

ACTION PLAN

A Post-Graduate Teacher Training and Research Center

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Group Training Course in
Intellectual Disabilities
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ACTION PLAN

GOAL:

To establish a Post-Graduate Teacher Training and Research Center.

PHILOSOPHY and RATIONALE:

The philosophy behind the establishment of such a facility is based on two observed needs within the Jamaican educational system.

A. The first is the need for teachers, and especially teachers in special education, to develop a wide range of practical teaching skills.

At present, graduates of teachers' colleges in the special education option, receive one semester of teaching practice as part of the program for their diploma. This means that they enter the classroom with very little 'hands on' experience in working with children in the areas of their specialities. A one year practical teaching course, under the guidance of experienced special education teachers would better equip them for the classroom. The use of small classes in such an institution would allow for greater consolidation of theory and experimentation with new techniques.

Teachers can gain much knowledge through observing other teachers and in reflecting on their own experiences within the classroom. This post graduate facility would allow for such opportunities through the structure of the curriculum for the teachers. An integral part of the teachers' curriculum should be the completion of action research in their special fields. Training in this area would encourage teachers to be active researchers in the field of education and impact positively on their classroom practice. An extension of this aspect would be the publication of results and the discussion of techniques in a newsletter or journal.

An extension of the services of this center could be the provision of training, and the dissemination of theory driven research and information to teachers already in the field. The Ministry of Education recognizes the need for upgrading the skills of pre-trained teachers working within the education

system. The summer courses presently offered in this upgrading program could be enhanced with the inclusion of practical training in, and exposure to, specific topics in the area of special education. The Post-Graduate Training Facility could provide these courses. It is also possible that these courses could be made available to other professionals who work with special children such as social workers and nurses.

B. The second is the need for one or two year intensive academic intervention programs for children at risk in the early primary grades.

The Mico CARE Center assesses a number of children who are failing, or who are at risk of failing within the regular school system. It is felt that many of the children who fall within the slow learner range of intellectual abilities could benefit from early academic intervention programs. Such programs would focus on consolidating the basics needed for success in reading and mathematics. They could also facilitate the introduction and use of 'independent learning skills' among this group of learners.

At present, large class size and limited resources within many of the primary schools help to lessen the chances for the academic success of children with special needs. A facility which provides smaller classes with specially trained teachers and individual education plans could provide the assistance needed and at the right time.

It is felt that the two needs identified above can be met in the creation of an institution that allows for the merging of these two areas.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES:

- 1 Identify the number of persons leaving teachers' colleges with diplomas in Special Education.
2. Identify the needs of teachers who are already working with special children. A carefully structured questionnaire could provide the information required.

3. Identify skilled personnel from the educational, medical and social welfare fields who would be available to teach at this facility.
4. Ascertain the number of slow learners who would fit the established profile for inclusion in the proposed facility. This could be done by checking the referral lists of the Mico CARE Center.

OBJECTIVES:

General Objective:

To provide a facility which allows teachers to gain practical experience in working with special children within the slow learner range.

Specific Objectives:

To develop the teaching skills of trained teachers working with children with special needs.

To develop academic intervention programs for children at risk in the regular school system.

To prepare these children for re-entry into the regular school system.

METHOD:

- a. Training graduate teachers.
- b. Providing remedial assistance to special children.

Type : Institutional Project

ACTIVITIES:

Planning Activities.

Establish a Curriculum Committee to develop the curriculum for the graduate teachers.

Establish a Curriculum Committee to develop the educational philosophy that will guide program development for the children at the facility.

Budgeting

A cost analysis should be conducted to ascertain the level of funding that will be needed.

Establish a committee to garner financial support from the Government. This committee should also identify financial support among NGOs.

Monitoring

Establish a flow chart outlining the targets and time frame for each stage of the project. This chart should also serve as a monitoring device at the initial stages of implementation.

RESOURCES:

Manpower

- Trained and experienced Special Education teachers
- Part time university lecturers
- Part time lecturers in the field of Special Education
- Administrative staff

Equipment

- School furniture and fixtures
- Stationery
- Educational material and toys

Location

Attached to a Teachers' College. The Mico Teachers' College would be a suitable location as it offers a diploma in Special Education and it has access to the CARE Center and its assessment facilities and educational specialists.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of the benefit of the programs offered at the facility should be two- fold:

- a. Testing the teaching skill and knowledge of the teachers.

This should be done at the end of modules and semesters through observations, research projects and reflective exercises and surveys.

- b. Testing the readiness of the children for re-entry into regular schools.

This should be done through series of informal assessments.