

REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN MALTA

YEAR IV - YEAR VI

- A CASE STUDY

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L-Universit   
ta' Malta

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A B S T R A C T

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This work deals with remedial education in Malta - its past and present - and makes suggestions for its further development.

The work commences with a clarification of the concept of remedial education as viewed by local and foreign authorities. Chapter Two then gives a detailed account of the development of remedial education in Malta since its initiation. An important landmark - a survey on children requiring remedial education - is reported and analysed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents an analysis of the questionnaires answered by 30 heads of Primary 'B' Schools in Malta and Gozo. The aim of this questionnaire was to gauge their views on remedial education while acquiring supplementary information on the present situation. These opinions are supported by the views of a number of teachers in charge of children with learning difficulties in the ordinary school. Research and attempts at providing remedial education abroad are outlined in Chapter Five, the last section of which offers recommendations for the development of remedial education within the Maltese context.

Dissertation Supervisor  
Mr. Joe Fenech

B. ED. (HONS.)  
December 1987

With gratitude to my sister Mona who  
gave me moral support during my five-  
year course.

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I extend my thanks to the headteachers who kindly spared the time and effort to answer my questionnaire or questions during interviews; and the teachers who were so helpful in the way they responded to my enquiries.

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Stephanie Aquilina

C O N T E N T S

	Page
Abstract	
Dedication	
Acknowledgements	III
Contents	IV
Introduction	1
Chapter One:	
<u>What is remedial education?</u>	4
- Introduction	4
- The relationship between 'remedial', 'special' and 'ordinary' education	4
- Who does remedial education cater for?	10
- Forms of remedial education	12
- The aims and objectives of remedial education (further attempts at clarification)	15
- Conclusion	17
Chapter Two:	
<u>The Story of remedial education       in Malta</u>	18
- Introduction	18
- Remedial education in Britain	18
- The situation in Malta	19
(i) introduction	19
(ii) first signs of remedial education	20
(iii) remedial teaching in ordinary schools	21

	Page
(iv) teachers and teacher training	23
(v) remedial education in secondary schools	27
(vi) appointment of E.O. for remedial education	28
(vii) an outline of remedial provision by 1976	30
(viii) significant factors on remedial education	34
(ix) the years 1977-83: the rise and fall of remedial education	35
(x) the years 1984-86: opportunity classes and Preparatory Secondary Schools	40
- Political party views on children with learning difficulties	44
- Conclusion	45
Chapter Three: <u>Case Study: Government school children in need of remedial education - incidence and diagnosis</u>	46
- Introduction	46
- Reliability of the report	48
- Incidence	50
- Diagnosis	52
- General classification of performance	63
- Conclusion on Survey	64
- Further Developments	64

	Page
Chapter Four:	
<u>Remedial education: head-</u> <u>teachers' and teachers'</u> <u>views</u>	66
- Introduction	66
- Teachers' views	69
- Headteachers' views	71
(i) who does remedial education cater for?	71
(ii) special provision	72
- the present situation (provision and recommendations)	72
Chapter Five:	
<u>Remedial education - A</u> <u>comparative analysis</u>	76
- Introduction	76
- Remedial education abroad	76
(i) early provision	76
(ii) curriculum development	78
(iii) a flexible system of remedial education	80
(iv) special apparatus	83
(v) teacher training	84
(vi) the contribution of teachers/student- teachers in training	87 88
(vii) co-operation	
- Important considerations on remedial education in Malta	90
- Recommendations	93

	Page
<u>Appendices:</u>	
A - Survey Tests	97
B - Questionnaire to Primary Schools (B)	107
C - Basic questions for interviewing teachers	111
Notes	IX
References	XIII

TABLES

	Page
Chapter 2	
Table 1A	Remedial sessions in Primary Schools in Malta (Year IV-VI)
Chapter 3	
Table 1	Children in need of remedial education in a number of subjects (Year IV - VI)
Table 2	Children in need of remedial education in a number of subjects in different year groups (Year IV - Year VI)
Table 3	Children performing at chronological and below chronological age ability in Maltese word recognition tests (Year IV - VI)
Table 4	Children performing at chronological and below chronological age ability in English word recognition tests (Year IV - VI)
Table 5	Correct responses on the Checklist of Basic Skills
Chapter 4	
Table 6	Child population in each year (Year IV- VI) given by heads of schools answering questionnaire.

## INTRODUCTION

My interest in remedial education was sparked off during my first year in the B.Ed. (Hons.) course. During a school visit, as the head of school was showing me around, he stopped at the far end of the corridor and showed me into "the remedial class". There must have been around 12 children in the class; the desks were old, the walls were strikingly bare and a wire hung across the room. From it was suspended a light bulb. It struck me as a contradiction that these students who needed motivation should be educated in this setting. I wished to discover more about remedial education and especially remedial education in Malta. Who does it cater for? What are its aims? What special provision does it offer? Is such provision being made in Malta? What forms of remedial education exist on our Island? How adequate is this provision? Are there specific problems hindering its development?

Remedial education is a field which is universally surrounded by an aura of uncertainty. Before organizing provision these questions must be resolved, and one must also know what is already available. The absence of an E.O. for remedial education or working committee in this field, hinders an easy access to such information; the confusion on remedial education is therefore accentuated. The aim of this work is to clarify issues on remedial education. Hopefully, the collection of such information in one piece of work, will be useful to those who are in a position

to plan the re-organization of remedial education in Malta.

My research was based on foreign literature on remedial education (books and journals); reports and circulars issued by the Education Department in Malta, questionnaires which were sent to all heads of Primary 'B' Schools, interviews with heads and teachers of children with learning difficulties, visits to primary schools, and correspondence with Education Departments abroad and the UNESCO International Bureau of Education in Geneva.

The dissertation is made up of five chapters. Chapter One aims at clarifying the concept of remedial education by referring to local and foreign sources. This is achieved by showing the relationship between 'ordinary', 'remedial' and 'special' education. Characteristics of children needing remedial provision are outlined as are the different forms that remedial education can take to suit individual needs. Finally, the aims of remedial education are formulated.

Chapter Two traces the development of remedial education in Malta, points out the significance of certain events, indicates periods of progress and regression, and suggests some factors which could have influenced this trend.

Chapter Three deals with the Survey initiated in 1980 on "Children requiring remedial education". This chapter presents the findings of the Survey Team and whenever it is

opportune, includes a personal comment.

Chapter Four presents the views of heads of Primary 'B' Schools and teachers which have been gathered through questionnaires and interviews. These views deal mostly with the present situation of remedial education in schools.

Chapter Five broadens the view of remedial education by outlining some research and experiments abroad in the field of remedial education. Against this background, and taking into account the Maltese context in education, personal suggestions for the preliminary stages of remedial education development are presented.

Throughout the chapters runs a constant thread of thought. Remedial education is a field that requires specific skills and specialised personnel. It demands an urgent union of manpower in order to be revived in Malta and yield positive results.

Stephanie Aquilina

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT IS REMEDIAL EDUCATION?

- Introduction
- The relationship between 'remedial', 'special' and 'ordinary' education
- Who does remedial education cater for?
- Forms of remedial education
- The aims and objectives of remedial education (a clarification)
- Conclusion

## Chapter 1 - What is Remedial Education?

The term 'remedial' has entered the vocabulary of both primary and secondary education in Malta and abroad. In the course of its adoption, its meaning has been somewhat distorted: when asked whether there are remedial classes in their school, a significant amount of teachers are likely to reply in the affirmative and indicate those classes where children are regarded as having very low ability. 'Remedial' is sometimes erroneously used to refer to "children of low ability with little promise of any progress". (Clark, 1979 pg 18) In actual fact, 'remedial' refers to a branch of education whose function it is to remedy learning difficulties.

This chapter aims at clarifying some important issues related to the concept of remedial education by viewing

1. the relationship between 'remedial', 'special' and 'ordinary' education
  2. the pupils for whom remedial education caters
  3. the form that remedial education can take
  4. the aims of remedial education: a clarification.
- 
1. The relationship between 'remedial', 'special' and 'ordinary' education.

The Warnock Report has been instrumental in breaking down some of the rigid limits that existed between the above sectors of education.

"Categorisation perpetuates the sharp distinction between two groups of children - the handicapped and the non-handicapped - and it is this distinction which we are determined as far as possible to eliminate" (Warnock H.M.(1978) par 3.24).

The Report disapproved of terms such as 'backward' and 'slow' which leave a stigma and create a schism between the so-called 'bright' and 'weak' students.

"We recommend that the term 'children with learning difficulties' should be used in future to describe both those children who are currently categorised as educationally sub-normal and those with educational difficulties who are often at present the concern of remedial services" (Warnock H.M. (1978) par 3.26)

This term includes the above-average child who for some reason, specified later, is experiencing a learning difficulty. Hence a 'continuum' of needs and special provision which extend from the 'ordinary' to the 'special' school, from the above-average child with a specific difficulty to the child with a serious physical or mental handicap who needs long-term help. The notion of children who need special help has therefore widened considerably.

"We recommend that the planning of services for children and young people should be based on the assumption that about one in six children at any time and up to one in five children at some time during their school career will require some form of special educational provision." (Warnock H.M. (1978) par 3.17)

Though a breakdown of innaccurate, meaningless or harmful categorisation is recommendable, the distinctive and correlated aspects of various branches in education must be determined. This section, as already been indicated, will concentrate on 'ordinary', 'remedial' and 'special' education:

In the past, the type of education one received (eg. special education) was based largely on location. Special education catered for children in special schools. Now, with the gradual introduction of integration, (1) together with the broadening concept of special educational needs and the contribution of the ordinary class teachers towards remedial education, such a criterion is hardly reliable.

At this point, it is worth considering a few aspects that distinguish 'remedial' education from 'ordinary' education when handicapping conditions, if any, are not serious enough to hinder the child's benefitting from learning experiences in the classroom and developing his or her potential.

The main distinguishing feature of remedial education is its function:

"Semantically (remedial education) suggests a type of teaching which 'rectifies some deficiency' or 'puts things right' to quote two recent statements. Such a corrective function is clearly something different from what the ordinary class aims at." (Sampson, O.C (1975) pg. 1)

Besides suggesting that within an ordinary teaching/ learning situation. the main function is not corrective (though there are valuable aims), there is, in this interpretation of remedial education, a subtle implication that the corrective function should be an integral part of 'ordinary' education; this, however, tends to be ignored in

a 'survival of the fittest' situation. Whatever Sampson's intention may have been in stating such a phrase, it is clear that the corrective function within the 'ordinary' class is not to be ignored. It is every teacher's responsibility to detect learning difficulties so as to provide the necessary help. Only when time and provision (human and material) are genuinely insufficient should the child be referred to remedial support services.

Remedial education has as its main function the treatment of learning difficulties. A concentration of time, effort and adequate strategies are therefore applied to reach such an objective. At their best these measures are scientific. Coaching in the ordinary classroom is usually based on trial and error methods.

"Remedial treatment deals with the underlying primary causes which have hindered the psycho-physiological development of the child: coaching treats symptoms without attempts to discover the cause of anomalous development.

Remedial teaching is essentially based on differential diagnosis which make for direction and purpose in treatment".  
(Attard F.X. (1976) )



'Remedial', 'ordinary' and 'special' education each embrace particular concepts, but one cannot say they are independent. As regards 'remedial' and 'ordinary' education, a child could be placed in an 'ordinary' class while receiving remedial help on a withdrawal basis. Ideally, collaboration between the remedial specialist and the classteacher leads to long-term improvement in the child's performance. In this way, remedial work is extended

into the classroom. The teacher too, if competent, unconsciously and continually administers remedial help whenever difficulties arise in the classroom.

If the distinction between 'ordinary' and 'remedial' education is relatively clear, it is more difficult to draw a line between 'remedial' and 'special' education.

"The distinction between remedial and special education can no longer be maintained and we see these children (those for whom remedial teachers in ordinary schools usually have responsibility at present) as forming the largest proportion of all those who, in our view, require special educational provision". (Warnock H.M. (1978) par 11.49)

When provision in the class (teacher's expertise, time apparatus) does not satisfy a child's needs so that learning experiences become uncomprehensible or irrelevant to the child, special provision is necessary (specially trained teachers, special apparatus, special attention, maybe special curricula). It is evident that remedial education is a part of special education.

"It follows from our broader concept of special education and our proposal for a co-ordinated advisory and support service that the education officer responsible for special education should have wide terms of reference which embrace special educational provision wherever it is made (and he should be) responsible for all arrangements for children with special educational needs wherever these needs are being met" (Warnock H.M. (1978) par 13.30)

The above recommendation places remedial services within the responsibility of the Special Education Department.

Since 'remedial' and 'special' education are so closely related, it is not easy to decide whether remedial support or other types of special help will benefit a child fully.

"There is certainly no clear dividing line either by type, range or severity of difficulty, by age of pupil or other qualities which could claim general agreement as necessitating remedial education" (Clark M.M. (1979) pg 20)

A thorough recording and diagnosis of a child's history (birth, family background, progress at school, illness, etc.) must be carried out to arrive at the source of a child's special educational need, and to identify whether the child's backwardness is accidental or acquired, innate or permanent. The child's problem could be one that requires long-term treatment possibly throughout his or her school career. Whatever the case may be, except for very extreme cases, the child is educable. Yet one must admit that though a learning difficulty can be attenuated or a child can learn to cope with it, it cannot always be remedied, that is, extinguished. This could be one way of distinguishing between remedial education and other sorts of special education.

"The Pack Report (4.18) draws a distinction between those pupils who require remedial teaching, a term which suggests the existence of a learning difficulty which is susceptible of remedy, and slow learners, a term which is intended to identify those children who will require help and support throughout their school lives ..." (Bain M. (1979) Vol 14 No. 2)

According to the Pack Report it seems that the latter

cases of learning difficulties are the responsibility of other branches in special education and not of remedial services.

2. Who does remedial education cater for?

Intervention ought to take place as early as possible after a learning difficulty arises or is detected. Ideally, remedial services cater for all children from their early years at school. This ensures optimal success and long term results.

"If adequate arrangements are not made for these children when they are young, more severe difficulties in learning, motivation and behaviour may arise as the result of their failure and frustration" (Warnock H.M. (1978) par. 11.49)

Very often, unfortunately, some children are regarded as 'hopeless dunces' because of this delay. At this late stage, it is no wonder that remedial services are looked upon cynically, (although they might still yield positive results). Remedial education is in no way limited to the middle years in schooling.

The previous section has already suggested which of the pupils at any age receive remedial support. The above-average child with a specific learning difficulty is included. After careful diagnosis remedial education is offered to those pupils who, notwithstanding the severity of their handicap, have a chance of overcoming such a hurdle and re-entering the 'ordinary' class where they

can continue to develop their potential. Not all educationalists are satisfied by this view of remedial education, and they continue to speculate who exactly remedial education caters for:

"What is remedial education? Is it provision for the slow learner, and in particular for the illiterate? or is it, what its name suggests, remedial provision in the sense that it provides for specific and remedial lacks, eg. the child who is behind in mathematics or in a language?" (Megson B.E. (1979) pg. 4)

"(Remedial services) are those educational measures used to meet the educational needs of children with learning difficulties within the ordinary school" (NARE in Gains, 1979, pg. 29)

"Remedial education is part of education which is concerned with the prevention, investigation and treatment of learning difficulties from whatever source they may emanate and which hinder the normal development of the student." (Gains C.W. (1980) Vol 15 No. 1)

The problem arises: does 'remedial' imply the extinction of a learning difficulty or does it also include services that aim at attenuating such hurdles, thereby including support throughout the school career of a child who has little or no chance of entering the 'ordinary' classroom and benefitting from it? These questions must be answered by local or national remedial departments; their areas of competence and goals for individual children must be defined with greater precision.

"Only in that way will administration be made aware of its specialist skills and its unique contribution to both primary and secondary

education, and will colleagues in the schools become appreciative of the support and the on-going contribution which remedial colleagues can make with children with specific learning difficulties." (Clark M.M. (1979) pg. 24)

Learning difficulties have a variety of causes which it is important to identify before deciding what type of special help a child needs. A number of cases can, unless intervention is dangerously delayed, place a child under the responsibility of remedial services. Such cases include

1. a gifted child experiencing difficulty in an area of learning (eg. maths, a language) or subsection (Geometry, pronunciation).
2. a child whose difficulties are due to absenteeism because of illness.
3. a child whose learning problems are due to a change of country, school or teacher.
4. a child whose special educational need results from physical or sensory difficulties (perhaps undetected).
5. a child who is suffering academically because of some emotional or social disturbance.

The range of cases demands flexibility and a variety of strategies.

### 3. Forms of remedial education

This section does not aim at providing an exhaustive

view of remedial services which are currently practised in Malta and abroad. Since the chapter contributes to a clarification of the concept of remedial education, arguments will run parallel to the variety of sources of learning difficulties mentioned at the end of the previous section. In short this section is merely an expansion of the statement: "The range of cases, demands flexibility and a variety of strategies"

"Difficulties of remedial pupils may be short or long-term, general or specific to certain subjects, and they will consequently demand organization and methods of great variety and flexibility. The concept of remedial education as a special form of teaching has thus considerable ramifications." (Sampson O.C. (1975) pg. 1)

In general, according to Geoff Sewell, remedial education does not seem to entail adaptation of curricula.

"It is a mere adaptation of methods used in a normal class to the special needs of the children through additional time and resources given by teacher." (Sewell G. (1982) pg. 32)

Adaptation of methods, on the other hand include different teaching aids, individual attention, and working at a slower pace.

Such strategies suit the gifted child with a specific learning difficulty. For the child who has been away from school because of illness and the child who has changed country, school or teacher, a different approach is needed.

"After illness, change of school or frequent change of teachers (...) it may be important that remedial education is brief, concentrated and similar to, rather than protracted and different from that provided in the ordinary classroom." (Clark, M.M. (1979) pg. 19)

The child suffering from a physical or sensory difficulty could benefit mostly from on-going support by a remedial specialist with close collaboration with the classroom teacher. In the case that the difficulty is too severe and continuous assessment shows unsatisfactory progress, transfer to a special school is worth considering. In spite of the diversity of services that is already evident, the child with emotional or social problems needs other forms of support besides that which will help him academically. The child needs to grow socially and emotionally.

"Some would argue that the crucial contribution of remedial education is a therapeutic role, counselling and interaction being seen as the important facets of the remedial situation." (Clark M.M. (1979) pg. 19)

This surely applies to the child in question.

In most cases, it is advisable for the remedial specialist to attend sessions in the ordinary classroom "to appreciate what the difficulties are and to give the pupil the immediate help he needs." (Megson B.E. (1979) pg. 7)

Apart from the above possibility, other alternatives arise: Should remedial education be long or short-term? full-time or part-time? within the ordinary class or in a special school or unit? It is the individual child's special



educational need which will indicate the best approach.

4. The aims and objectives of remedial education: (further attempts at clarification)

The previous sections have somewhat revealed the 'raison d'etre' of remedial education. It is a support service for children and youths whose general or specific learning difficulty hinders their progress and full potential development in the ordinary class. By means of this special service, it is hoped that such obstacles be removed so that the pupil can be redrafted to the 'normal' classroom. Other educationalists who have a broader concept of remedial education prefer not to limit its scope to children who are likely to return to the ordinary classroom. This is the impression given by N.A.R.E. in their definition of remedial education as "that part of education which is concerned with the prevention, investigation and treatment of learning difficulties from whatever source they may emanate ..."

Departing from this broad aim, N.A.R.E. lists the objectives of remedial education under three headings.

- "1. To diagnose and treat specific learning difficulties, to reteach skills which have been inadequately learnt or taught, and to teach skills that may have been omitted.
2. To develop an appropriate curriculum which encompasses the total needs of students with learning difficulties.



3. To instil a sense of confidence and self-fulfilment as a basis for the improvement of social adjustment and awareness."  
(Gains C. ed. 1979) pg. 181

In planning a programme to reach these objectives learning activities must fall within the criteria which allow an activity to be called 'education'.

"Aims in remedial education should not be divorced from aims of education in general." (McNicholas (1979) pg. 31)

McNicholas quotes Gribble who, following Peters, lists three criteria for an activity to be considered as 'education'.

1. That the activity is valuable in itself.
2. That the activity is associated with other activities so that there is a wide cognitive perspective ....
3. That those who are engaged in the activity come to care for it, come to think that it is worth doing."  
(McNicholas (1979) pg. 30)

With these aims, objectives and criteria in mind, remedial education is more than reading, writing and arithmetic. A professional approach is necessary for curriculum planning and creating effective and interesting teaching strategies.

"We should not pretend that improvements can be brought about by the amateur therapy and brief coaching that passes for remedial education." (Collins (1972) pg. 2)

## Conclusion

An important landmark in the history of education was the realisation that about one in five children at some time during their school career will require some form of special educational provision. This underlines the increasing importance of Special Education of which Remedial Education forms a part.

Educationalists have had difficulties in determining the concept of remedial education. While the question of what form it should take is somewhat resolved in the sense that this ought to be flexible and determined by a child's learning difficulties, should remedial education merely support those children who have a special educational need that can be remedied and who have a chance of returning to the 'ordinary' class? Should it include children who will benefit from a modified curriculum throughout their school career? These questions must be resolved by local and national Special Education Departments before they can seriously undertake diagnosis, intervention, and prevention procedures in line with the aims of education in general.

## C H A P T E R   T W O

### THE STORY OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN MALTA

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- Introduction
- Remedial education in Britain
- The situation in Malta
  - (i) introduction
  - (ii) first signs of remedial education
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  - (ix) the years 1977-83: the rise and fall of remedial education
  - (x) the years 1984 - 86: opportunity classes and Preparatory Secondary Schools
- Political party views on children with learning difficulties
- Conclusion

## Chapter 2 - The Story of Remedial Education in Malta

Due to historical reasons, Malta's educational system has followed the English pattern. Some information about remedial education provision in Britain, therefore, will help us to understand better the development of remedial education in Malta. The first part of this chapter deals summarily with the initial stages of remedial education in Great Britain. Against this background, there follows an attempt to trace as fully as possible the development of remedial education in Malta, pointing out the significance of certain events, indicating periods of progress and regression, and suggesting some factors which could have influenced this trend.

### Remedial Education in Britain

Remedial Education seems to have originated in Britain with the mental health movement.

"The first remedial teaching was offered in clinics as a form of Therapy. Later many classes and groups of various sorts sprang up in the schools in close association with child guidance arrangements and in accordance with psychological views of the facts of individual difference. Now, however, the National Association for Remedial Education puts the work definitely in the educational camp, stating that their professional concern is for 'that part of special educational treatment which takes place outside special schools' " (Brennen, 1971 pg. 1)

Schonell, Burt and Collins worked extensively on child-backwardness in education. This gave impetus to remedial education in the 40's and 50's. Both Burt and Schonell distinguished between pupils whose backwardness was innate and due to dullness and those whose backwardness was acquired

and who represented cases of "improvable scholastic deficiency" (Sampson quoting Schonell, 1975, pg. 5). At that time, after the Second World War and all its upheavals, backwardness and retardation were more widespread than is usually the case. This called for special attention to make up for the lacunae in many children's education.

The awareness of backwardness in children who were not working to their capacity was thus created and remedial services continued to be extended all over England. In 1952, 70% of the Education Authorities in England had some form of provision for remedial teaching. Along the way, however, the distinction between retardation <sup>(2)</sup> and backwardness <sup>(3)</sup> was somewhat lost, and though services continue to grow in quantity and quality, "there seems to be no clear-cut unanimous agreement as to the category of children remedial teaching should specifically serve. (Attard, 1976). Meanwhile, Colleges of Education and Universities opened in-service and Diploma courses. Increased interest gave rise to the National Association for Remedial Education (N.A.R.E.); one of its important functions, the publication of the journal 'Support for Learning', formerly 'Remedial Education', has strengthened and established the position of remedial education in the educational camp.

#### The Situation in Malta

The "take-off" years of remedial education in England

coincided with problems and changes in education in general in Malta. In the 40's efforts were being made to bring about universal primary education; this culminated in the Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1946. During the following years, attention centred on the quality of education especially teacher-training and curricular development. The years 1949 - 1955 were difficult due to problems brought about by expansion: teacher shortage, inadequate school premises, lack of furniture and equipment. Once these problems were somewhat tackled, primary education stood on a sounder footing and in 1965, the primary school syllabus was published. It seems that once the major setbacks were overcome, attention started to be given to the significant minority of pupils who were not progressing normally. From the early 60's first attempts were made at providing some sort of support for them - this led to what is now termed 'remedial education'.

#### First Signs of Remedial Education

As early as 1961, absenteeism due to illness was recognized as one of the causes of backwardness and classes were held daily by a specially trained teacher for sick children in St. Luke's hospital. This service has been maintained. Later, in 1965, preparations were undertaken to organize special day classes at Misraħ il-Barricri, now Mater Dei School. This was to cater for boys between the ages 9 - 11 who had failed or were failing to make a satisfactory adjustment to the normal school or home situation. Among the symptoms mentioned as guidelines for recognition of

possible cases was "backwardness not accounted for by dullness." (Educ. Dept. 1965). This is the type of backwardness that remedial education ought to be concerned with. The opening of Mater Dei School was the first attempt at organising some type of remedial provision. Already, the aim of remedial education was adopted as an aspiration of these special day classes at Msida.

"It is therefore anticipated that a number of pupils referred for this type of special educational treatment, would, in time, return to the normal school". (Educ. Dept. 1965)

Gradually, various educational authorities started to include children who were not progressing normally in their surveys and propositions for primary education. Among these was the Malta Union of Teachers:

"Provision should be made for remedial classes for backward and slow children (...). The curriculum should exist for the child and not the child for the curriculum. It should be flexible to meet the individual need of the growing child whether he be bright, average or backward. Whatever his interests and aptitudes."  
(M.U.T. 1967 pg. 9)

#### Remedial Teaching in Ordinary Schools

This increasing awareness of special educational needs led to the official recognition of remedial teaching as a separate form of organized teaching in 1967. The first remedial lessons operated at Zabbar Primary School on a withdrawal basis by a trained teacher. From that year to 1970, another class was set up at Rabat (1967) and B' Kara girls (1968) while teachers started peripatetic remedial teaching at Senglea Boys' school (1969) and Gozo. The

number of teachers attached to the Special Education Section amounted to 6 in 1970. Soon after, teachers applying for posts in the remedial service or special schools were promised a special allowance.

In 1971, efforts were made to improve the quality of remedial education. From that year, lectures on the subject were given at the College of Education and the University of Malta. That same year, one of the specialised services within the Education Department was the Psychological service whose aim was "to help children rated as mentally retarded, educationally backward and with behaviour problems." (Educ. Dept. 1972, pg. 54). In March 1972, Francis Attard previously remedial teacher, also lecturing on remedial education, was seconded for duty as Remedial Adviser-teacher with the School Psychological Service. This was a positive landmark in the development of remedial education in Malta. Support services are an indispensable element in remedial teaching: the teacher of the ordinary class needs to follow up the activities of a child who has been withdrawn for remedial lessons or who receives such help from a remedial specialist within the ordinary classroom. Furthermore, remedial education requires specific skills and knowledge for organization and planning. Hence the importance of the Remedial Adviser-teacher within the Education Department.

After a survey carried out in 1973 for identification of 'E' stream pupils in primary schools in Malta and Gozo, it

was considered by a committee set up for the purpose that a high percentage of those pupils who had low attainment in the Basic Subjects (Mathematics, English and Maltese) could be categorized as 'remedial' children, and others who did not fall within that 'E' category, failing in one or more subjects nevertheless required remedial attention. The high incidence of pupils in need of a special type of provision probably spurred on educators to increase and improve remedial provision.

#### Teachers and Teacher Training

Remedial teaching spread to more schools with the employment of 18 teachers (17 in Malta and 1 in Gozo) as remedial teachers on a full-time basis. (Shortly afterwards, peripatetic remedial teaching in Gozo was discontinued). Schools where such teaching had already been initiated (B'Kara and Rabat) and where there was urgent need for remedial provision, were among the schools where such teachers offered their services. Choice of schools was based on other criteria such as the availability of staff (Attard, 1976). This refers to redundant members of staff or others who on medical grounds could not undertake ordinary class teaching. As regards redundant teachers they were not necessarily the ones to be transferred to remedial teaching.

"There were cases when a redundant teacher changed schools with another teacher who was to start remedial work duties elsewhere."  
(Attard, 1976)

Experience with children having learning problems, attendance of special courses and recommendations by the headteacher also determined selection for teaching remedial groups.

In spite of the contribution given by these teachers (redundant or not teaching an ordinary class on medical grounds), their situation prior to employment as remedial teachers could have given a wrong impression of remedial teaching, its value and the special knowledge and skills involved.

"This tends to give the impression that remedial provision was meant to accommodate teachers rather than in sympathy for children's needs." (Attard 1976)

For remedial education to be reinstated and recognized, appropriate teacher training/education on the subject as a special area in education should be organized, not only in the form of in-service courses but also as courses at University.

The record of teachers involved in remedial teaching in each school in the scholastic year 1973 - 1974 (see Table 1) also suggests recommendations for the future. No comment can be passed on the difference that exists between the size of one group and another since this could be due to the varying degrees of severity of the children's learning difficulty. However the difference in the amount of groups allotted to each teacher is evident. While one teacher was responsible for 18 groups, another was charged with 2, with the result that the former could only give one or two sessions weekly and the latter given 10. These are extreme cases, but 'milder' ones existed too. While in one school a teacher taught 8 remedial groups for 2 sessions weekly, another, responsible for 5 groups in another school,

School	No. of teachers	No. of groups	No. of chn. per group	No of weekly sessions per group	Duration of session
1. B'Kara I.	1	8 (Yr II)	4	3 (except 1 group)	45-60mins.
2. B'Kara G.	1	18	3,4 & 6	Yr III - 1 English Yr IV,V - 2 English & Maths Yr VI - 2 Maltese	45 mins.
3. Hamrun v.B (Boys)	1	2	8	10	60 mins.
4. Marsa B.&G.	1	13	7 - 11	Boys = 1 Girls = 2	Boys- $\frac{1}{2}$ day Girls-30-60mins.
5. Mosta G.&I.	1	11 - b 8 g 3	6	Boys = 2/3 Girls = 5	depending on needs
6. Naxxar B.&G	1	5	3 - 8	2 - 7	60-90mins.
7. Paola Boys	1	11	8 - 10	3 - 5	30-40mins.
8. Qormi S.G. (Boys)	1	8	8	2	90 mins.
9. Qormi S.S. (Girls)	1	9	8	3	45 mins.
10. Rabat B.&G.	1	8	4 - 8	3 - 5	30-45mins.
11. Siggiewi	1*	12	4 - 9	2 - 3	40 mins.
12. Sliema I. B. & G.	1	10	6	5	30 mins.

.../

TABLE 1A

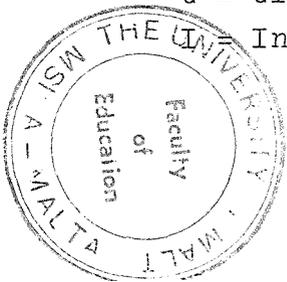
School	No. of teachers	No. of groups	No. of chn. per group	No. of weekly sessions per group	Duration of session
13. St. Julians (mixed)	1	8	3 - 5	3 - 5	45 mins.
14. Zabbar B.	1	7	2 - 6	2 - 5	45 mins.
15. Zejtun B.	1	13	6 - 7	2	45 mins.
16. Zejtun G.&I.	1	7	3 - 4	2 - 3	45 mins.
17. Nadur G.&I.	1	7	4	2 - 3	30 mins.
18. Nadur B.	1	5	5	4 - 5	30 mins.

\* 1 redundant giving help

B = Boys

G = Girls

Infants



could afford 2 - 7 sessions weekly. This situation must be remedied in the future by recruiting a larger load of remedial teachers and distributing the teaching load as evenly as possible. In this way more children will receive the amount and quality of attention they need.

Despite the above shortcomings several efforts were made to develop remedial education. Between 1968 and 1975, five vacation courses on remedial teaching were organized by the department for private and government schools. "On each occasion the course was oversubscribed" (Attard, 1976). A seminar on 'Aspects of Remedial Teaching' was given by a Professor and Clinical Psychologist from Michigan State University; agreement was reached between Government and M.U.T. on the reorganization of teaching grades which awarded two extra increments to remedial teachers. Remedial teaching was now provided on a withdrawal basis for approximately 1250 students. This positive period prompted the formation of a National Association for Remedial Education. Unfortunately the Association did not survive more than a few meetings.

#### Remedial Education in Secondary Schools

At first selection of pupils for remedial teaching in secondary schools was restricted to those who, on the basis of intelligence and attainment tests proved to be working below their potential. It is worth noting that Heads opened remedial classes on their own initiative.

The system of selection was devised on the advise of the

Remedial Adviser and the Educational Psychologist. These are signs of a healthy atmosphere in which remedial education could develop successfully. Remedial teaching spread to other secondary schools: in 1975 it was raised to a post of special responsibility and most schools in this sector opened one or more classes to serve "retarded children". It has already been indicated in Chapter 1 that such labels are hardly meaningful, and create confusion. In fact clarity of objectives was somewhat lost at this stage. The function, objectives and scope of remedial education needed to be restated and specified.

#### Appointment of E.O. Remedial Education

That same year, that is, in 1975, applications were invited for the post of Education Officer I (Remedial Teaching). Official recognition of Remedial Education as a significant aspect of education was thus ascertained. Furthermore, judging from the duties specified for the E.O. Remedial Education, this particular field in education was going to be reorganized. Mr. F.X. Attard, appointed E.O. for Remedial Education was to be responsible for the following duties.

- (i) to advise Heads of Government and Private Schools and teachers on matters related to remedial teaching.
- (ii) to advise the Director on Remedial Teaching
- (iii) in conjunction with other Education Officers, Heads of schools, Heads of Departments and teachers to ensure integrated programmes of activities and studies related to remedial teaching

- (iv) to help organize and conduct educational and cultural activities and collaborate with teacher-training institutions in the organization and conduct of in-service courses
- (v) to inform the Director on the work being carried out in schools
- (vi) to do administrative work related to the area of his responsibility, e.g. collection and dissemination of relevant documentation to schools, help in drawing up lists of books and equipment and checking on their distribution and proper maintenance in schools
- (vii) to ensure that the policy of the department is efficiently carried out
- (viii) any other duties compatible with his post.

(Educ. Dept., 1975)

The roles outlined above are all vital to remedial education: ensuring communication with all the personnel involved in the educational hierarchy, advising them on aspects of remedial teaching, organizing teacher-training courses, evaluating the progress of remedial education and carrying out administrative work. Since remedial education has not yet been firmly established, the work involved in each of these duties demands extra time and effort. This can only be carried out efficiently and effectively by teams assigned separate duties. The staff involved would be specialised in this field of education. Then the E.O.'s role would be mostly one of co-ordinating the work of all the teams.

The movement towards organized remedial services was gaining momentum. Circumstances however, had an adverse effect.

"While most secondary schools had started remedial provision, the number of remedial teachers in primary schools decreased from 18 to 12 by 1972, due to resignations (marriage) or transfers. A further transfer and staff shortage in the Primary complement in 1976 cut down the number of remedial teachers in this sector to the present 10. Replacements were never effected."  
(Attard, 1976)

By June 1976, there were only 600 pupils receiving remedial education on a withdrawal basis, compared to 1250 pupils by June 1975. The consequences of staff shortage on the development of remedial education will be discussed later on in this chapter.

#### An Outline of Remedial Provision by 1976

What follows is an outline of remedial provision at the time when the E.O. for Remedial Education wrote his 1976 report. A brief commentary on certain aspects is reserved to the end. According to Mr. Attard, a clear distinction was made between the "remedial" child and the "slow learner" in that remedial education was to cater for the child who was not functioning to his/her full ability, and was not innately dull. Ambiguous cases were either referred to the E.O. (Remedial) or the final decision was taken by the remedial teacher following a short period of observation. Remedial teachers, besides attending vacation courses, were briefed on methods of assessment and diagnosis and had appropriate tests at their disposal.

Decisions as regards subjects taught and the time-table were taken by the remedial teacher and the headteacher. Subject choice depended on what they considered to be the most urgent need in the school in a particular scholastic year. The time-table was worked out in such a way that children attended remedial lessons in a particular subject in the time allotted to it in the ordinary class. Since remedial lessons are preferably short and frequent, this system caused some inconvenience as lessons in the ordinary class were disrupted. On the other hand, simultaneity of sessions was beneficial in that the child avoided conflicts as regards standards expected of him. Still, it was advisable that the child attend a lesson in that subject at least once a week so as not to feel totally isolated from his classmates in that subject area. This also gave the class teacher the opportunity to assess the child's progress and readiness for re-entry to the mainstream. A short period each day in the remedial teacher's time-table was left for record-keeping and cases of children needing individual attention. A substantial amount of record-keeping was in fact done and handed over to the staff concerned on transfer of a child to secondary school.

Grouping of children was in the hands of the remedial teacher. It depended on the amount of children needing remedial attention, the amount of children needing lessons in a particular subject and the abilities of individual children being catered for. Dilemmas arose on who to select, that is, children from the lower years(III/IV)or the Upper

Years? (not to mention Years I and II when remedial education is also a necessity). Usually a cross-section of children were chosen, particularly those children who seemed likely to benefit from remedial provision in the shortest possible time.

Success of remedial provision depends largely on special books and apparatus. The teachers in Malta made their own apparatus besides using the Ladybird and Denfil series; this was not directly imposed on them. The choice of books was left to the remedial teacher in consultation with the head. In English, two teachers made extensive use of the Stott Reading Kit.

If appropriate material was not available, accommodation compared well to other countries where according to surveys conducted, remedial teachers often had to work in "tiny stuffy rooms" or "any available corner on the day of the lesson." (Attard, 1976). In Malta, all teachers, in 1976 at least, had their own classroom although one uses the school's library "in keeping with the rest of the school." (Attard, 1976)

The aspects mentioned above give a general view of the situation of remedial education in 1976. Since attitudes of colleagues, parents and pupils are controlling factors in education, these must also be considered when tracing the development of remedial education. Remedial teachers seemed to face no obstruction from their colleagues.

"It is also clearly indicated that teachers have become educated in the aims and purpose of remedial teaching." (Attard, 1976)

However teachers who were formerly involved in remedial teaching report unfavourable attitudes from their colleagues who regarded remedial teachers as "having it easy."

On their part, parents did not complain about their children being withdrawn; some inquired or asked for clarification, others requested to have their children withdrawn in remedial groups. On Parents' Day, they had the opportunity to speak both to the class teacher and to the remedial teacher.

As for the pupils themselves, according to reports and the E.O.'s personal observations, they showed "absolute eagerness" (Attard, 1976) for remedial lessons. The general picture is therefore one of appreciation of remedial services.

The effectiveness of these services is a complex issue to tackle. If one had to look at the discharge rate for the scholastic year 1975-76, by the beginning of July, 75% of Year VI pupils (90 children) were released from remedial lessons on having caught up with their proper educational mainstream. 70% of them had been enrolled in remedial groups for less than 10 months. 39% of total pupils attending remedial lessons in the Primary School were returned to the mainstream by the end of the second term and  $46\frac{1}{2}$  of the total population was discharged by the end of the year. Of these 21% had been receiving help in 2 subjects and 15% had been attending lessons in 3 subjects. Translating these statistics into a meaningful evaluation of the provision offered can only be achieved through a finer

examination of facts which will include information as how long children had been facing learning difficulties; what type of difficulties were they encountering, in how many subjects did they need remedial lessons, what provision was made in each case (teaching strategies, apparatus, the amount of attention depending on group size), how did the children adapt to the ordinary classroom situation?

### Significant Factors on Remedial Education

Certain important points emerge from this insight into remedial education by 1976.

1. Clarity of objectives must always be ascertained. Only then can remedial education achieve positive results.
2. Collaboration and communication with staff (head, colleagues and support services) and parents are undoubtedly positive; they contribute to the best remedial services.
3. Positive attitudes from colleagues depend on their recognition of remedial education as valuable and necessary. This calls for specialised remedial education provision and a system of permanent teacher education.
4. Remedial lessons must be organized in such a way as to cause the least possible inconvenience to ordinary class teachers.
5. Interest on the part of the pupils is indicative of of the success or failure of remedial education.



6. The remedial teacher's role must be clarified. There are responsibilities other than preparing supplementary material which the remedial teacher must attend to. Ideally the remedial teacher acts as guide and counsellor, therapist, evaluator, manager of the learning environment, curriculum developer and consultant for the ordinary class teacher (O' Hagan, 1977 pg. 56 - 58). Most of the books and apparatus must thus be readily available to allow time for these important tasks.
  
7. The report by the E.O. for remedial education was written on a positive tone, looking towards the future with optimism. The poor state of remedial education in Malta today is thus surprising. One of the main causes of this regression seems to have been staff shortage. This restricts both the quantity and the quality of remedial provision. If remedial education is to be restored, educators must realise firstly that it is an urgent need for a significant amount of pupils and secondly that it requires a large body of specialised teachers.

The Years 1977 - 83: The Rise and Fall of Remedial Education

The next part of this chapter will deal with the years 1977 - 1983, when another report by the E.O. for Remedial Education was published, throwing light on the predicament of remedial education by the end of the scholastic year 1982 - 83.

Remedial provision in secondary schools continued and secondary school teachers received extra remuneration unlike primary school remedial teachers who received no benefits.

In 1980, a survey was launched on the personal instructions of the Minister of Education Dr. P . Muscat M.D., to determine the incidence of children needing remedial attention in primary schools. (See Chapter 3 for more details). 2056 children were found to be in need of remedial attention while the rest, suffering from very severe mental retardation, were considered to benefit mostly in special classes or schools. This survey was an extremely positive step in the development of remedial education. It was seriously undertaken and therefore provided a sound base for future organization.

In the interval between the launching of the survey and the publication of its results (1982) there were other developments in the remedial education field. In 1981, the E.O. for Remedial Education carried out a follow-up study of checklists compiled in 1977 in the form of as a full a report as possible on each child. By the end of 1981 there were 8 classes operating on a withdrawal basis. During that year a call for teachers for remedial classes was made. The type of remedial provision and the children it would cater for were specified in the circular calling for applications

"In remedial education the selected teachers will work on the withdrawal group system where a group of children are taken for individual teaching in the basis subjects."

Such teaching would support a specific type of child:

"those who are currently failing in one or more of the tool subjects (i.e. Maltese, English or Arithmetic) and whose learning failure is not considered to be due to innate dullness. These are the children who, for one reason or another, are not considered to be working to their full potential; whose learning disability does not demand permanent segregation in a special class or special school but more likely to be of a temporary nature and could be remedied if given intensive special attention."  
(Educ. Dept. 1981)

These initiatives seemed to announce the revival of remedial education. UNESCO too played an important part in the development of remedial education in Malta. At the end of 1982, under the auspices of UNESCO, an inservice course in remedial education was organized. During the 3-week consultancy mission in remedial education by UNESCO, a conference was held for Headteachers of Government and Private Schools. It aimed at assessing the problem of students in need of remedial education and at studying and discussing the issues pertaining to causes of school failures, the resulting problems being faced by the school and possible actions for remediation based on necessary forms of provision. After viewing the situation in Malta, the following recommendations were formulated by the UNESCO expert.

1. Headteachers' and teachers' support for remedial education to be enlisted
2. Adaptation of curriculum and exams for children with learning difficulties
- 3a In-service training in Malta, 1 year courses to be commenced - a one day per week release for 40-50 teachers

- 3b. More highly qualified training on full-time diploma courses in the United Kingdom for 3 teachers.
4. A follow-up course in Malta at a later date.
5. Education Officer for remedial education to visit remedial and support service institutions of training in U.K.
6. Establishment of a Resource Centre for Remedial Education.
7. Improvement of the status of Remedial teachers.

This visit by UNESCO experts must surely have aroused enthusiasm and revived interest in setting remedial education on its feet again. However, none of the recommendations were taken up. When an attempt was made, and two remedial teachers were nominated to follow a one year course in the U.K. - at Edgehill College - they were informed by the department (in Malta) that the plan had been cancelled. In fact, training abroad for remedial education was undergone by only a few teachers and on a very short-term basis.

Unfortunately for remedial education, the teacher shortage problem persisted. Because of teacher shortage at the primary and pre-primary level, a number of specialised teachers, including remedial teachers were "temporarily given full time charge of primary classes" with the hope of "these useful services (being) soon fully restored." (Educ. Dept. 1983 pg. 48). Though requests for replacements and expansion were made at regular intervals, recruitment was

never effected except for one teacher in 1981 (now no longer in the remedial education department). After the 1981 call for remedial teachers, 25 applications were received but by the time the E.O. for Remedial Education wrote his report 'Remedial Teaching in Primary Schools. Staff Projection 1982/83'," no action (had) been taken to have the 16 eligible applicants transferred to do remedial duties" (Attard, 1983 pg. 4). This is reflected in the decrease of children receiving remedial help. It is reported that in 1982, 310 children were receiving regular remedial lessons in 10 schools, when in 1976, 600 pupils were receiving remedial education. In 1983/84 the staff complement was made up of 6 teachers (1 at each of the following schools: Sliema, Qormi S.G., Qormi S.S., Zabbar, Zejtun, Marsa). 4 other teachers (1 each at Hamrun S.S., Valletta B, St. Paul's Bay, Zabbar) were also doing some form of remedial duties either because they were redundant or relieved of class-teaching on medical grounds. Though these teachers helped to relieve the situation to an extent, their contribution only had a palliative effect and, as had occurred in previous years, their employment could have led to misconceptions about remedial education. The 6 teachers doing proper remedial teaching seemed very promising, and their work was highly praised by foreign educators. Still, the remedial help they could offer was limited; they were not given any extra remuneration for their hard work. They felt insecure and discouraged.

At a time when remedial education was to be needed most, it was not provided. For in 1981, the selective Junior

Lyceums were opened. From then on primary education tended to be geared towards the entrance exam. While the brighter pupils responded 'well' to the demands made on them, did not pupils with learning difficulties encounter greater failure? This was probably a time when remedial help was needed desperately. Instead it was barely available.

#### The Years 1984 - 86: Opportunity Classes and Preparatory Secondary Schools

In the next years (1984/85), the form of remedial education which had been in practice in previous years, was not restored. Instead new services were offered for Year 6 low-achievers. The issue is not clear when it comes to deciding whether these services form part of remedial education. According to Chapter 1 remedial education aims at helping children overcome their learning difficulties totally or partially, so that they can continue their education in an ordinary class. In 1984, opportunity classes <sup>(4)</sup> and preparatory secondary school centres <sup>(5)</sup> were created. The Special Education Section together with the E.O. for Remedial Education were both deeply involved in the identification of pupils for one service or the other. In 1985, however, co-ordination of work in Preparatory Secondary centres fell into the hands of the E.O. in charge of Special Education. This gives the impression that such classes are not considered as 'remedial'.

The initiative of providing some form of help to low-achievers is appreciated, but one must admit that the results

of one year's treatment are limited, if the children have been facing frustration and failure for several years, when no remedial help was offered to them. By Year VI, unattended learning difficulties are severe, and remedy is extremely difficult. Could this explain the transfer of Preparatory Secondary Centres to the Special Education Section?

In 1986, the treatment available for children with learning difficulties was still restricted to pupils who had finished their primary education. Heads were requested to supply information on any Year VI pupils with low scores. Those scoring between 15, 15 and 12 and 30, 30 and 25 in the basic subjects (Mathematics, Maltese and English) were to be referred to Mr. Samuel (Educ. Dept. 1985). Following this request for information, no new or modified remedial provision was created but Preparatory Secondary Schools and Opportunity classes in ordinary schools continue to exist, up to the present day.

Opportunity classes are for children who repeat the Year VI class in the Primary School. No special syllabus has been set up especially for them; rather it is up to the class teacher to adapt the material to the students. As regards examinations they sit for a special paper besides that for all Year VI students.

In the case of the Preparatory Secondary Schools, the function of such schools is to 'remedy' failure of students who have finished the primary school course. A section of the

children (Prep. Sec. Form I) are those who have not reached the required level to proceed to the mainstream of the Secondary School. In this case they follow the same syllabus as other Year VI students in the Primary Schools. They also use the same textbooks with some additions. A weekly lesson is dedicated to Woodwork. This year is considered as a consolidation year with a difference from ordinary Year VI classes. Classes are composed of an average of 16 pupils so that the teacher can give more individual attention. "Records show that around 20% of these Form I children proceed to the normal stream in the Secondary School the following year" stated a co-ordinator in one of the Prep. Sec. Schools. This seems to be an example of remedial education .

There is another category of children in Prep. Sec. Schools: the Opportunity Class stream. Here the situation is somewhat different. The students are very low-achievers coming from the Opportunity Classes in Primary Schools. They have therefore repeated at least one scholastic year. These children follow a special syllabus which one might call a "run down" normal syllabus. Unfortunately, no special books are available. Still one tries to give these children an adequate education for life - the basic needs, the minimum one should have to move in the world and be as independent as possible. After two years these children pass on to a newly established Trade School at Floriana. This was not only the case - There were 16 year old students who were supposed to be preparing for Secondary School.

Unlike the Prep. Sec. Form I classes, the Opportunity Classes do not fall so easily within the 'remedial' category.

Co-ordinators in Prep. Sec. Schools, at least those in one of the schools, play an important role in the education of the students. They try to make up for the lack of specialised books by producing specially prepared handouts and 'books' at their modest resource centre. Moreover, since the staff is made up mostly of casual instructors/instructresses with no training, the co-ordinators give advice in all fields. They discuss children and identify means of helping them through remedial action. As yet, this service is not extended to Primary Schools where it is undoubtedly needed.

A full view and understanding of the development of remedial education in Malta cannot exclude the death of Mr. F.X. Attard in 1986. He had attended courses abroad on remedial education, he had also served as remedial teacher, Remedial Advisory Teacher in the Psychological Service, and E.O. for Remedial Education, thus following the development of remedial services in Malta from the start. His interest, dedication and hard work undoubtedly contributed to remedial education, and as yet he has not been replaced. At present, the E.O. for Special Education is responsible for remedial education. While appreciating his contribution, one must consider the present situation of remedial education in Malta. This demands full attention

from the E.O. for Remedial Education, or other co-ordinators.

#### 1986/87: Revival of Remedial Lessons - An Attempt

An awareness of the need for remedial treatment continues to be felt. In the scholastic year 1986/87, an attempt was made at resuming some form of remedial education on a national scale. After a one-week briefing course, first-year student-teachers started to withdraw children with reading difficulties in English and Maltese. A total of 1061 pupils were withdrawn in 56 schools in Malta and Gozo. This provision must have helped to alleviate some reading difficulties; however it is limited. First of all, these students have good will but no experience - it might be a better idea for more advanced students to do such work. Secondly, the briefing course is too short to equip first year student-teachers sufficiently to help pupils overcome difficulties on a long-term basis. It is clear that support given by student-teachers must form part of, and not substitute a network of specialised remedial services.

#### Political Party Views on Children with Learning Difficulties

The need for provision for children with learning problems was recognized by political parties before the 1987 elections. The Democratic Party proposed measures to provide the best opportunities for children who are at a disadvantage: (unmotivated, physically or mentally disabled) - preferably from a very early age. (Democratic Party, 1987, pg 42 para. 4.41). The Labour Party agreed that children with the greatest need should be given the best possible help (Labour

Party, 1987, pg. 26). The Nationalist Party also thought it necessary to provide as much help as possible to children with problems so that they could keep pace with their peers. Like the Democratic Party, it proposed starting from the youngest age group (Nationalist Party, 1987, pg. (iii) 36, para. 5.1).

In July 1987, a call for applications was made for teachers wanting to take up remedial teaching in primary schools (Educ. Dept. 1987). This was the latest attempt to revive remedial services; until December 1987 no such teachers were employed.

#### Conclusion

The development of remedial education in Malta from the early 60's to the present day has not been a steady one, with progressive improvement of the quality and quantity of services provided. Various setbacks hindered this trend so that there were periods when remedial education was flourishing and others when such provision regressed. This was due mostly to staff shortage and confusion of aims and issues related to remedial education. Lack of special apparatus and lack of appropriate teacher training also prevented improvement of remedial provision.

Throughout the past 20 years various individuals and institutions have voiced an awareness of the need for special help for children with learning difficulties. Since this has been achieved the next step is to invest human and material resources into remedial education.

C H A P T E R   T H R E E

CASE STUDY: GOVERNMENT SCHOOL  
CHILDREN IN NEED OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION  
- INCIDENCE AND DIAGNOSIS

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- Introduction
- Reliability of the report
- Incidence
- Diagnosis
- General classification of performance
- Conclusion on Survey
- Further Developments



Chapter 3 - Case Study: Government school children in need of remedial education - incidence and diagnosis

A preliminary step in the organization of remedial education is to establish the criteria which define the remedial pupil. This has been somewhat clarified in the first chapter. The following stage is the identification of pupils who fall into this category, and the diagnosis of their learning difficulties and needs. This did not occur on a large scale until 1980 and even then, only government school children were examined. Still, this initiative - a Survey on "Children requiring remedial education" - is the most thorough and reliable study on children in need of remedial education in schools in Malta. For this reason, this chapter will present the findings of the Survey team, and whenever it is opportune, a personal commentary.

The Survey mentioned above was launched in October 1980 on the personal initiative of the Minister of Education. Its objectives were

- "1. to ascertain the incidence of pupils in need of remedial teaching in Years III to VI in Primary schools.
2. to ascertain the extent of these children's backwardness/retardation in the area/s of failure
3. to base the planning for future provision of remedial teaching in Primary schools in accordance with the findings of this Survey."

As regards the first objective, I disagree with restricting the Survey to Year III to Year VI classes when all educators know that learning difficulties often have their source in the early years of school. In the case that it was difficult to carry out a thorough study of all children needing remedial education in primary schools, it would be interesting and important to trace learning difficulties from their early stages in another study. In spite of what I consider limits this Survey, the first objective is vital in itself. It raises an awareness of the extent of the population that has learning difficulties which can be remedied. The size of this population determines important organizational factors such as the size of the staff needed to give regular remedial lessons. If a relatively large number of pupils fall into this category (remedial) apparatus might be more readily purchased or compiled (in the case of graded textbooks). (In reality even a small proportion of the school population should have this right).

The qualitative aspect of remedial education, that is, the variety and complexity of provision, depends on the second objective. In fact once the Survey team concludes that there are varying types and degrees of learning difficulties with this 'remedial' group, a flexible remedial programme is necessary to suit the needs of all.

As for the third objective I will refrain from commenting on it until the end of the chapter.

### Reliability of the Report

The report on the Survey indicates that serious planning was undertaken both before and during the testing of children and diagnosis of the results. Before headteachers handed in the names of children whom they considered as needing remedial help, measures were taken to ensure that as much as possible selection was based on the same criteria. A meeting was held to brief heads of schools "on the characteristics of children who are in need of remedial teaching as distinct from other failing children whose learning problems indicate a more deep-rooted condition which therefore calls for treatment in a special class or/ and a special school" ("Chn requiring rem. ed.", 1982, p.2). Of 1346 children selected only 32 were found to be of a lower category than remedial, after testing. This indicates that school staff is capable of identifying children needing remedial help once their characteristics are specified. The situation in Malta is therefore serious; for while there is a constant awareness that certain children are in need of remedial education, hardly anything is being done to meet these needs.

The survey team, made up of 8 remedial teachers and the E.O. for remedial education planned out the tests so as to meet the stated objectives. Since standardized tests alone would not have provided enough information on the extent of the children's learning difficulties, diagnostic tests formed an important part of the Survey. In fact, a point which is

constantly emphasised in the report is that "the Survey went far beyond the scope of confirming the incidence of remedial children" ("Chn requiring rem. ed.", 1982, preface). It also attempted to obtain an analysis of observed attainment.

So as to ensure that a fair judgement was made of a child's standard, the children were tested on the previous year's material. Furthermore, care was taken to dispel any tension that pupils might have been feeling, while they were tactfully encouraged to give their best performance. During the tests, strict supervision was exercised. All this ensured that their performance was as true to their ability as possible.

The children were tested on Reading and written work in Maltese and English. Mathematics, and Basic Skills. It was vital that the Survey team derive maximum information from these tests. For this purpose the children were tested individually - except for Maths when the maximum number of children tested at one go was 6.

"We kept the numbers low, even in this, the only group test, so as to keep an eye on the children's method of working and on their general 'behaviour' and thus we had the time to take written notes of proceedings and consider these in our final assessment." ("Chn. requiring re. ed." 1982, preface)

An evaluation report including a brief Case History, Intellectual Evaluation, Personality Evaluation, a Basic Skills Checklist and an Attainment Summary was drawn up for each child. This information led to the compilation of a

group profile for the organisation of future remedial provision. This was possible because "all the children were subjected to a uniform screening test measured by a uniform scale which was also marked and eventually analysed by the same group of people. Testing was supervised throughout by the same group " (D.O.E., 1982, preface).

In the course of testing, meetings were held weekly between the teachers involved in the Survey and the E.O. for remedial education. Progress was evaluated, adjustments were made; difficulties encountered were tackled; cases were discussed; categorisation of a child was decided after a study of the individual case by the team.

In short, there are several factors which contribute to the reliability of the survey: uniform criteria for selection of children needing remedial education, uniformity in the administration and evaluation of tests, the drawing up of a detailed diagnosis on each child and constant contacts between the members of the survey team. This Survey should undoubtedly be considered when the Education Authorities set about planning seriously remedial provision.

#### Incidence

The N.A.R.E. (National Association for Remedial Education) in Britain set the figure of children needing remedial education at 10 to 12 per cent of children on roll in ordinary schools. According to the Survey 12.7% of children attending government schools in Malta need remedial education

in the basic subjects. This figure excludes 310 children already attending remedial lessons at the time the survey was carried out.

Table 1

Children tested	Needing Remedial Teaching in			N.F.I*
	1 subj.	2 subjs.	3 subjs.	
1778	265	353	1128	32

\* N.F.I. Need Further Investigation. Results suggest that these children are probably ESN or lower. ("Chn. requiring rem. ed." 1982, pg. 9)

Table 2

Subject/s	Yr III * 402	Yr IV 541	Yr V 451	Yr VI 352
Maltese	33	2	-	-
English	208	5	-	-
Maths	17	-	-	-
Malt. & Eng.	54	101	37	52
Malt. & Maths	23	28	-	-
Eng. & Maths	24	34	-	-
Malt. & Eng. & Maths	43	371	414	300

\* No. of children tested. ("Chn. requiring rem. ed." 1982, pg. 10)

From the above findings one can conclude that

1. Children needing remedial education are a significant

proportion of the whole school population (the final figure of 12.7 % applies only to Year III to Year VI pupils)

2. Most children are facing some sort of failure in all three of the basic subjects (English, Maltese and Maths). Further investigations are needed to study the relationship between failure in one subject and another.
3. Apart from 7 children in Year IV all the children discovered to be failing in one subject only come from Year III. This indicates that the problem aggravated as the children moved to a higher class and this problem remained unattended to. This confirms the hypothesis suggested in previous chapters that learning difficulties are reduced with early intervention but increase when this is not readily available.

### Diagnosis

Since the Survey team gave prominence to the diagnostic element when testing the children, diagnostic tests, some of which were specially devised for the purpose - were administered along with standardized tests. In this section, the main findings on each area tested will be reported, complemented at times with a personal commentary. For the purpose of maximum clarity the report will be presented in sub-sections. A copy of the tests is included in Appendix A.

## Reading

### (a) Diagnostic word list (Maltese)

A high correlation was discovered between the ability to read 2 - 3 letter words and words composed of 4 letters. The same applied to the correlation in the ability to read 5 and 6 letter words.

"This implies that children who can read words like 'ma' and 'fuq' should find no difficulty in reading 4 letter words like 'rixa' and 'xemx', those who can read words like the 5 letter word 'fenek' should also read 6 letter words like 'bastun'."

(Chn. requiring rem. ed.", 1982, pg. 20)

However the difference between the skills needed to master 4 letter words and those needed to read 5 letter words seems quite pronounced. A marked discrepancy in the handling of such words resulted from the Survey. The diagnostic word list test also revealed that the children's greatest difficulty was with words including 'h' (hakka) and 'gh' (ghajn).

### (b) Word Recognition tests (English and Maltese)

While there is no significant difference in the English word recognition ability of children from one year to the next, there is a marked decline in Maltese word recognition from Year IV to Year V. Another difference between Maltese and English word recognition is that in English a greater percentage of children work below their chronological age in Year IV than is the case for Maltese.

Table 3

Subject	Yr. No. of Chn.	Chron. Age	Chn. performing at chron. age ability	Chn. performing below chron. age ability
Maltese	IV(541)	8	316 (58.41%)	225 (40.59%)
	V(451)	9	77 (17.07%)	394 (82.93%)
	VI(352)	10	86 (24.43%)	266 (75.57%)

Table 4

Subject	Yr. No. of Chn.	Chron. Age	Chn. performing at chron. age ability	Chn. performing below chron. age ability
English	IV(541)	8	46 ( 8.5 %)	492 (90.5 %)
	V(451)	9	45 ( 9.98%)	406 (90.02%)
	VI(352)	10	74 (21.02%)	278 (78.98½)

(c) Word picture matching, sentence completion and sentence arrangement

The English word-picture matching test administered to Year III pupils revealed that in Year III English word recognition was not a problem for most children. Rather children stumbled at word comprehension. In the sentence completion tests 65% got less than half the answers right, while in the sentence arrangement tests 70% managed less than half. (The exercise was based on Books 1 and 2 of the Ladybird scheme). These results call for research into a systematic approach to teaching English.



(d) Phonic skills test (English)

This test was fine enough to detect that children reading English encounter great difficulties in reading words with vowel diagraphs as 'cow' and 'deaf', and others having consonant diagraphs and silent letters such as 'ship', 'when', 'right' and 'wrap'. Furthermore, many children were unable to detect fine differences in words such as 'water' and 'waiter' or they lacked common phonic units such as 'oa'.

Apart from these specific learning difficulties other problems stemmed from inter-language interference. Some children resorted to the Maltese alphabet to spell and read out English words. Some others used the English alphabet to spell and read Maltese words (eg. xahar). When inter-language interference did not occur, and children sounded individual letters correctly, then they could not blend the sound easily: or they attached word spelling unsystematically.

The type of difficulties outlined so far indicate that a substantial amount of the children's learning difficulties could have been overcome earlier on, either through a more systematic approach to learning or through timely remedial education. Perhaps diagnostic tests ought to be devised by teachers and other educators for the continual assessment of pupils' progress. That way, once difficulties are detected, effective measures can be taken to diminish or extinguish them.



### Written Work

Written work was another aspect taken up for investigation, 'Written work' is a broad term for it involves various skills such as repertoire, syntax, creativity, logical sequence in ideas, etc. What exactly were the Survey team observing? This unclarity is somewhat explained in the introduction to the section. The exercise which required expression based on a picture was merely meant to serve as an extra resource to which the Survey team could refer "in those cases where results on different tests threw doubt on the reliability of the scores obtained by individual children." ("Chn. requiring rem. ed. 1982, pg. 37). However as the analysis of the children's performance revealed common weaknesses, excerpts from the children's written work and a short commentary were included in the report.

Separate pictures were used for Maltese and English, but the pictures were the same for Years III to VI; the exercise was graded. Year III pupils had to name as many objects in the picture as they could, Year IV pupils had to write a number of sentences, while Year V and VI pupils were asked to write a short paragraph about the picture. Marks were assigned systematically with the aim of eliminating the subjective element, and ensuring reliability of results.

#### Common weaknesses

Though samples of the children's written work were included

in the Report, no attempt was made to identify common weaknesses. This, perhaps, was not within the scope of the exercise. It is interesting, nonetheless, to mention some of the common weaknesses revealed in the excerpts.

#### Maltese

1. difficulties in spelling where 'għ' and 'h' are concerned: eg. tatom, oġob.
2. lack of knowledge as to when to double a consonant: eg. tufieh, sigġar.
3. lack of discrimination between similar-sounding consonants. eg. Bużkett (Buskett), dawwhom (tawhom).
4. unsystematic approach to spelling out words: eg. sgar (sigar), bada (abjad).

#### English

1. generalisation of rules for forming the past tense: eg. swimmmed, taked.
2. wrong selection of components of past tenses: eg. he had went, he gone.
3. frequent repetition of the same subject in a short passage.
4. inter-language interference for spelling: eg. towst..

It is immediately evident that some of the errors are easier to correct than others which might require a more carefully devised programme. Within the same 'remedial' group, the needs are diverse. Thus, remedial provision must be flexible to suit the needs of the individual.

## Categorisation

After marking and analysing the scripts, the Survey team divided the children into three categories. (This applies only to written work - it is not a general categorisation)

1. a small group of children (about 10% in Maltese and 6% in English) whose performance indicated a fairly good level of attainment - and in need of only some attention to minute detail.
2. a large group of children (comprising 75% in Maltese and 68% in English) whose work was indicative of a fairly satisfactory attempt and whose deficiencies indicate potentiality and remediation.
3. a group of children (comprising 15% in Maltese and 31% in English) whose work indicates severe retardation or/and deficiencies in written work.

To a different degree, the difficulties of all three groups can be remedied. This is possible once a proper and thorough diagnosis of their errors in undertaken and treatment is organized by a specialised staff.

## Mathematics

The subject areas mentioned so far, reading and written work are usually the ones associated with remedial work.

"Mathematics is not widely considered as an area falling under the umbrella of remedial education (...) Fortunately and wisely this attitude is changing." ("Chn. requiring rem. ed." 1982, pg. 54)

The Survey team came to this conclusion after noting that an exaggeratedly limited number of pupils (3) were referred as needing help in Mathematics only and 108 needed help in Mathematics as well as English and Maltese. A screening test was administered to verify this assumption. 17 children turned out to need remedial education in Mathematics alone while 1237 children needed such help in Maths as well as English and Maltese.

The reason for the schools' misconception seems mainly that failure in reading is the most noticeable; the teacher can usually cope better with difficulties arising in mathematical activities than with a child struggling to read.

Once all the children with learning difficulties in Mathematics were identified, the survey test administered was composed of the most essential part of the previous year's syllabus with emphasis on the four rules. From the four rules, division was the main obstacle and the '0' in subtraction was another outstanding hurdle.

Unfortunately the diagnosis of the children's mathematical performance is not very detailed in the report. Perhaps since the children were tested in groups one could not draw up the detailed report which is possible when a child is observed individually. In spite of this the team was determined to give an accurate picture of the children's ability before categorising them as remedial or otherwise.

In the Mathematics test (and presumably in the other areas too) not all mistakes were regarded in the same manner: mistakes due to "carelessness rather than deficiency were noted and taken into account when the classification of children was being undertaken" ("Chn. requiring rem. ed." 1982, p. 56). Besides, children were provided with the multiplication tables so that the source of errors could be more easily traced.

### Basic Skills

The backwardness of children who are considered to be in need of remedial attention is sometimes overestimated perhaps. This suspicion prompted the Survey team to test the children on some basic skills such as knowing, (and knowing how to write) one's name, the days of the week and months of the year; counting in ones, fives and tens, recognizing and writing the numbers 1 - 100, handling money correctly and reading the clock. A copy of the results (Table 5) is being included to present the situation as it really is.

All measures were taken to give the truest picture of the children's ability: when testing the children on number recognition and notation, care was taken to eliminate any factors that might have obstructed the child from demonstrating his knowledge.

"Preference (for Maltese/English) was first established" ("Chn. requiring rem. ed." 1982, p. 66)

TABLE 5    CORRECT RESPONSES ON THE CHECKLIST OF BASIC SKILLS  
 (Figures are given in percentages)

Item, number and Task	Yr. III	Yr. IV	Yr. V	Yr. VI
1. Identifies name	97.52	100	100	100
2. Identifies surname	94	100	100	100
3. Writes name	98.13	100	100	100
4. Writes surname	84.5	96.71	100	100
5. Knows address	55	61	63	70.02
6. Writes address	32.42	45	48.5	52
7. Knows age (in years)	96.5	100	100	100
8. Knows date of birth	11	22.76	36.84	41.5
9. Writes date of birth	3	9.5	26.23	31.5
10. Knows no. of days in a wk	96	100	100	100
11. Knows no. of mths in a yr	80.43	93.5	100	100
12. Knows days of the week	91.5	100	100	100
13. Knows names of months	52.44	65	78.72	71.5
14. Recog. numbers 1 - 100	86.27	93.82	96	98
15. Writes numbers 1 - 100	88.62	97.62	98	100
16. Counts in ones	90	100	100	100
17. Counts in fives	95.4	97.47	100	100
18. Counts in tens	98	100	100	100
19. Recognises alphabet	* Not Applicable			
20. Writes alphabet	* Not Applicable			
21. Recognises coins/notes	95.5	97	100	100
22. Gives correct change fr £1	73.36	90.02	95	97.24
23. Reads simple price lists	86	93.5	93.5	98
24. Reads the clock	41.6	60.32	86.41	86.62

("Chn. requiring remedial education", 1982)

\* Tested separately during Reading Tests

Although in general, the results of the basic skills test disprove an extreme negative impression about children in need of remedial education, the Survey team remarked several times about the number of children who did not know certain basic information such as one's address and date of birth, number recognition 1 - 100 and the time. As regards some of these skills (eg. knowing and writing one's date of birth) it is possible that they are not given the importance they deserve in class.

"The correlation between the scores in items 8 and 9 indicates that these items are not being given enough attention."  
("Chn. requiring rem. ed., 1982 p. 69)

As for the other skills (eg. number recognition and reading the clock), the Survey team comments

"The result on item 14 (recognizes numbers 1 - 100) is somewhat below expectations particularly from Year IV to Year VI"  
("Chn. requiring rem. ed., 1982, pg. 69)

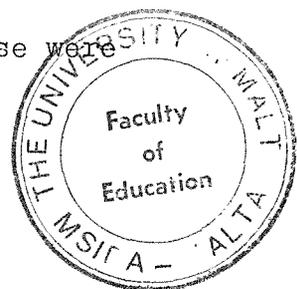
My experience with below average pupils in Years IV and V has shown that this age group regards basic knowledge (such as number recognition) as below their standard. Unless an exercise on such a skill is tactfully disguised, pupils react with indifference even though their performance reveals a need for such basic work. Hence, their errors are not eradicated. Sometimes the teacher himself regards this material as something that should be known and moves on to more complex skills. Thus, late in the primary school, some children still stumble at the most elementary skills.

### General Classification of Performance

Following the assessment and analysis of specific skills, the population of children needing remedial education was classified into 5 groups.

- "1. Children who are performing at a markedly lower level than the average child in a lower grade and whose performance will deteriorate unless attention is given immediately to the difficulties they are facing.
2. Children whose performance indicates gross disparity between their attainment on different subjects (especially English and Maltese).
3. Children who manifested different levels of competence in the various skills within the same subject (eg. reading and written work).
4. Children who are performing close to the average child in his stream and whose problem seems to be the result of a few gaps in learning. (These cases are few compared to the other groups)
5. A group of children whose attainment is so low that "they will need an extensive and highly structured remedial programme to suit their special needs". (This is a fairly small group) ("Chn. requiring rem. ed.", 1982, pg. 77)

The report points out that a degree of improvement is expected of each group if proper attention is provided. According to the team most of the children in group 1 are borderline cases "and show high potentiality for complete remediation of their problem." ("Chn. requiring rem. ed.", 1982, pg. 79). For this to occur, one must repeat, remedial education must be reorganized. The report was to be followed up by recommendations. These are not available for consultation but members of the Survey team commented that whatever and whenever recommendations were made, these were not taken up.



### Conclusions on Survey

The manner in which this Survey was carried out makes it the most reliable so far on children in need of remedial education in Malta. Apart from its findings on specific areas of learning, which are valuable for setting up a learning programme to help the children overcome their difficulties, there are two ideas that leave a lasting impression. Firstly it stresses the different degrees and variety of learning difficulties that call for flexible remedial provision. Secondly it refers constantly to the need for immediate and adequate provision if difficulties are to be overcome.

### Further Developments

What further development was made after the Survey, when headteachers' and teachers' awareness of children needing remedial education had been raised? In the previous chapter, the events have already been traced.

1. Visit by UNESCO experts at the end of 1982: consultancy mission, conference for heads, in-service course for teachers - under auspices of UNESCO. None of the recommendations were taken up.
2. Remedial teachers given full time class because of staff shortage. In the scholastic year 1983/84 the staff complement was made up of 6 teachers together with a few others, untrained for such work.
3. A decrease in children receiving regular remedial

lessons - from 600 in 1976 to 310 in 1982.

4. 1984/85 - special provision for children with learning difficulties restricted to children who had ended Year VI: opportunity and Preparatory secondary classes were created.
5. 1986 - death of E.O. Remedial Education - no replacement.
6. 1987 - an attempt to revive remedial lessons on a withdrawal basis for English and Maltese reading. Children were taught by first year student-teachers.

When one reconsiders two fundamental recommendations of the Survey team, that is flexible and early remedial provision for children one realises that the third objective of the Survey - to base future provision of the findings of the survey - has not yet been reached. Staff shortage was a major setback, the death of the E.O. for remedial education, and his not being replaced, was another. In Chapter 5 recommendations will be made, taking into consideration the difficult situation which is hindering the development of organized and effective remedial provision in Malta.

## C H A P T E R   F O U R

### REMEDIAL EDUCATION: HEADTEACHERS' AND TEACHERS' VIEWS

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- Introduction
- Teachers' views
- Headteachers' views
  - (i) who does remedial education cater for?
  - (ii) special provision
- the present situation (provision and recommendations)



Chapter 4 - Remedial education: headteachers' and teachers' views

This study has presented the various attempts which have been made abroad and in Malta to clarify the concept of remedial education, and has defined those children who are generally in need of it. I have also outlined the findings of a survey initiated to investigate this category of needs. The personnel involved in the above contributions to the development of remedial education are not the only determining agencies in this sector of education; other members in education such as headteachers and teachers influence the improvement or otherwise of such services. The views of a number of these on remedial education have been gathered through questionnaires (Appendix B ) and interviews (Appendix C ). The aim of these was to

1. gauge their understanding of 'remedial education
2. get their view of the current situation
3. gather their suggestions and recommendations for the proper organization of remedial education.
4. gain a tentative indication of the future of remedial education from their responses.

Originally, headteachers' views were meant to be acquired through interviews. For practical reasons, this meant restricting the amount of people interviewed. Yet on what criteria was selection going to be based? Was I to interview only headteachers where remedial education used to

exist? Since, in my opinion, the issue i.e. remedial education, is relevant to all heads, the interviews were substituted by questionnaires which were sent to all Primary B schools (59) in Malta and Gozo. As for teachers' opinions, four schools were chosen where some form of remedial teaching was claimed to take place at that time. I observed some sessions and interviewed the teachers of opportunity classes or some low stream class. More details about this will be taken up further on.

As regards the despatch and return of the questionnaires 30% of them were sent back, answered, by the set date for return. A few days before the 'closing date' a note of thanks, and reminder, was sent to all schools (since their identity was not required in the questionnaire). In the following days the total number of questionnaires went up to 50% (30 questionnaires out of 59). A greater response might have been forthcoming were it not for the unstable political climate in the election year. Still, the picture that emerges seems quite reliable and representative of headteachers' views in Malta: a large number of schools (30) is represented with a wide range of school population (15 - 180 children) in each of the three groups (Years IV, V and VI) (see table 6). This seems to imply that those heads who replied were in charge of different types of schools (large, small and possibly urban and rural schools). Hence, the reliability of information gathered. The quality of responses also varied, ranging from minimal information to detailed and informative responses

TABLE 6

School	Total Population in each year		
	Year IV	Year V	Year VI
1	13	23	17
2	19	19	15
3	24	27	24
4	21	21	26
5	23	27	26
6	35	27	22
7	35	20	31
8	39	33	27
9	25	35	30
10	40	23	39
11	34	27	44
12	41	26	20
13	40	45	40
14	45	37	37
15	43	44	45
16	64	70	71
17	68	70	84
18	64	81	80
19	64	84	82
20	67	83	93
21	81	83	55
22	97	96	80
23	93	100	125
24	103	102	93
25	128	107	110
26	146	113	139
27	130	174	178
28	131	176	153
29	-	-	-
30	-	-	-

drawing upon experiences acquired during school visits abroad.

As regards the contact with teachers of children with learning difficulties (there are no proper remedial classes), two of the visits were in opportunity classes, another two in low stream classes and one in an integrated class where pupils who were supposed to be in Year V or Year VI were taught in the same class. According to their teacher, most of them were ESN classes. In each of the classes visited, the average number of children was 15.

A pattern of questions was followed in each interview.

On the whole these formal questions served as a guideline for a relatively informal situation.

#### Teachers' views

The main difficulties encountered by most of the children were reading, writing (correct spelling) and short-term memory. Also, for the majority, the concentration span was short. The children's parents were generally educationally backward, though not necessarily disinterested in their children's education; some children came from broken homes. Others, in the integrated class seemed innately dull but their background did not improve their predicament.

When questioned about textbooks and curricula, all teachers complained about the lack of material suited to their pupils and especially about the national exam which children

are faced with at the end of the year. One teacher voiced a desire to be informed about how free or constrained he was as regards the syllabus. A few teachers tried to adapt the syllabus, some by starting from the simplest work and working up until they found the pupils' standard; one worked her way down from difficult material until she reached the pupils' standard. Some effort was also made at creating one's own teaching aids but this was limited in quantity and quality (usually limited to flashcards and pictures). All teachers seemed very isolated in their efforts receiving no support from co-operation with other teachers.

Teachers preferred to start with a whole class approach to teaching, but then worked with individuals according to their attainment. For example, one teacher worked on the 4b Ladybird book with the whole class while she worked with individuals on Book 3 or 6.

Was the teachers' approach to teaching systematic? In Mathematics, it was: most of them recognized that if a mathematical problem was split up in several steps, each had to be clarified on its own before going through it all. But when it came to reading and writing, it seems that from year to year there is no build-up of skills for children with learning difficulties.

The teachers themselves are aware of the need to receive suitable training but also demand support especially as regards special apparatus. Most of them desire more

freedom in their handling of the curriculum and a fairer system of assessment. An attempt at this was made at one of the schools where the children in the integrated class sat for a mock exam which the teacher based on their classwork. One final important suggestion was to start prevention or cure of learning difficulties from the earliest age possible; this was voiced with great emphasis by teachers of opportunity classes who see little chance of their pupils learning or relearning at this late stage.

#### Headteachers' views

##### Who does remedial education cater for?

All headteachers agreed that remedial education caters for children with learning difficulties, and one headteacher remarked that such provision is also necessary for children who, though having potential for learning, have been kept back by weaker peers in their class. Opinions diverged in identifying the source of children's learning difficulties (in order of frequency, i.e. what is usually the source of a child's learning difficulty?). The main sources were innate dullness and educational backwardness of parents. Some heads specified that rather than educational backwardness, it was lack of parental interest and a motivating background that hindered or slowed down learning.

I gathered, from some of the responses that headteachers regard children needing remedial education as innately dull; a few considered the low classes as remedial classes because "the syllabus cannot be followed and the children cannot read".

It seems that the term 'remedial' tends to be generalised to include any child who works below the average standard. So the child who is innately dull is included. This goes against the official view that such teaching would support "those whose failure is not considered to be due to innate dullness." (D.O.E., 1981)

Other headteachers refrained from considering the low streams as remedial classes because no special resources were available for them. In fact, lack of apparatus was a primary complaint of all heads.

Remedial education: special provision

Nearly all headteachers specified that remedial education implies special services. Most of them regard withdrawal group teaching as a central aspect of remedial education. Yet such teaching, they opine, can only be truly effective if administered by specially trained teachers who have suitable textbooks and apparatus at their disposal. These are the central factors necessary for remedial teaching, as outlined by heads of schools.

The present situation

At present, the only disparity that seems to exist between one school and another as regards remedial education provision is that in most small schools no student-teachers were sent to give remedial lessons on a withdrawal basis in reading. One reason for this could be the isolation of these schools. Nevertheless, heads of such schools have voiced

the right to greater attention to their situation. Otherwise the situation of remedial services is similar in most schools. Only one school from 30 avails itself of a peripatetic teacher, and in the scholastic year 1987/88, student-teachers took withdrawal groups for reading. All heads considered this as part of remedial education but questioned its effectiveness since the student-teachers had no training or experience. Similarly, they saw teachers in charge of low streams or opportunity classes as dedicated but untrained.

In this situation, headteachers are looking towards the Special Education Unit for support. At present, unfortunately, this service is irregular and not sufficiently organized. 15/30 headteachers said that their schools benefit from support services (peripatetic teacher, speech therapist, education welfare officers, child psychiatrist). Headteachers need to receive a more constant service from this personnel. This is not easy since the responsibility of the Special Education Unit is already great. Until a co-ordinating team for remedial education is set up, the situation is unlikely to improve.

Head teachers view this team within the Special Education Unit as important in the assessment of children. In fact, they praised the tests administered by the Special Section and suggested them as a fair substitute for the exams which all children presently sit for. Regular and systematic assessment is based on exams and teachers' and headteachers' opinions.

The above are some of the suggestions made by headteachers. At this point it is apt to present the salient recommendations which resulted from the questionnaires and interviews in order of frequency.

1. Training for teachers of children with learning difficulties.
2. Suitable apparatus.
3. A fairer system of assessment.
4. Regular and well-organized support services
5. Early prevention and cure of learning difficulties
6. A flexible system of remedial teaching.
7. Smaller classes.
8. Extra-curricular activities (sport, art, drama, Woodwork, excursions).
9. Co-ordination between schools and pooling of resources.
10. Clarity of objectives, planning and evaluation.

It is obvious from their responses that a need for remedial education provision is felt by all headteachers. They recognize that children with learning difficulties are educable, and they realise that this can only be acquired through special provision (teachers trained for such work, special apparatus ....). They also have a general idea about how this can be attained. Yet, since at present there is no one actively responsible for remedial education, nothing is being done to start actuating what headteachers and teachers consider necessary.

This fact will be taken up for further discussion in the last section of Chapter 5.

## C H A P T E R F I V E

### REMEDIAL EDUCATION - A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

- Introduction
- Remedial education abroad
  - (i) early provision
  - (ii) curriculum development
  - (iii) a flexible system of remedial education
  - (iv) special apparatus
  - (v) teacher training
  - (vi) the contribution of teachers/  
student-teachers in training
  - (vii) co-operation
- Important consideration on remedial education in Malta
- Recommendations

## Chapter 5 - Remedial Education - A Comparative Analysis

At one point or another in the previous chapters, the basic requirements for effective remedial education have been identified: early intervention, a systematic approach to early learning especially, different assessment procedures, a flexible curriculum, a variety of remedial provision to suit specific needs, special apparatus, adequate teacher training, co-operation between teachers, heads and support services, and the need for a multi-professional approach. Since remedial education has continued to develop abroad, the first part of this chapter will outline some aspects of remedial education which are being implemented, and educators' views on how these can be improved. These are by no means exhaustive - this would require a separate work; Nor will they serve as conclusive recommendations for future remedial provision in Malta. Before these can be made, relevant features of education in Malta must be considered; this is what the second part of the chapter deals with. Finally my personal suggestions for the preliminary stages of remedial education development will be presented.

### Remedial education abroad

#### Early Provision

Although this work is concerned mostly with remedial education in the Primary School Years IV - VI, such provision in early years should by no means be excluded.

"There is no doubt that dramatic results have been achieved by intelligent early intervention. Significantly NARE (6) is now concerning itself with this approach..." (Gains, 1980 , pg. 8)

Before this statement was made, attempts at early remedial provision were already at work. In Westlands Infants' School in Essex, there were about 10 per cent of the children who were experiencing learning problems and were making no progress in spite of various attempts by teachers.

"As a staff we discussed how best we could help this type of child (...) and we came to the conclusion that if these children could be withdrawn for a set period each day to follow a specially programmed system, it should prove beneficial to the children." (Valerie Pope, 1977, pg. 88)

The results were promising, and though some children will continue to need extra help "at least they were 'on their way' " (Valerie Pope, 1977, pg. 90).

The need for early intervention prompted the administration of screening tests to predict future performance. According to Wedell & Lindsay (1980) there is less rallying around this psychological approach - this seems to be giving way to more of a pedagogical approach.

"It seems likely that early identification procedures will be inaccurate for the very group of children who are thought to be educationally at risk (Stan and Fletcher, 1979), and therefore that the procedures are neither educationally nor economically worthwhile." (Wedell & Lindsay, 1980, pg. 133)

This concern for early identification was beneficial in that it helped teachers become aware of causes underlying children's failure, and led them to identify steps which a child takes in learning the 3 R's. This leads to a child

experiencing success more easily; it also enables the teacher to monitor the child's ongoing progress and pick up the individual's need as it reveals itself.

Monitoring itself requires expertise as Wedell and Lindsay opine.

"Setting up sequences of teaching objectives needs to be linked with ways of monitoring children's progress through the sequence. Approaches to doing this have been developed in the U.S.A. (e.g. Haring et al. 1978) and in this country (Ainscow and Tweddle, 1979)." (Wedell & Lindsay, 1980 pg. 134)

This form of assessment need not exclude schoolbased or national exams if headteachers wish to gauge how their pupils compare with others in the school or country. These exams must, however, be formulated in the fairest manner possible.

#### Curriculum development

Before discussing ways of establishing norms fairly, the implications for curriculum development must be considered. Does remedial education include curriculum change? If this is the best way of helping a child in his education, yes. In the past remedial provision was prescribed after a diagnosis of the child involved; that is, failure lies within the child. More recent views consider that the fault could be within the child's environment, and not solely within the child.

"(In Holland) emphasis on a systems analysis of the school rather than a deficit in the child is an interesting concept prompted possibly by the requirement in law that

all schools must publish a policy document and a description of the organisation and curriculum designed to achieve these policies (...). There is an increasing interest in the systems analysis approach in the U.K." (Appleton & Foster, 1982, pg. 54)

Part of a pilot project in a school district of Asuncion, Paraguay, was the identification of some failure factors.

"The family background and educational diagnosis of students and the school curriculum were analysed." (UNESCO, 1987, pg. 4)

According to the results of this analysis, teachers were trained in remedial instruction techniques and in the design of flexible curricula. The need for reconsideration of the curriculum was reiterated by Gains.

"For the good of those (failing) children, remedial teachers must play an important role in curriculum design and innovation." (Gains, 1980, pg. 8)

The reconstruction of curricula for remedial education seems to be cautiously attempted. In fact, the literature speaks mostly of training for this and implies hesitancy in actuating it.

Flexibility in the curriculum ought to be accompanied by an examination system which is not rigid. Here I am not referring to the different sorts of intelligence and attainment tests (group tests, individual tests, diagnostic tests, specialized tests etc), but to a system of assessment for the entire school population for the establishment of norms. Three possible styles of examination were proposed by the Dunning Committee (1977) so as to accommodate the less able pupils.

- i) A single question paper will include questions that are within the competence of the least able students and which will test even the most able. "It is however not always easy to devise a satisfactory 'incline of difficulty'" (Bain, 1979, pg. 87)
- ii) The content/method system offers alternative content or approaches or both within a subject but the options are of equivalent standard (...). This may be in line with the suggestion that the traditional written form of examination is not sacrosanct, that is, separate forms will have to be produced for each of the three levels.
- iii) The grade range system offers a choice between papers of different levels of difficulty. These will relate to the different levels of syllabus.

The Dunning Committee had secondary education in mind, but it is worth examining them to see whether they can be adapted in some way to primary education.

#### A flexible system of remedial education

It has been stated above that flexibility in the curriculum is commendable for children with learning difficulties. Similarly one cannot set up a type of remedial provision and expect it to apply to all children with special needs. The amount of variety in each country depends on how

centralised or de-centralised the education system is. For example, there is infinite variety of remedial provision in the U.K., since the system is de-centralised and schools have sufficient leeway for experimentation. This has led to the set up of an opportunity class for Infants at Westlands Infants' School (discussed above); elsewhere a number of junior schools were offered the facility of allowing pupils experiencing learning difficulties to attend an ESN day school on a part-time basis in an attempt to alleviate their problems. Perhaps these examples give the impression that the British system favours withdrawal. This is not the case. On the contrary, team teaching, with a remedial specialist intervening in the ordinary classroom is being advocated.

I agree with Ferguson & Adams (1982) that remedial provision by withdrawal should not be dispensed with, merely for the sake of favouring integration. When interviewing teachers in secondary schools on team teaching, results favoured withdrawal.

"Only eight teachers in each group believed team teaching to be the more effective strategy with remedial pupils. Twice as many remedial teachers (16) and more than twice as many class teachers (19) felt that extra help given outside the ordinary classroom was of more benefit to the least able children (...). There may be special advantages in close relationships, individual treatment and the concentrated attention of an interested adult."  
(Ferguson & Adams, 1982, pg. 28)

Improvement in academic attainment does not seem to be marked following withdrawal. It does, however, improve

children's self-concept sufficiently so that a prescribed programme to be followed up in the ordinary classroom achieves results.

The importance of a healthy self-concept is not some romantic notion - it is recognized as the first essential step to scholastic achievement in the Federal Republic of Germany, or rather in some of its schools.<sup>(7)</sup> These set up what is termed "promotion groups". By extra-curricular activities such as: playing, walking together and free discussions on the children's own problems, the town, etc., children can gain new confidence in their own worth; thus a more positive self-concept, a new readiness for scholastic achievement can develop. This phase of building up a new motivation is not separated from the phase of instructing about scholastic subjects, for the separation could even entail new dangers. (Sanders, 1978, pg. 17, 18).

In France,<sup>(8)</sup> where the system is more of a centralised one, the types of remedial provision are more specific than those in Germany and the U.K. On the one hand, there are two types of classes for the treatment of learning difficulties.

1. "les classes d' adaptation dites 'fermees' " ('closed' classes) - a maximum of 15 children attend these classes on a full-time basis; some of them attend ordinary classes for certain activities.



2. "les classes d' adaptation dites 'ouvertes' " ('open' classes). In this case the teacher either helps children who attend ordinary classes in areas such as reading, writing maths ... or else his time is shared between this type of support and interventions within the ordinary class.

These remedial teachers are aided by a GAPP- a group which gives psycho-pedagogical support and made up of an educational psychologist and educators specialised in education for children with training difficulties. What remedial provision best suits the child depends on his needs; what remedial education is provided in general, depends largely on the system of education within the country.

#### Special Apparata

A country's economic state and how much of a priority education is, are strong determinants of the availability of special apparata in schools, and in this case in remedial education. Remedial teachers in the U.K. usually have resource centres at their disposal, either in their own school or in the region. Remedial education without special apparata is hardly conceivable.

"The importance of using new materials and methods with children who have experienced failure is well-documented."  
(Holdsworth, 1984, pg.149)

This was taken into consideration when organizing remedial provision at Mowbray School, North Yorkshire, where Pauline

Holdsworth holds the post of Deputy Headteacher. Valerie Pope, teaching at Westlands Infants' School in Essex (to which references have already been made) lists some of the apparatus ordered for the newly-established opportunity class: a Language Master, headphones, visual discrimination cards and letters, tapes for auditory discrimination etc. It was important that no apparatus was purchased if children had already used it in class and experienced failure.

### Teacher Training

On 1st September 1982, the British Secretary of State announced his intention to introduce, in 1983-84, a scheme of direct grants for in-service teacher training (...) in five specified areas, one of which, was special educational needs in ordinary schools (Newton & Hill, 1985, pg. 159). The importance of courses to prepare teachers for work in specialised fields is being recognized by more and more countries from the U.K. to Paraguay. Even in France, where remedial provision is relatively young (since 1970) remedial teachers are trained. After obtaining a teaching diploma and teaching in an ordinary class for some years, teachers specialise in pedagogy or psychology for remedial teaching.

In a survey on slow learners which included an evaluation of in-service course content, teachers expressed what they viewed as assets of such courses. Four out of ten course

members valued the opportunity to meet with other teachers of slow learners and exchange views. Displays of new books, equipment and teaching materials were viewed by one teacher in four as helpful to their teaching.

"The third most helpful aspect of many courses, concerned the practical guidance on teaching methods which was given in workshop sessions, through discussion, or by means of formal lectures." (Clunies-Ross, 1984, pg. 155)

How can courses for remedial teachers be structured so as to cater for the beginner and the specialist in the profession? Charles Gains (1979, pg. 182, 183) who runs a course at Edge-Hill College, envisages four phases of in-service training.

Phase 1 Meetings and Conferences: Their aim will be to stimulate local interest, promote the opportunity for social interchange, encourage and inform the less experienced and allow the more experienced to exchange ideas.

Phase 2 Courses of a more extended nature. Their aim will be to further develop a knowledge of techniques, undertaking a more extensive evaluation of materials and resources and stimulating an awareness of the implications across the curriculum.

Phase 3 Courses designed to fit teachers for further responsibilities: Their aim will be to develop comprehensive skills to an advanced level in preparation for posts of responsibility in remedial education.

Phase 4 Research and innovation: Their aim is to promote research and innovation in the field of remedial education.

These schemes would provide openings for those involved to progress as much as they aspire.

When one considers the changing roles that remedial teachers are being requested to take on, training becomes an inevitable and even more desirable requisite. While Charles Gains assigns to the remedial teacher in the 80's the responsibility of monitoring assessment, acting as counsellor co-ordinator and resource agent in the school he is posted at, Frank O' Hagan (1977, pg. 57) outlines five complementary aspects of the teacher's task.

1. guide and counsellor
2. therapist
3. evaluator
4. manager of learning environment
5. curriculum developer.

When one considers how turbulent the educational history of children with learning difficulties can be, and the social and emotional problems that are possibly part of this history, the role of the remedial teacher as counsellor and companion assumes great importance, the ultimate aim of this role being to enable children to gain feelings of selfworth and realize their full potential. To help children develop and mature and come to terms with their problems, a teacher could resort to psychodrama, role play

and art therapy, hence the role of therapist. As evaluator, the remedial teacher keeps a record of children's progress and attainments (academic, social, emotional ...) and assesses class activities. This is extremely useful for the planning and management of classroom activities. Through this continual evaluation, the remedial teacher can devise appropriate learning programmes and use a variety of apparatus (media, for example) to organize optimum learning situations for children. Here the remedial teacher assumes the role of manager of the learning environment, but yet more is demanded of him as curriculum developer. Teachers have been aware of the inadequacy of the common curriculum for children with learning difficulties, desiring a more flexible one which allows children to develop their potential and creativity by being based on their needs and interests.

The remedial teacher's role was initially that of 'private tutor' by taking a small group of children for coaching. Today, the growing awareness of the complexity of children's failure makes greater demands on the remedial teacher. This calls for organized, on-going training for teachers.

#### The contribution of teachers/student-teachers in training

Training for undergraduates or serving teachers is sometimes organized in such a way that they contribute to the development of remedial provision. At Edge Hill College, course members are taken to meet the staffs of certain schools with known educational problems. These problems

are discussed, and as part of course requirements, the course members propose strategies for solution which they then work on with the help of the school. (Mc Nicholas in Gains, 1979, pg.156). In the state of Parana (Brazil), an experiment was carried out for the purpose of providing remedial reading programmes to low ability students and enabling the students of 14 teachers' colleges of the State to have practice teaching. Student teachers worked in teams of four supervising reading activities. 50% of the children overcame their reading difficulties according to results. 24% made some progress, 12% were not successful and 14% left the programme (UNESCO, 1987, pg. 7). As long as this practice teaching is thoroughly planned beforehand, it will prove to be a worthy investment.

### Co-operation

"My final point is to make a plea for good communications. Innovations (...) depend for their realisation, on a number of factors (one of which is the establishment of) efficient lines of communication during and after the introduction of innovation."  
(Mc Nicholas in Gains, 1979, pg. 156)

This plea takes us back to Valerie Pope's report (1977), Before setting up the opportunity class for infants, the teachers discussed the difficulties which some of the children were facing. Wedell and Lindsay (1980, pg. 134), describing the sequence of objectives in education, conclude their report on the subject of co-operation.

"In several parts of the country, teachers are as a group already co-operating in the development of sequences of objectives."

Charles Gains (1979, pg. 173) speaks of reading clinics. Here, a small group of teachers meet with the course leader to discuss the individual problems they face in the classroom.

Though co-operation between teachers is desirable, one must realise the complexity of a child's problem which at face-value might seem restricted to academic achievement. Psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors and social workers are only part of a vast network of personnel who could help the remedial teacher to remedy a child's problem on a long-term basis. Attempts at this are made (the GAPP in France for example, the course on child development for parents in Asuncion, Paraguay...). On the whole however, a multi-professional approach is questionable even in the U.K.

"It is widely argued that 'information is often not shared among doctors, nurses, psychologists, teachers and social workers though in the interests of individual children it should be'(...). There remains serious gaps between what we know, what we say we know we should do and what we actually do." (Paisley, 1980, pg. 142)

The results which a multi-professional approach can achieve will not be fully effective if the children's parents are not somehow involved. Serious attempts have been made, some of them ambitious such as parents entering classrooms and giving a hand with teaching children with learning difficulties. Before this great step is made attention must be given to parent/child relationships.

"The first purpose is not to win the parents for some well-aimed exercises with their child at home - this cannot be expected from parents of many of the school-weak children for different reasons; rather the intention is to turn the interest of the child towards school by building up parental interest." (Sander, 1978, pg. 18)

### Important considerations on Remedial Education in Malta

The above review of some of the research and experiments in remedial education does not constitute recommendations for the development of such provision in Malta. Provision for remedial education has regressed to a state of near non-existence. It can only develop slowly and by means of careful planning. Yet even if these conditions are present, one should not expect to adopt in our schools that which exists abroad, at least for the time being. Certain factors which will condition development must, at this point, be outlined.

The system of education in Malta is centralised in the sense that the curriculum syllabuses and final year examinations are set by the department for all schools or types of schools (e.g. trade schools). Thus, while a head of school might be willing to formulate a special syllabus for children with learning difficulties, he is also responsible for their performance in national exams. So is he and his staff - who are in the best position to know the needs of their students - really free to cater for these needs? On the hypothesis that special textbooks existed, is the head and his staff free to supply such

books for their students unless these are distributed by the department? How free are they to formulate or modify curricula if they feel capable of such a task? If the education system remains as centralised as it is presently, remedial education will develop, but the framework will be more rigid than if the system were more de-centralised.

Another important factor that will determine what type of remedial provision is organized is the system of streaming. This implies that some classes - the lower streams - will definitely need remedial provision, not on a withdrawal basis but as a whole class within the ordinary school. Children in the higher streams might also need remedial provision - this could be organized on a withdrawal basis or through direct intervention by a remedial specialist within the ordinary class.

The latter responsibilities demand sufficient staff supply. In tracing the development of remedial education in Malta, staff shortage turned out to be a major problem in this field. It is probably the reason why the Education Department has not followed up recommendations and calls for applications. It seems that at present and in the near future, development in remedial provision will be handicapped by this shortcoming.

One of the measures for remedial provision mentioned above implied team teaching. The first section of this chapter stressed the importance of co-operation between staff and

support services. Unfortunately, the existence of associations is as yet very limited in Malta. My experience in schools has given me little reason to believe that much discussion and co-operation exists in primary schools as regards pedagogical matters. This calls for a gradual change in attitude if measures for remedial provision are to be implemented satisfactorily.

Co-operation includes the involvement of parents. This is another delicate issue following the 1983 teachers' strike that resulted in some teachers and parents considering each other as hostile parties. This will undoubtedly have an effect on the pace or amount of involvement of parents in classroom matters.

The pace or amount of development in remedial education will, in turn, depend on the availability of special textbooks and apparatus. Teaching aids are essential for all children but the education of children with learning difficulties depends almost entirely on them. Since in primary Schools especially, there is a general lack of sophisticated apparatus, it will be no easy task to purchase these aids, for this demands a fresh outlook on education.

There is undoubtedly great disparity between remedial services abroad and those in Malta. This difference emerges clearly when one considers that remedial education abroad is recognized as a special field in education with personnel giving constant and specialised attention to

its development. Although staff shortage, insufficient financing, lack of co-operation between those involved in remedial education and other problems exist abroad as well, the general picture of remedial education abroad is a positive one.

### Recommendations

In the past, several recommendations for the development of remedial education in Malta have been made, but for some reason, they have not been followed up. Is it because the present situation, particularly staff shortage in Primary Schools does not make such provision feasible? Has the manpower in remedial education been scattered so that it cannot work for a common cause? Whatever the case, much harm has already been done in leaving remedial education relatively underdeveloped for a number of years. The first step to put it back on its feet is the immediate appointment of an E.O. for remedial education supported by a team of educators who were or are involved in this field. This basic step will probably be the hardest since it would entail removing them from their present post when replacement is not such an easy matter. If they are irreplaceable because of their experience with children who have learning difficulties, they could still act as support agents for whoever substitutes them. If this risk cannot be taken, the organization of remedial education will have to be postponed not only until staff

shortage is less marked. One must add to this period the amount of time which will be needed to plan such provision and start it off effectively (training teachers, identifying flexible measures for remedial work, setting up a resource centre etc.). In my opinion, it is wiser to release this staff now so that, as a team, they will start to prepare for future remedial provision.

I do not envisage or recommend radical measures in schools. For the first years, work will be mostly preparative so that once there is a fuller complement of teachers for ordinary classes, remedial education, backed by careful planning can be provided on a large scale. There is already one category, however - low stream classes - which can receive some form of remedial education quite early after the setting up of the 'remedial team'. In these cases there is no question of employing teachers to give support on a withdrawal basis to some of the students, for the class as a whole needs a special approach. Nevertheless, teachers of such classes will need to be given some training to help them identify difficulties, sequence objectives in small steps, and motivate children. The responsibility for such training falls upon the remedial team. This and other responsibilities of the team during this preparation period are enlisted below:

1. estimating when the complement of teachers will allow the necessary remedial services to be actuated.

2. gauging the existing expertise in this field in Malta
3. visiting remedial centres abroad to acquire skills for organizing remedial education, training teachers, etc.
4. seeking the support of NARE in the U.K.
5. organizing meetings and conferences to stimulate local interest and ideas (Phase 1 of Gains' plan for in-service courses)
6. providing the training necessary for teachers of children with learning difficulties, and most urgently for teachers in charge of low-stream classes
7. advising headteachers on matters of curriculum adaptation
8. giving the necessary support to teachers implementing ideas from their training
9. pressing for a vote for the supply of apparatus
10. setting up a resource centre
11. participating in the training for remedial education of student-teachers
12. encouraging student-teachers to give a valuable contribution to developing remedial education through their course work (research, supply of material such as text books, etc.)
13. discovering meanwhile the best provision that

can be organized in the Maltese context

14. continuing meanwhile to send personnel abroad for training especially for high posts of responsibility in remedial education.

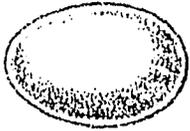
When one considers the time and effort that are involved in setting up effective remedial provision, it is no wonder that remedial education is presently static or nearly so. The above can only be actuated, to some degree, once a team is constantly and wholeheartedly working on the development of remedial education in Malta: stimulating ideas, pressing for funds, etc. Remedial education, that is, provision for children with learning difficulties within the ordinary school, is a specific field in education, and it demands an urgent union of man power in order to be implemented effectively in Malta and yield positive results.

APPENDICES

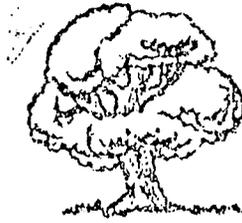
APPENDIX A

Plate (i)

Year III: Word Picture Matching (Maltese)



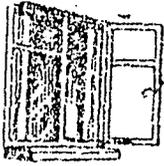
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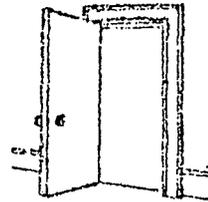
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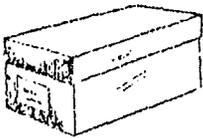
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k \_ \_ \_



\_ \_ \_ \_



i \_ \_ \_ a



m \_ \_ \_



h \_ \_ \_



r \_ \_ \_

PLATE vWORD RECOGNITION TEST (Falzon)ENGLISH

to	is	school	egg	milk
book	tree	for	at	of
up	sit	picture	cake	my
big	one	boys	flower	some
an	girl	he	his	sun
or	that	they	no	playing
little	something	people	things	went
light	pot	clock	water	now
frog	just	sad	road	told
summer	think	biscuit	carry	shepherd
wet	quickly	love	village	train
angel	sandwich	dream	beginning	crowd
thirsty	return	nurse	island	downstairs
appeared	twisted	shelves	journey	postage
scramble	nephew	tongue	explorer	known
terror	smoulder	beware	canary	ceiling
luncheon	saucer	obtain	attractive	image
projecting	disposal	serious	siege	university
disease	gradually	steadiness	knowledge	commenced
situated	orchestra	prophecy	fascinate	applaud
choir	audience	physics	plausible	intercede
nourished	forfeit	recent	campaign	gnome

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NOTE on administering the test. The child starts reading from left to right.

He is stopped after 5 consecutive failures. Words read correctly are counted and the number is converted into the equivalent Reading Age as shown on the Table of Norms. (See Plate vii - a)

PLATE viiiDIAGNOSTIC WORD LIST2 - 3 letter words

ra	xi	id	hu	sa
dak	gib	elf	qis	oht

4 letter words

mara	saru	ahna	pupa	rota
bidu	xott	bard	kelb	issa

5 letter words

nejda	kamra	xitla	berqa	sabih
siggu	bocca	qoffa	sitta	kanna

6 letter words

ballun	furnar	sellum	statwa	arlogg
midfun	dendel	tambur	katina	serduq

words including 'iq'

bieb.	sieq	niet	bniet	znien
halliel	tellief	subien	gurdien	knieni

words including 'h' (hakka)

huwa	bih	dahar	mhux	deheb
rah	fuqha	xhur	luha	fih

words including 'gh' (ghajn)

ghar	gheneb	tieghu	tfiegh	qlugh
siegha	ghalih	mieghu	biegh	fergha

PLATE ixTHE PHONIC SKILLS TEST2 - 3 letter words

if	at	is	to	up
egg	tax	jet	but	sum

4 letters & silent 'e'

hand	sink	bend	fond	sold
nice	joke	wide	fate	oope

initial consonant blends

frog	plan	slot	flip	crab
pram	spot	trip	plug	bled

vowel digraphs I

cow	paw	toe	sail	lied
dew	heap	coat	deaf	boil

vowel digraphs II

weak	book	door	jeep	hood
moon	poor	seed	boot	peel

consonant digraphs & silent letters

shop	when	know	chip	this
right	high	though	ghost	wrap

---

Instruction. Test is untimed.  
Child is asked to attempt every word.

Plate xi

A reproduction of the picture used for the Written Test in Maltese.

This picture is one in the series of Wall Pictures used with the Ladybird Key Word Scheme. The original picture is in colour.



Plate xii

A reproduction of the picture used in the Written Test in English.

This picture is one in the series of Wall Pictures used with the Ladybird Key Word Scheme. The original picture is in colour.



*Plate XVI*

maths

year III

A.

2, 3, —, —, —, —

—, 7, 8, —, —, 11

4, 6, —, —, —, —

5, 10, —, —, —, —

—, 20, 30, —, —, —

B.

$$\square + \square \rightarrow 9$$

$$\square - \square \rightarrow 5$$

$$\boxed{7} + \square \rightarrow 13$$

$$\boxed{8} - \square \rightarrow 4$$

C.

7 +	10 +	49 -	50 -
3	20	<u>36</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	_____	_____
_____	_____		

Plate XVII

maths

year IV

A.

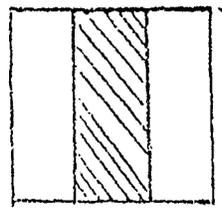
$47 +$	$98 -$	$84$	$3 \overline{)693}$	$569 +$
$22$	$54$	$\times 2$		$247$
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
				$31$
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

B.

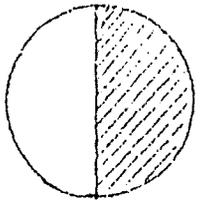
$321 +$	$716 -$	$509 -$
$570$	$647$	$291$
$409$		
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

$376$	$903$	$4 \overline{)728}$	$5 \overline{)400}$
$\times 4$	$\times 6$		
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

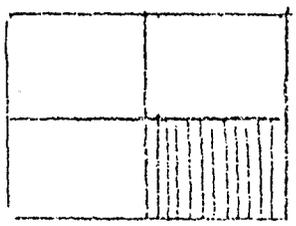
C.



?  $\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{3}$



?  $\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{3}$



$\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{4}$  ?

*Plate XVIII*

maths

years V & VI

A.

$$809 + 597 +$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 493 \\ 200 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 288 \\ 314 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$861 -$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 278 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$900 -$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 578 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$498 \times 3$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

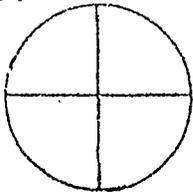
$$\begin{array}{r} 609 \times \\ 10 \\ \hline \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$5 \overline{)476}$$

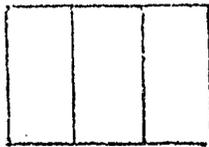
$$3 \overline{)8.07}$$

B.

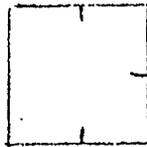
*Shade these figures*



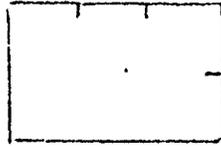
1/2



2/3



3/4



5/6

C.

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{£M} \quad \text{c.} \quad \text{m} \\ 4 \ 15 \ 9 \ + \\ 1 \ 20 \ 8 \\ \hline 3 \ 45 \ 7 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{£M} \quad \text{c} \quad \text{m} \\ 9 \ 25 \ 4 \ - \\ 3 \ 56 \ 9 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{£M} \quad \text{c} \quad \text{m} \\ 8 \ 16 \ 9 \\ \hline \quad \quad \times 3 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{£M} \quad \text{c} \quad \text{m} \\ 4 \overline{)19 \ 07 \ 2} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

APPENDIX BQuestionnaire:Remedial Services in Primary Schools (B)

1. What do you see as forming part of remedial services?

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2. Are there, at present, any such special services available in your school for children with learning difficulties?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

3. What form do these services take?

a) withdrawal groups for certain subjects \_\_\_\_\_

b) integrated classes \_\_\_\_\_

c) opportunity classes \_\_\_\_\_

d) any other. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

4a) If there is no remedial service now, was there any in the past?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes,

4b) What kind? \_\_\_\_\_

Was there a specific reason for its stopping? \_\_\_\_\_

---

5) Do you think there are children in your school who could benefit from some form of remedial service?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

6a) If there are withdrawal groups, which subjects are covered? \_\_\_\_\_

b) By whom are they taught?

---

7a) Do you think it is necessary for teachers of children with learning difficulties to have some training in this area?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- b) If yes, what form of service would you suggest?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8) As for the other services offered (b, c, d, in no. 2) what is the average number of children in each class?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9) On what criteria are children elected from different classes because of learning difficulties, to form one class?  
 a) exam results \_\_\_\_\_  
 b) class test results \_\_\_\_\_  
 c) screening tests \_\_\_\_\_  
 d) teacher's opinion \_\_\_\_\_  
 e) headteacher's opinion \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Number in order of frequency, what you consider to be the sources of learning difficulties.  
 a) innate dullness \_\_\_\_\_  
 b) educational backwardness of parents \_\_\_\_\_  
 c) broken homes \_\_\_\_\_  
 d) absenteeism due to illness \_\_\_\_\_  
 e) absenteeism for no specific reason \_\_\_\_\_  
 f) incompatibility with some teacher in the past \_\_\_\_\_  
 g) any other - specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) How many children who have been withdrawn from the normal stream for special attention, make enough progress to return to the normal stream?  
 Many \_\_\_\_\_ A few \_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) On what criteria do children return to the normal stream?  
 a) Exam results \_\_\_\_\_  
 b) Class test results \_\_\_\_\_  
 c) Teacher's opinion \_\_\_\_\_  
 d) Headteacher's opinion \_\_\_\_\_  
 e) Support service's opinion \_\_\_\_\_

13a) Do you consider the lower streams as remedial classes?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

b) Why? \_\_\_\_\_

14) Do children from these low streams get promoted to a higher stream?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how often?

Often \_\_\_\_\_ Quite often \_\_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_\_ Very rarely \_\_\_\_\_

15) What type of assessment would you suggest for children needing special education in normal schools?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16a) Does the school benefit from support services?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes,

b) what kind? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ If no,  
what kind of support services would you suggest?

\_\_\_\_\_

17a) Have there been requests or suggestions from teachers regarding inadequate supply of appropriate material for children with learning difficulties?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

b) Mention some of their suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18) Further comments or suggestions about remedial services.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19) Streamed    Unstreamed

Number of children in Year 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children in Year 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children in Year 6 \_\_\_\_\_

20) If streaming takes place, are there classes of mixed ability in :

Year 4 _____	Yes _____	No _____
Year 5 _____	Yes _____	No _____
Year 6 _____	Yes _____	No _____

Thank you.

APPENDIX C

1. What difficulties do these children encounter?
2. To what do you attribute their difficulties?
3. How do you adapt curricula and textbooks to the group?
4. Do you prefer a group or individual approach?
5. How do you approach a reading/writing activity which is usually a source of difficulty for these children?
6. What would you suggest to help these children benefit from education?

NOTES

Notes

1. Integration:

For a long time handicapped people have been kept apart from the rest of society. This could be reinforced by the tendency to educate the handicapped exclusively in special schools. Though special schools will still be needed for children whose disabilities are such that it is impracticable, or less beneficial for them to be educated in ordinary schools, it has been publicly stated that the vast majority of children with learning difficulties, should by right, be educated within the ordinary school. Such integration could take many forms, e.g. full-time education in an ordinary class with any necessary help and support; education in an ordinary class with periods of withdrawal to a special class or unit with social contact with the main school.

2. Retardation:

This applies to a condition characterized by an unrealized margin of intellectual power (Sampson, 1975, pg. 5).

3. Backwardness:

This applies to pupils with an innate and permanent deficiency.

4. Opportunity Classes:

These classes were opened for pupils who at Year VI were found to be "still mentally weak and academically unprepared to embark on a secondary school course. These pupils would have scored less than 15 marks out of 100 in each of the tool subjects "in the Year VI National Annual exam. Opportunity classes have a "special curriculum and selected teachers." (Educ. Dept. 1984)

5. Prep. Secondary Schools:

"Currently boys at Year VI primary who scored less than 30% in the tool subjects in the same exam and who were considered to be as yet unprepared to embark upon a full secondary course (...). Under special teachers, a special curriculum and small class (maximum 20), they were to be given that remedial education which would prepare them for secondary education next year." (Educ. Dept., 1984, pg. 48).

6. NARE (Central office in Stafford, U.K.)

The National Association for Remedial Education was formed in 1963 to bring together all those directly concerned in remedial education. The association is concerned with the prevention, investigation and treatment of learning difficulties from whatever source they may emanate and which hinder the educational development of the child.

NARE offers a number of services to teachers, backed by a high level of expertise in the field. These include

1. promoting national and regional courses
  2. encouraging the formation of local groups and activities - some 60 groups in the U.K. and some overseas
  3. initiating research relevant to special educational needs
  4. publishing quarterly its own international journal 'Support for Learning'
  5. publishing a number of practical guides for teachers
  6. providing speakers for local meetings.
7. Federal Republic of Germany: education system
- In the school system of the Federal Republic of Germany, there is no specific arrangement for the treatment of learning disabilities within normal schools. What exists is largely a result of an increasing number of experiments. There are experiments with an official character but many other experiments are not officially registered nor sponsored by the authorities; they are spontaneously realised by the teaching staff or by individual teachers working on their own initiative.

8. Remedial education in France:

In a personal communication to the authors, the Director of Education from the Ministry of Education in France wrote: "Provision for the prevention of learning difficulties in school was initiated in 1970. The main aim was to limit such difficulties and bring the child to a level where he can benefit from education in the ordinary class. The measures to achieve this are based on the principle of minimal segregation."

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\* This source is referred to as "Education Department" in the text.