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## AN OVERVIEW OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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### A Study on Remedial Education in Overview

#### Introduction

**Remedial education** (also known as developmental education, basic skills education, compensatory education, preparatory education, and academic upgrading) is education designed to assist students in order to achieve expected competencies in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy. Whereas special education is designed specifically for students with special needs, remedial education can be designed for any students, with or without special needs; the defining trait is simply that they have reached a point of under preparedness, regardless of why. For example, even people of high intelligence can be underprepared if their education was disrupted, for example, by internal displacement during civil disorder or a war.

Remedial classes are often used to stress the basics in a subject such as math or language. They can help students who are having problems with advanced concepts to fully understand the basics of a subject. Students can also use them to catch up on material after a long break from education. Some people look upon remedial classes as embarrassing, but they can in fact be useful tools to gain a more complete grasp of difficult ideas or rules.

#### Objectives

The objectives of the remedial are as follows:

1. To motivate and help the academically weaker students to realize their weakness and help them to improve on their fronts.
2. Improving academic skills of the students in various subjects.

3. Raising their level of comprehension of basic subjects to provide a stronger for further academic work.
4. Strengthens their knowledge skills and attitude in such subjects including interpersonal relationship, communication, problem-solving, self-management, self-learning, independent thinking, creativity and the use of information technology. Such training can lay the foundation for pupils' life-long learning, help them develop positive attitudes and values, as well as prepare them for future studies and career.

Pupils usually have one or more than one of the following learning difficulties:

- Poor memory
- Short attention span and are easily distracted by other things
- Relatively poor comprehensive power
- Lack of learning motivation
- Lack of self-confidence and relatively low self- expectation
- Weak in problem-solving power
- Fail to grasp information effectively and mix things up easily
- Have difficulty in understanding new/abstract concepts
- Fail to transfer knowledge to the related learning areas appropriately
- Need more time to complete assessments or tasks.

Apart from various learning difficulties, pupils may have different abilities and styles of learning. Some are better in visual learning while others are more competent in audio learning. Certain pupils have to learn through sense of touch or practical experiences. Remedial teachers, therefore, should design diversified teaching activities and adopt various teaching methods to help students develop their potential and remove the obstacles in learning.

### **Principles of Helping Pupils with Learning Difficulties**

#### **• Teaching preparation**

Before preparing for their lessons, remedial teachers should identify pupils' diverse learning needs as soon as possible so that they may design appropriate teaching plans to facilitate pupils' effective learning.

#### **• Devise various learning activities**

Since pupils have different characteristics in learning, teachers must devise different learning activities with the same teaching objective to develop pupils' varied abilities and skills in problem solving. It is more effective for teachers to adopt a series of relevant and simple teaching activities than assigning one long teaching activity since pupils may acquire the required knowledge and skills through diversified activities.

#### **• Design meaningful learning situations**

Remedial teachers should specifically design meaningful learning situations, language environments (especially for English subject), games or activities so as to

provide personal learning experiences for pupils and stimulate their interest and initiative in learning.

- **Teaching approaches**

Teachers should give concrete examples before proceeding to abstract concepts by way of simple and easy steps at a pace in line with the learning abilities of students. Teachers may teach new concepts from different perspectives by various approaches so that pupils can grasp the ideas through meaningful and repeated illustrations. Teachers should encourage pupils' active participation by more frequent use of teaching aids, games and activities. They can also make use of information technology and all the teaching resources available to help pupils understand the main points.

- **Provide clear instructions**

Pupils with learning difficulties are less competent in understanding written language. Therefore, remedial teachers should give pupils short and clear instructions to avoid confusion. They must explain clearly the arrangement of each learning activity. If necessary, they may ask pupils to repeat the steps of activities so that every pupil may understand the instructions.

- **Summarize the main points**

At the course of teaching, teachers should always sum up the main points in teaching and write the key phrases on the board to enhance pupils' audio and visual memories. Teachers can guide their pupils to link up the knowledge they learn from class with their life experiences so as to enhance the effectiveness of learning. Besides, guiding pupils to repeat the main points in verbal or written form is also an effective way of learning.

- **Enhance learning interest and motivation**

Suffering from frequent frustrations in their work, pupils with learning difficulties may gradually lose their interest in learning. Therefore, teachers should adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. With less pupils in the remedial classes, teachers can design interesting activities coupled with reward scheme to stimulate pupils' interest. It is most important to help pupils overcome their learning difficulties so that they may gain a sense of achievement and recover their confidence and interest in learning.

- **Encourage pupils' active participation in class activities**

Pupils with learning difficulties usually lack self-confidence and are more passive in class. They seldom ask questions or express their views. Remedial teachers should patiently encourage active participation in class. Pleasurable learning experiences may help enhance pupils' interest in learning.

- **Focus on the learning process**

Teaching should not only focus on the transmission of knowledge. It is also important to see that pupils are benefited from the entire learning process. Teachers should provide ample opportunities in class for pupils to practice and think what they have learnt, and allow them to solve problems by different means. Teachers should also

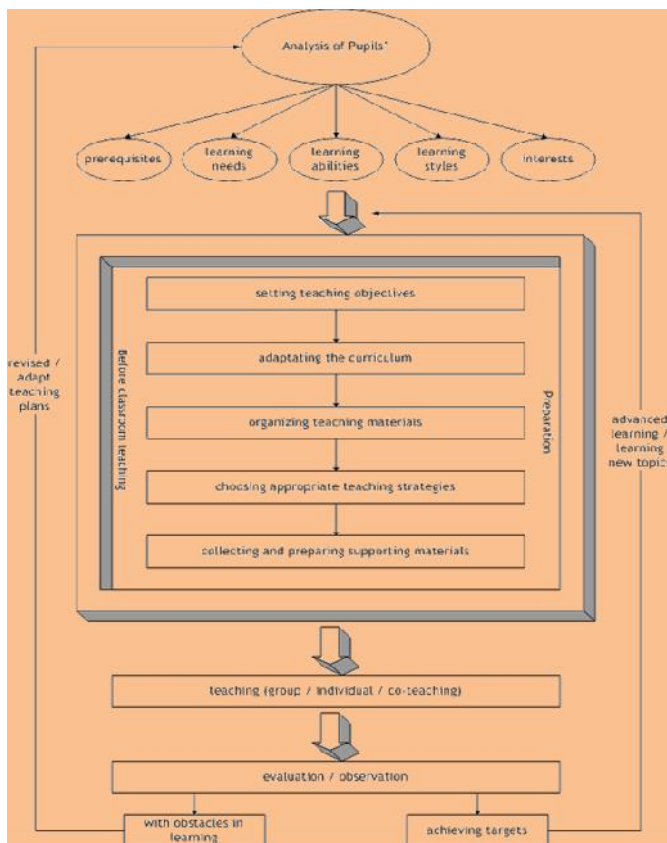
carefully observe the performances of pupils and give them appropriate assistance, feedback and encouragement so as to help them acquire the learning skills, solve their problems and understand their own capability, thus enhancing self-confidence and improving their learning skills.

- **Show concern for the performances of individual pupils**

Pupils may encounter different problems in their studies; therefore, teachers should carefully observe the learning process of individual pupils in class. Whenever necessary, they should provide individualized remedial teaching before and after class, during recess or lunchtime, so that they can remove their learning obstacles as soon as possible.

### The Process of Remedial Teaching

The flowchart below may serve as a reference for teachers in the delivery of collaborative teaching or individual teaching:



### Curriculum Adaptation

- Remedial teachers should adapt the curriculum to accommodate the learning characteristics and abilities of pupils. They should set some teaching objectives which are easy to achieve to ensure that pupils may acquire the knowledge as desired after the completion of each module.

- Teaching should not be directed by textbooks which should not be taken as the school curriculum. There is no need to cover all the contents in the textbooks as well. Colleges can classify the teaching content into core and non-core learning aspects according to the teaching objectives and pupils abilities. Core

learning aspects require in-depth studies and application whereas materials in the non-core or advanced learning aspects may be streamlined or appropriately selected for teaching.

- Teachers are encouraged to adopt recommendations on cross-curricular teaching by linking up related teaching areas flexibly so that more time can be spared for effective activities and learning.
- Teachers should make good use of all teaching materials. For example, they may select and use the materials in textbooks to meet the teaching objectives, or compile their own supplementary teaching materials. They may also design materials of different standards. Materials from the internet, newspapers, magazines and references provided by the Education Department may help teachers design interesting and enjoyable activities to enhance pupils' effectiveness of learning.

### **Home Work Policies**

Colleges should formulate clear policies on homework which should be reviewed regularly. The assignments should be targeted at the teaching objectives and serve the purposes of learning. Exercise books available in the market should only serve as a reference. Colleges should choose these exercise books carefully and make appropriate adjustments to the category, quantity and quality of homework.

Teachers should take note of the following points when designing homework for pupils:

- The homework should have clear objectives and can accommodate the level and needs of pupils;
- The form and contents of homework should be of a great variety so as to develop pupils' creativity, self-learning and collaborative skills;
- The homework should match the content taught in class;
- Teachers should give simple and clear instruction;
- Assign appropriate amount of homework each day;
- Ineffective and mechanical drills should be avoided; and
- Teachers should make good use of the homework as a tool for evaluation and feedback to enhance the motivation and effectiveness of learning.

### **Teaching Activities, Aids and Supporting Materials**

Teachers should design appropriate learning activities in line with the focus of teaching. On the basis of low starting point, small steps, diversified activities and instant feedback, teachers should encourage pupils to participate actively during the learning process to help master the skills and methods of collaborative learning. Diversified teaching activities such as situational teaching, competitions, collation of information, discussion, oral reporting, games, topical research, production of graphs/figures/models, role play, recording, visit and experiments may help pupils enhance their interest in learning, stimulate their thinking and reinforce the effectiveness of teaching. Teachers should exercise their discretion in the appropriate use of teaching aids. Appropriate teaching aids not only help to enhance pupils' interest in learning, but will also consolidate the knowledge they learned, thus

achieving the objective of teaching. Common teaching aids are concrete objects, figures, models, word cards, number cards and audio-visual equipments such as tape recorder, headset, wire free induction loop system and multimedia teaching aids, etc. When designing and using teaching aids, teachers should first consider their practical use and assess whether the aim of remedial teaching can be attained.

The design and organization of teaching materials should be pupil-oriented. They should be selected and collated systematically to serve the purpose. Teaching materials provided by the Education Department or other academic institutions may also serve as a reference for teachers.

## **Remedial Teaching Strategies**

### **Individualized Educational Programme (IEP)**

Geared to the learning needs of individual pupils, the Individualized Educational Programme aims to reinforce the foundation of learning, help pupils overcome their learning difficulties and develop their potentials. Individualized Educational Programme should include short-term and long-term teaching objectives, learning steps, activities and reviews to ensure that the programme is implemented effectively. Teaching can be done in small groups or for individual. If necessary, remedial teachers, other teachers, student guidance officers/teachers, parents and pupils alike are to participate in designing the programme. Remedial teachers hold meetings regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of work and gather opinions for refinement.

### **Peer Support Programme**

Remedial teachers may train up pupils who perform better in a certain subject to become 'little teachers' and who will be responsible for helping schoolmates with learning difficulties in group teaching and self-study sessions as well as outside class. Peer support programme helps pupils reinforce their knowledge, and develop their communication and cooperation skills as well as good interpersonal relationship. To enhance the effectiveness of the programme, remedial teachers must provide training to the pupils concerned beforehand and make regular reviews on its effectiveness. Generally speaking, this programme is more suitable for pupils of higher grades.

### **Reward Scheme**

The reward scheme has positive effect in enhancing pupils' motivation. It aims at guiding pupils to set their own objectives and plans, and positively reinforcing their good performance. No matter what reward is provided, the most important thing is to help pupils cultivate an interest in learning and gain a sense of satisfaction and achievement during the learning process. When designing the rewards offered, remedial teachers should take note of the following:

- Set clear and specific targets (for example: requirement on the score of dictation and number of assignments submitted);
- Set Achievable Objectives

- Give diversified rewards (including verbal commendation) or prizes to accommodate pupils'
- Review and revise the reward scheme regularly; and
- Invite parents to help children improve their work.

### **Handling pupils' behaviour problems**

Remedial teachers should observe the following when dealing with the behaviour problems of pupils:

- Always observe the performance of pupils in class and their behaviour in groups;
- establish close relationship with pupils, develop mutual trust and listen carefully to what they say
- Help pupils understand the effect of their behaviour on the other as well as their own selves
- keep in close contact with parents to find out the cause of pupils' behaviour problems;
- help pupils build up self-confidence and a healthy self-image;
- give positive reinforcement to pupils' good behaviour, and do not pay undue attention to their misbehavior
- do not try to change all the deviant behaviour of pupils at once. Teachers should list out the problems and set the priorities with an aim to improve one or two of them at a time;
- refer the cases to Student Guidance Officers/Teachers for follow-up action if the behaviour problems of pupils continue or become serious. If necessary, student guidance officers/teachers may refer the case to the Psychological Services Section of the Education Department for individual assessment and remedial services.

### **Assessment and Record on Learning**

Assessment plays a very important role in teaching and learning. By means of assessment, remedial teachers can know the learning progress as well as strengths and weaknesses of pupils; hence, they may design different teaching activities accordingly to help pupils learn in an effective manner. Besides, it is also a means to measure the discrepancy between Remedial Class Students pupils and ordinary pupils so that teachers may decide whether it is desirable for the pupil(s) concerned to withdraw from Remedial Class Students.

*The two most common assessment methods are listed as follows for teachers' reference:*

#### **Formative Assessment**

Teachers can understand and assess the learning abilities of pupils from their daily class work and homework as well as individual or group projects, such as model

making, drawing, information collection, measuring activities and the way they relate daily events to the topics they learnt in class, so that they can revise the teaching content accordingly.

### **Summative Assessment**

With reference to the progress of teaching, teachers may assess the performance of students by means of examinations/tests. The examination/test papers must cover all the main points in teaching where the levels of difficulty meet the pupils' abilities. The weighting of questions and marks should be balanced. Different types of questions should be included

### ***Colleges may have different forms and weightings of assessment.***

Remedial teachers should keep a detailed personal record for each pupil under Remedial Class Students. They should assess the progress of pupils regularly and systemically. A comprehensive record provides information on the learning progress of pupils and serve as a reference.

Teachers should pay attention to the response of pupils during classroom learning and make a record in the "Evaluation" column of the teaching plan to facilitate follow-up actions or changes in teaching strategies. In addition, teachers should make reference to the teaching objectives in evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, and revise their teaching plans according to the learning needs.

### **Liaison with Parents**

In order to help pupils with learning difficulties, Colleges must liaise closely with parents. Apart from providing guidance on homework to their children, parents also handle pupils' problems either by the same way or similar ways in line with the requirements of the school and their college work.

Some parents may have unrealistic expectation of their children's performance. In such cases, remedial teachers have to explain to the parents about the characteristics and abilities of pupils so that they may help their children to learn in a pleasurable manner. On the contrary, some parents' expectation may be too low. Teachers must then keep in contact with parents to help them understand their children and to provide appropriate guidance to develop the pupils' potentials.

Remedial teachers must keep in close contact with other teachers. They are encouraged to discuss or share their experiences with others to find out ways to improve pupils' learning and behavior. For example, they may discuss on the teaching plans, learning progress of pupils, test and examination questions, pupils' problem behavior and partial or total withdrawal of pupils from Remedial Classes.

Remedial teachers should also liaise with other related professionals to seek for professional support with a view to helping pupils solve their problems. Co-ordination with Other Teachers and Professionals is very important.



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