeting was called to discuss the findings and recommendations with the Minister and his advisers.

III. REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

Impressions of visits to schools

16. Many lessons observed were heavily based on reading of texts and answering of questions with little opportunity for pupil-directed activities or individualized teaching. Teaching, obviously, was affected by a rigidity of syllabus and examination system. There was an apparent lack of appropriate teaching materials for those experiencing difficulties. Only one of the teachers visited had received some training in remedial work.

Course for teachers in Valetta

(See Appendix II for content details)

17. Course aims:

- (a) to introduce participants to newer concepts and practices of remedial education;
- (b) to stimulate examination of teaching and attitudes towards children with learning difficulties;
- (c) to suggest some newer strategies and techniques which teachers in Malta might develop.

18. A unified course of action was assured by frequent contact by mail and telephone between the Education Officer for Remedial Education, and the consultant before the mission began. A meeting with all course lecturers on 29 November was arranged so that agreement could be reached on lecture content, particularly with regard to attitudes towards testing, expectations of teachers, motivational factors in teaching and whole school approaches to remedial education.

Lecturers/seminar and group leaders

19. Lecturers on the course consisted of three members of the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, five education officers and one educational psychologist. Two remedial teachers and one education welfare officer related their school experiences. Seminars and group discussions were led by education officers--the aim being to allow teachers to discuss lecture topics and their relationship to school policies and practices.

Course evaluation

20. No formal evaluation was attempted. Subjective assessment, gained through feedback from seminar and group discussions and the final forum on the last day of the course, seems to suggest that the course had been successful in achieving its aims. Many teachers spoke of a desire to have a follow-up course of a practical nature.

Seminar in Valetta

21. After an introductory lecture by the consultant on the ideal concept of a 'whole school approach' (i.e all staff being involved) to remedial education, participants were put into discussion groups from which, at a later report-back session, questions could be raised. Topics discussed were related to children with special educational needs--primary and secondary curriculum, transfer from primary to secondary school, of the school for the disadvantaged, trade schools, the failing child in the mixed ability class and the withdrawal system of remedial education.

Seminar in Gozo

22. Same as for Valetta except that there were only four discussion groups 'the failing child in the mixed ability class'; 'the culturally disadvantaged child'; 'transfer from primary to secondary school'; and 'children with special needs in primary and secondary schools'.

23. Details of seminar reports are placed in Appendix. They reflect a lively interest in the topics under discussion and a widespread belief that commitment to remedial education should receive a high priority in Malta. Adapted curricula, specialized training, remedial specialists and special resources were mentioned over and over again.

Meeting with education officers

24. There was general agreement on the need for a relevant curriculum for children with learning difficulties, including delay in teaching English until children have a mastery of their own language and less rigidity in the application of the syllabus. A priority was seen to be trained remedial personnel and special resources.

25. Two important matters discussed were (a) the need for statements to be issued on the nature of a curriculum for children with learning difficulties and (b) a suggestion that a committee of education officers meet regularly to prepare such statements.

Meeting with the Minister of Education

26. The Minister was informed of the findings of the consultant and discussions with teachers, head teachers and education officers. A typed report containing these findings, a synopsis of lectures and discussions from the course and seminars, plus observations and recommendations, was handed to the Minister. (See Part IV for recommendations made to the Minister).

Views of the teaching profession

Examinations and syllabus

27. Of the many lecturers, head teachers, teachers and education officers consulted, these themes were the most commonly recurring. For children with learning difficulties, it is overwhelmingly considered that school flexibility with regard to examinations and syllabus is essential.

Resources for remedial education

28. Concern was expressed over the paucity of suitable apparatus and books for children with learning difficulties. The majority of teachers spoken to would welcome alternative reading schemes and other professionally produced materials.

Training for remedial work

29. Many teachers expressed feelings of inadequacy arising out of unpreparedness in terms of professional training in remedial education. Head teachers are appreciative of teachers who are able to teach children with learning difficulties and there appears to be a sufficient number of teachers of the right calibre if only opportunities could be made available to train and support them in their role. The visit to the University Bachelor of Education Course confirmed this viewpoint.

Status of remedial teachers

30. Very often status for such teachers is low. Some teachers and head teachers unfortunately do not accord to remedial work the support it deserves and needs. Course members were agreed that such work requires experienced and dedicated teachers whose efforts merit due recognition.

Parents

31. Certain parents wish to withdraw children from school so they can begin earning money. Parental disinterest is felt to be a contributory factor in the under-achievement of some pupils.

Under-achieving pupils

32. Many pupils, it is reported, particularly at secondary level, show little interest in school. They are poorly motivated and sometimes turn to bad behaviour, which is causing great concern.

Attendance

33. School attendance is affected by the factors stated in paragraph 32. In one school the head teacher admitted that attendance was regularly down to 60% to 66%. Such conditions have a deleterious effect on attainments.

Personal observations (Impressions formed from school visits, questions and responses to lectures, discussions with lecturers, education officers and teachers and general reading)

34. Development of remedial education should be viewed in the context of an emergent country wishing to expand educational provision with limited resources at its disposal. Growth will need to be planned and patiently nurtured in a country where sweeping changes have followed each other in rapid succession

over recent years. If Malta is to have trained remedial teachers, a peripatetic remedial service and adequate resources, it will take several years to build up, assuming a period of investment and stability in the system.

35. In Malta, educational innovations can be subject to political interpretation.

Thus, great sensitivity will be required in the communication, support and dissemination of good remedial practices in order to secure total professional acceptance.

36. Malta is not yet ready to accept the total philosophy of special educational needs as propounded in the Warnock Report in Britain (1978). This is something to aim at once remedial education is well established.

37. Despite the manifest problems, tribute must be paid to the dedication and zeal of all those involved in the establishment and participation of this programme. There is a fund of goodwill and concern that remedial education be firmly established in Malta. Some of the points made by teachers are quite justifiable: an adaptation of the curriculum and examination system is patently essential; specific teaching aids and materials are also necessary; trained remedial teachers are vital for the provision of a professional remedial service. (Some of the other problems raised by teachers would start to disappear once these factors were met).

38. A planned, progressive development of a remedial education service with trained remedial teachers in primary and secondary schools, ably supported by advisory teachers and support services is seen as essential. However, with limited financial backing, it would perhaps be prudent to suggest that a start should be made on providing primary remedial teachers (40 or 50) and three advisory teachers in the first year of follow-up to this participation programme; in the second year, training for secondary remedial teachers could commence.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the support of all head teachers and teachers is enlisted in order to promote remedial education.
2. That headteachers permit teachers of children with learning difficulties to adapt the curriculum to their developmental needs.
3. That training for remedial work be provided at two levels:
 - (a) Initial. Malta needs trained teachers as soon as possible. In order to accommodate this need and having regard to the availability of professional manpower and economic resources, it is suggested that a one-day per week release course for 40 to 50 teachers volunteering for remedial work be organized.
 - (b) Further. There is a need for qualified personnel to study remedial education at a more advanced level. It is recommended that bursaries be sought to enable three teachers to attend Advanced Diploma courses in the United Kingdom. These teachers would provide Malta with remedial advisory/teachers who could act in a peripatetic supportive role to teachers on course (a).

Both courses (a) and (b) would need to run from 1983 and thereafter until the Maltese authority was satisfied that it had a sufficient quota of trained remedial teachers.

4. That a course of a more practical nature, i.e. concerned with teaching method and technique, be organized in July 1983 as a follow-up to the present course, course members to consist of members of courses (a) and (b), and lecturers to be specialists in remedial education.
5. That the education officer for remedial education should visit remedial and resource centres in the United Kingdom in order to acquaint himself with specific exemplary practices and prepare for the establishment of remedial education in Malta in a progressively developing manner.
6. That a Resource Centre for Remedial Education be established as soon as possible. Such a centre should contain examples of the best published materials. Its most important function, however, would be in the manufacture and dissemination of teaching materials specific to the requirements of teachers in Malta. Reprographic and artistic support would be desirable so that materials of a professional standard could be produced.
7. That the status of remedial teachers be enhanced. This might happen in two ways (a) by providing specialized training and (b) by granting extra emoluments for those with extra qualifications and responsibility. Remedial education needs to be seen as important in its own right. Remedial classes require continuity of treatment, and should not be split up to provide cover for absent class and subject teachers.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Head teachers' and teachers' support for remedial education to be enlisted.
2. Adaptation of curriculum and examinations for children with learning difficulties.
- 3A In-service training in Malta. One year courses to be commenced--a one-day per week release for 40 to 50 teachers.
- 3B More highly qualified training on full-time diploma courses in the United Kingdom for three teachers.
4. Follow-up course in Malta in July 1983.
5. Education officer for remedial education to visit remedial and support services and institutes of training in the United Kingdom.
6. Establishment of a Resource Centre for Remedial Education.
7. Improvement of the status of remedial teachers.

ANNEX

MAIN POINTS ARISING FROM LECTURES/SEMINARS

In-service course lectures

1. 'The Developing Concept of Remedial Education', Mr Jim McNicholas.

This lecture, charted a nation's attempt to provide quality education--a natural development, after the goal of providing free, mass education in order to acquire an educated work force capable of providing the state with the manpower resources necessary for economic growth has been achieved. Growth of remedial and compensatory movements traced along with the more recent concept of environmental, social and systemic attributes of scholastic underachievement. A new concept of special educational needs, encompassing the whole range and variety of additional help, including that now described as remedial, has been suggested by the Warnock Report (1978) in Britain. It suggests that up to one in five children will require some form of special educational provision in this wider sense, and recommends that the planning of services for children and young people should be based upon this assumption. A recent survey conducted by Mr Francis Attard, Education Officer for Remedial Education, indicates that a similar provision may be required in Malta.

2. 'Where do we stand?', Mr F. Attard.

Results of a report of an investigation into the incidence of Year III to VI primary school children referred for remedial education.

Numbers of children requiring special help would appear to be in line with figures available from other countries. 'It is time now to rethink our approach and to place remedial education on a proper footing'.

3. 'Expectations and the underachiever', Mr J. McNicholas.

How teacher expectations often serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Dangers of stereotyping children of poor and working-class or disadvantaged children. Need to praise and encourage, avoid norm-searching and labelling. We must not use 'disadvantage' as an excuse for non-achievement. The cost to the individual and to society of not utilizing the abilities of all children is intolerably high.

4. 'Categories of handicap and provision in Malta', Mr G. Samuel.

The history of special education in Malta dates back to 1956. Provision for handicapped children has progressed steadily since then. The most recent developments have been in the establishment of integrated opportunity classes in primary schools. There is no clear dividing line between those assessed as ESN and children with extreme learning difficulties, often considered 'remedial'. One should regard the label as less significant than the provision of individualized treatment for these children. Considerable overlap exists between those considered ESN and remedial, and the continued co-operation and liaison between the education officers concerned is thought to be essential.

5. 'The under-achiever's reactions to school failure', Mr F. Attard.

A look at attitudinal, behavioural and psychological aspects of school failure. Some schools are poorly organized to deal with the problems--often not using equipment and materials that is available. Teachers will have to make much of their own apparatus and work cards--this requires dedication and great effort on the part of remedial teachers.

6. 'Motivation and learning', Mr A. Zammit Montebello

A child's motivation is seen in relation to two variables--the cognitive and the affective domains. For a child to learn, teachers must relate tasks to

- (a) previous knowledge
- (b) developmental readiness
- (c) the child's intellectual level
- (d) practice and
- (e) the age and interest level of instructional materials, e.g. 'do not give Ladybird 2A to a boy of 14 years'--these are cognitive factors.

Other factors (affective) consist of

- (f) attitudes to school, teachers and subject
- (g) personality
- (h) the value system held by pupil and school
- (i) attitudes of teachers.

Motivation is a complex phenomenon and any learning task needs to be seen in terms of the motivational level of the child.

7. 'Evaluation of aims and objectives in education', Professor C. Farrugia

Society places an obligation on teachers to 'educate', not just to teach reading, writing, mathematics, history, etc.

Remedial education should be seen in the context of total education and within the goals as follows:

- (a) making people intellectually autonomous;
- (b) vocational preparation--task completion; working in harmony
- (c) socialization--we all teach members of society
- (d) creativity--emphasis on activity in learning rather than passivity.

Discussion centred around the problems of trying to achieve these noble aims when the examination system applied so much pressure to prepare for the terminal assessment.

8. 'Objective and subjective assessment', Mr S. Debono.

Should examinations have any place in the assessment of students with learning difficulties? Should these be treated like other students in terms of tests and examinations?

9. 'Screening and diagnosis of learning difficulties', Mr J. McNicholas.

Use of teacher observation to pinpoint children's strengths and weaknesses. From this profile one can start to look beyond the information for causatory factors in under-achievement. The profile also enables teachers to group students for work and plan effective remediation.

A programme of activities following on the screening is recommended. This is based on mastery learning principles. Both measures are adaptable to the Maltese system but the programme would require a massive contribution from a resource centre to produce materials of sufficient type and range.

10. 'Intelligence testing', Professor J. Falzon.

The structure of intelligence tests. Binet and the grading of test items to suit various age groups. Stanford-Binet Scale. Rate of learning related to intelligence--eventually two children may 'get there' even though one takes a little longer.

When testing, other variables may intervene and affect the validity of the test, e.g. emotional state of the child, etc.

Tests may be used with extreme caution. A bright child would be dull if he did not get stimulating learning experiences.

11. 'Science subjects as a source of motivation', Mr C. Xerri.

Asimov's definition of science: 'In almost the beginning was curiosity'.

Suitable for young children because it uses curiosity, arouses their interest, stimulates thought because it answers questions they have in their own mind.

Science curriculum should develop - an inquiring mind
- independent working
- ability to solve problems by
applying a fair test.

A starting-point would be the child himself--knowing oneself, developing powers of observation, drawing and recording the information.

Use heights of children to build up bar graphs and discussion prior to number work.

Michael Faraday's lectures on a burning candle (6 lectures) can provide, for instance, so many uses of vocabulary and connected creative writing.

We also use science to classify--an important facet in science.

Discovery methods using concrete experiences like comparing our eyesight and hearing give rise always to discussion, reading, writing and mathematics.

A purely theoretical teaching content does not interest children, nor do they retain the material.

12. 'The role of the guidance teacher re children in need of remedial education'.
Mr Martin Vella Haber

What is 'Guidance'?

First priority is to socialize the child. Second aim to prepare child for the world of work. Third aim to guide the child.

The field of guidance is related either directly or indirectly with the child's personal or environmental problems and concerned with the development of the child's personality. This is a process spread over a period of time, geared to individual needs, to help normal pupils with normal problems.

Transition from primary to secondary may bring problems to the fore. Children now benefit more from a one-teacher situation (who has a pastoral role and knows the child's needs) to a many-teacher situation, new subjects with differing demands, and a confusing organizational system, Contact between primary and secondary education is vital. Children with learning difficulties will need guidance, especially at the transition stage.

13. 'Reading age and interest age', Professor J. Falzon.

Construction of attainment tests. Validity of norms obtained from attainment tests. Interpret a reading age with caution--this is a crude measure and we need further information on the child--his other attainments, educational history and family background. The concept of Interest Age is important, and has implications for the applicability of materials and teaching methods.

14. 'Behaviour modification', Mr G. Samuel

Behavioural problems may result from poor home and environmental conditions--overcrowding, lack of amenities, defective family relationships, defective discipline, violent upbringing.

It is important, therefore, to know the child's background and to provide the affection that may be absent in the child's background, and to provide the affection that may be absent in the child's home.

Some solutions in a 'modification' scheme:

- (1) allow self-directed activities;
- (2) avoid struggles of will with the child;
- (3) treat consistently;
- (4) set out rules clearly;
- (5) praise and value children's efforts;
- (6) provide a good model for children;
- (7) write to parents when achievements are positive.

15. 'Perspectives of a remedial teacher', Mr E. Cortis

In 1973, when Mr Cortis began this work, he and other remedial teachers were 'bombarded' with requests for remedial help. Numbers today are smaller because children are being identified, albeit unrefinedly, by the annual tests. However, it is still not possible to deal with all the children referred for remedial help.

Although results are encouraging, there is an obvious need for a follow-up service in secondary schools.

16. 'The disturbed and disturbing child', Mr A. Zammit Montebello.

Children need to be loved and to have a secure environment. Maladaptive behaviour leads to academic failure and vice versa, so we must get to know the child. Two programmes are required--an appropriate educational and a behavioural treatment programme.

Stages of learning:

1. Situation - 'the task'.
2. Personal characteristics - taking account of previous knowledge, abilities, and attitudes (e.g. 'I'm hopeless at numbers').
3. Goal - to gain satisfaction from that task.
4. Interpretation - highlight the significant details to ensure satisfaction.
5. Action - complete the task.
6. Consequences - confirms or contradicts expectation.
7. Learning set - either 'good' learning or compulsive behaviour results. 'Failure' is to be avoided, and it is the teacher's job to reverse this syndrome. Look for child's interests and use them as a motivator.

17. 'Use and abuse of resources in remedial education', M.G. Bonnici.

Stages in remedial work.

Diagnosis of difficulties. Exploration of the pupils' abilities and weaknesses--interpretation into a programme of treatment--a study: all these require 'Trained remedial teachers' and an individualized approach to learning.

Approaches need to be inter-active, combining teaching, therapy, and liaison with the home.

Principles of remedial education:

- (a) acceleration;
- (b) intensity;
- (c) investigation;
- (d) competition - free;
- (e) suitability;
- (f) extension.

The best resource of all is the teacher. But there is not enough topic work and individualized method. One problem is a scarcity of material. However, teachers can identify appropriate practices--not just filling in blanks, use illustrations--reading should form the basis of word study not vice versa.

A prime need is for teachers to meet and discuss and to make their own materials. The University Resource Centre offers its service.

18. 'The role of the Education Welfare Officer', Mr P. Mifsud.

Emphasis is placed on home visits to seek reasons for children's absence. A number of children do actually refuse to attend school--their main excuse 'I can't cope at school'. Are we making over-great demands on such children?

About 1,000 daily absences from schools, excluding those 'sick'. Approximately 1,000 cases per month are brought to the courts.

19. 'The role of the Remedial Department', Mr J. McNicholas.

Five functions of remedial teachers: Assessment; prescription; teaching/therapeutic; supportive of other staff; liaison with other professionals and parents.

How teachers need to develop the role so that remedial work is continuous both through and across the curriculum.

The need for curricula to be adapted to the special needs of these pupils.

20. 'Some general principles of a remedial programme', Mr F. Attard.

Principles of remedial teaching and children's opinions of school. A dissertation was presented which showed that many pupils in low streams had low achievements, and that some teachers were unable to motivate them. The study brought out the importance and place of children's attitudes of school.

21. 'Motivating the underachiever', Mr J. McNicholas.

Hewett's levels of motivation. How to organize one's classroom to achieve a match between school tasks and pupils' levels. Related to practice, especially a selection of reading games and activities. With some help these could be adapted to classes in Malta, not only in English but also in Maltese.

22. Forum. All education officers and teachers.

'There is a great need of remedial and guidance teachers'.

'Remedial work needs continuation in secondary schools'.

'In a school with 21 classes (7 in each stream), what does one teacher do?'

'Many secondary schools complain that primary teachers do not send up enough information.'

'More detailed records, inter-school visits, and samples of work between primary and secondary should be exchanged'.

'Could secondary school teachers agree to adopt a tutorial role for all children with learning difficulties?'

'Many children should not be 'remedial' cases--in many cases it is not a cognitive problem but a school-disparity problem'.

Head teachers' seminar (14 December 1982)

Group Reports. Reports of discussion groups which met following Mr J. McNicholas' lecture--'The whole school approach to remedial education', i.e. involvement of all the staff in remedial work.

Group 1. The secondary school curriculum and the child with special needs.

- (i) Need to avoid labelling.
- (ii) Need to be flexible regarding curriculum.

Proposed a two-tier curriculum and examination to suit.

More help to reduce class numbers for children experiencing learning difficulties.

Must reduce curriculum to the basic needs of the children with difficulties.

Give up the defeatist attitude by adopting a whole school approach.

Limit curriculum in Secondary B to two languages, and give more practical work.

Group 2. Primary school curriculum and the child with special needs.

Need for adaptation of curriculum.

Need for specialized teachers and need, also, for special classes. Such teachers should not be forced to take these classes; they should have experienced teachers who have undergone training. In primary schools, for children of low ability and the youngest teachers, leave teaching a second language until a first language has been developed.

Group 3. The transfer from primary to secondary.

Children being made to sit for examinations when we know they cannot succeed. Such children should have other types of assessment.

Need for integrated classes and trained remedial teachers. Parental support is required.

New teachers should serve a period of time in primary before teaching in secondary school.

Recommend a curriculum which is real and relevant to children's needs. Unless these needs are met, are we in Malta to face the problem of disaffection and consequent social unrest as we have witnessed in other countries?

Group 4. . Some topic.

Problem of lack of identity and security, the loss of an individualized approach when going into the secondary schools, particularly the bigger schools.

Group 5. Role of the school for the disadvantaged.

Concept of the culturally disadvantaged--problems of divided and broken families.

Children try to camouflage their background whilst at school.

A wider use of PTA is recommended.

Where children can be helped to obtain culture at school is in the provision of libraries and visits.

A greater need for flexibility to organize such activities.

More need for peripatetic specialists. Too many classes do not get sufficient education in the arts.

Need to adapt curricula to the cultural needs of the children.

Great need to involve the social services and work with their co-operation.

Great need to have school as a cultural centre for the whole community.

Libraries and field visits could assist in widening the cultural horizons of children.

Group 6. Same topic.

Suggestions: Make better use of parents through PTA.

More emphasis on home economics and practical subjects.

Ourselves, show more love to these students.

Group 7. 'Trade schools'.

Some students cannot read and write (about 5 per cent). The majority are having difficulty in the basic subjects. Many want to leave school at 16, and some leave before to take up a job. Remedial and guidance teachers should be an established fact in trade schools.

Group 8. 'The failing child in the mixed-ability class'.

Help should be given at the earliest age. Mixed-ability classes need smaller numbers; we also need individualized materials (to be provided from the authorities). There should be special classes for children with learning difficulties in all schools. Parents should be educated to accept the need for special education.

Group 9. 'The withdrawal system of remedial education'.

Problems: Selection of children should avoid stigmatization. During withdrawal one must ensure that children are not missing vital sections of the curriculum.

Findings: Where there is some motivation one can expect good results. The work of peripatetic remedial teachers has been noted.

Recommendations: Teachers need specialized training. Liaison between remedial teachers, head teachers and parents is necessary.

Important to help children with personal problems before they can be helped with academic work.

Seminar in Gozo (15 December 1982)

Group Reports

Group 1. The failing child in the mixed ability class. Difficulty of coping with all abilities when results are assessed.

Recommendations: Avoid labelling, especially oral one or two years.
 Teachers should receive training.
 Remedial teachers required to advise class teachers.
 Resource centres required, i.e. resources made by teachers themselves.
 Mixed ability classes should be no bigger than 18. Need for more group work.
 Abolition of national examination for the child who is below average ability. Should we have for such children a diagnostic examination?

Group 2. 'The culturally disadvantaged child'.

Lack of facilities at home and overcrowding.

Some children come from homes where there is violence and gambling. The PTA has a large part to play. Make up for deprivation by providing security and love at school and encouraging hobbies.

Group 3. Transfer from primary to secondary school.

Child loses sense of security in a larger school community; he was in the oldest age group, now he is in the youngest; he is in a larger pupil-teacher group; he has to learn many new subjects.

Suggestions: (i) determine abilities at an early age;
 (ii) help children over transition;
 (iii) make closer contact between primary and secondary school.

As far as trade schools are concerned there is a percentage of pupils who require remedial help. Many of these improve tremendously when they see that what they are learning has relevance for them.

Group 4.

Child with special needs in primary and secondary schools.

One class in a mixed ability situation poses the question 'Which children do we concentrate on?' Can we have opportunity classes in Gozo primary schools?

In secondary schools, the syllabus is inappropriate for many children (i.e. lower streams). Sometimes in years 1 and 2 there is, for instance, one art lesson every 15 days.

Home economics and needlework are not in the Junior Lyceum's curriculum. More trade and practical skills required in Gozo schools.

A separate syllabus is required for years 1 and 2 of secondary school.