

Name

School



Caribbean Studies

This research assignment was done to meet the requirements of the Caribbean Examinations Council as a part of the Caribbean Studies exam. The topic research was: “To what extent do private lessons impact the academic performance of a form six class.”

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Introduction to Research

RESEARCH TOPIC:

Education.

BACKGROUND:

The effect of private lessons has caused concern in the minds of some teachers in educational institutions. Some may argue that it is based on a money system; others may argue that it will aid students' in preparation for examinations. Success in examinations is a fundamental phase to open up possibilities to promote the lives of students in the approaching future and help them achieve their lifelong dreams.

Despite objection from some school teachers, private lessons are still becoming an escalating trend among examination students'.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

This research assignment focuses on the impact of private lessons and the influence they have on the lives and academic performance of the students of form six students located in Trinidad. The researcher will take into consideration that the opportunity to access private lessons can be influenced by academic, financial and social factors. This study will examine all aspects.

The impact of private lessons can be both negative and positive. This research project aims to explore whether private lessons benefit or interrupt students' from achieving their full potential.

It also aims to raise awareness of the role of private lessons and finally to investigate the reasons for students acquiring additional lessons.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

“To what extent do private lessons affect academic performance in a form six class?” The trend of private lessons in Trinidad is increasing significantly. This study will examine how students are affected as a result of private lessons. This study will also investigate the following objectives:

What is the reason for students taking lessons?

What are the consequences of taking lessons?

What is the cost for taking private lessons?

VALUE OF RESEARCH:

The researcher aims to answer the objectives outlined above. This study can have great educational value since lessons are becoming an escalating development and gaining knowledge of the background of this topic can give insight to the reasons for acquiring private lessons.

This study hopes to alert parents and students by understanding the reasons and consequences if any for acquiring lessons. Also teachers may gain insight as to why students take lessons and may need to amend their methods in the classroom to be of better service to students'.

This study also hopes to seek the awareness of the Ministry Of Education to deal with this situation and to develop policies to direct forthcoming legislation and control of private lessons.

TECHNICAL TERMS:

Academic Impact – The effect that influences the educational aspect of society.

Education – The art or process of acquiring or imparting knowledge or skills for a profession.

Educational Institutions – The institution or school in which teachers tend to educate students.

Financial Impact - The effect that influences the monetary aspect of society.

Private lessons – The extra teaching being offered to students after school hours.

Social impact – The effect that influences the human beings in a community.

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Literature Review

According to Dang & Rogers (2008), private lessons are identified as fee - based teaching that provides additional tuition to children for subjects they study in the “educational institutions”. Educational institutions are the places where teaching is supposed to take place. The teachers and the students mutually contribute in the classroom to achieve teaching. They explained the terms are such that in majority cases the students are required to do revision at home in order to enhance school education. It is done in the form of homework and learning what was asked by the school teachers. Dang and Rogers (2008) stated that studying at home requires teaching support, which sometimes the members of the family unit provides or outside help is often required and such support is sometimes provided free of cost or on most occasions on a payment basis. This means private lessons is on a payment-based tutoring support to the students outside official school hours (Nath, 2006).

According to Foondun (1992), private tutoring has shown that finances are a challenge in most households. One of the major challenges was discovered to be the high cost of lessons. This can be a foremost barrier because students already have the expense of school supplies such as uniform, books, shoes and other accessories needed during the school term. Foondun also outlined that some students’ may have additional cost of transportation to and from school. These expenses may be the reason for students not being able to attend lessons.

Professor Mark Bray (1999) called extra private lessons a “Shadow Education System”. He explained by stating private lessons only existed because the conventional education exists, by this he means education in schools. He also explained in almost all societies much more public attention focuses on the school teaching than on its shadow. He referred to private lessons as a shadow because it wasn’t the conventional method but relied on it. He went on to explain the features of the shadow system by saying lessons and school are different in terms of pace of work, type of work being taught and the method in which material is taught. He explains that the work may be taught faster in lessons allowing students to fully appreciate the work taught. Bray also discovered that lessons also reduce the workload of conventional teachers and help the students to understand the materials which have been taught during the school day. Bearing in mind all this information, there is a sense of balance between the negative and positive impacts of lessons in most cases. An important part of this study is to examine the social factors of

private lessons. An imperative social factor was found to be social stratification and little time spent on social activities.

According to Chief Education Officer, Olato Sam (March 2013), has stated in his article, *“Lessons have negative impact on children”* that extra lessons are having a negative impact on students, especially those preparing for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations. Sam asserted that extra lessons are now becoming a restraint to students progressing rather than contributing to their success. He also made public that parents are spending hard-earned money but lessons teachers are teaching things that are not associated with the things being taught in school, so the students are becoming more confused. Sam said that lessons teachers have students from different schools and they are doing their own thing. It’s time they restructure the lessons to ensure students get value for money. He complained about the need for cluster sessions for students preparing to write the CSEC exams to boost results but not fully understanding the work.

Raymond Hackett in his article in the Daily Express (September, 2009) *“Teacher Performance in Trinidad & Tobago”*, claimed that teachers in prestigious schools appear to be more effective because of the impact of private lessons and the fact that the more academically inclined students were assigned to these schools. In another article by Hackett (September, 2008) *“Education and Policy”*, he stated that in Trinidad and Tobago Education policy makers must now recognise and accept that schools today are not only working with children, but also with families and their household context. They must also take into consideration that schools no longer stand supreme due to competition from private schools and there is already the thriving and lucrative private lessons industry that has permeated all levels of our education system.

Data Collection Sources

In this research a questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire was used because it was a trustworthy scheme of collecting primary data directly from the respondents in an efficient method. It was also able to keep the identity of the respondents confidential. The questionnaire was given out to twenty students of forms six who were chosen selectively from 2 schools. The questionnaire was also a cheap method of gathering first hand data. Secondary sources were in the form of articles, online journals and books. These sources helped me to develop a better understanding of taking private lessons. Research done by Dang and Rogers (2008) was influential in the progression of formulating the questions for the questionnaire. They also highlighted the significance of the family unit in the life of a student. Similarly, Brunton (1997) gave the researcher insight into why students take private lessons. This information was extremely helpful in understanding more about the topic.

Presentation and Analysis of data

PRESENTATION OF DATA:

The data collected showed 86 % of respondents said they took lessons to enhance knowledge, 9% claimed that teachers do not teach properly and 5% indicated that parents said they had to.

Fig.1: Textbox showing the reasons for students taking lessons.

The text shows the reasons for taking lessons. 19 responses (86%) were to enhance knowledge, 2 responses (9%) were teachers do not teach properly in school and 1 response (5%) was parents said they had to.

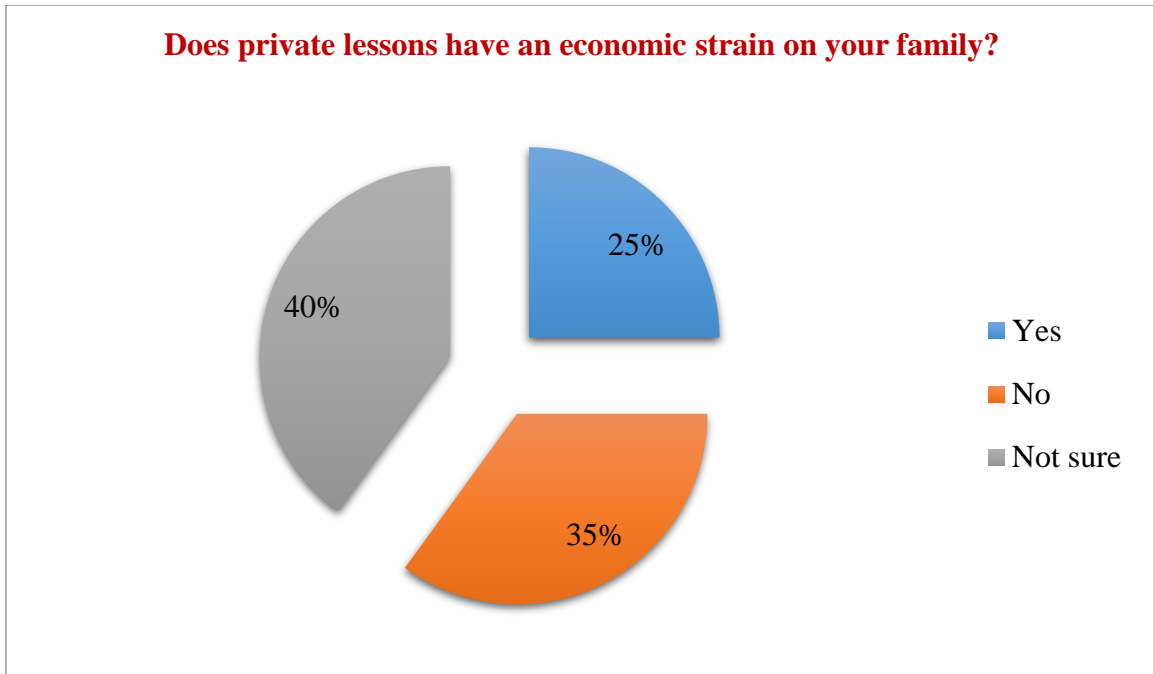


Fig.2: Pie Chart showing the percentage of students with an economic strain.

The chart above shows the percentage of students with an economic strain on their families. From the data obtained, 25% said yes, 35% said No and 40% was unsure.

Negative Effects of lessons	No. of Responses
Can't go to outings with family & friends	4
Can't Participate in extra-curricular activities	11
Too tired to study/do homework	17
Poor time management	13
Other: increased homework from lessons	1

Fig.3: Table showing the negative effects of lessons and the No. of responses.

The table above shows the negative effects of lessons. From the data, 4 responses were Can't go to outings with family & friends, 11 responses were Can't Participate in extra-curricular activities, 17 responses (Majority) were Too tired to study/do homework, 13 responses were Poor time management and 1 response was increased homework from lessons.

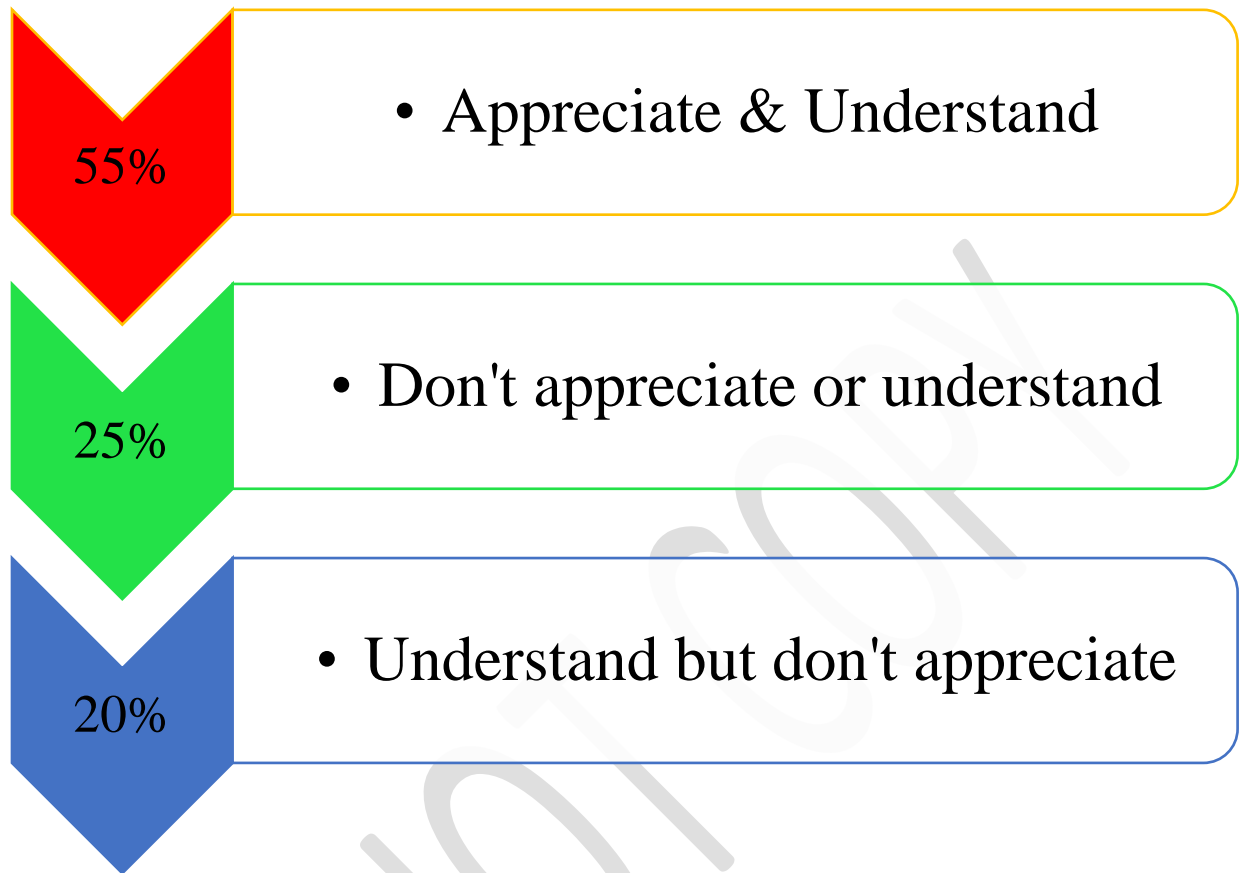


Fig.4: Diagram in descending form representing the percentage of students and their level of understanding & appreciation to the work taught in schools.

The descending diagram shows the percentage of students and their level of understanding to work taught in school. The majority (55%) appreciate & understand, 25% don't appreciate or understand and 20% understand but don't appreciate.

To gain money (70%)

To help weaker students (6%)

To finish syllabus (16%)

More Resources (4%)

Incompetence of school teacher (4%)

Fig.5: Smart chart showing the opinions of students as to why teachers give lessons.

The smart chart shows the opinions of students as to why teachers give lessons. The different colours show the different percentages and reasons:

To gain money being 70% (orange)

To finish syllabus being 16% (green)

To help weaker students being 6% (blue)

More resources being 4% (blue)

Incompetence of school teachers being 4% (blue)

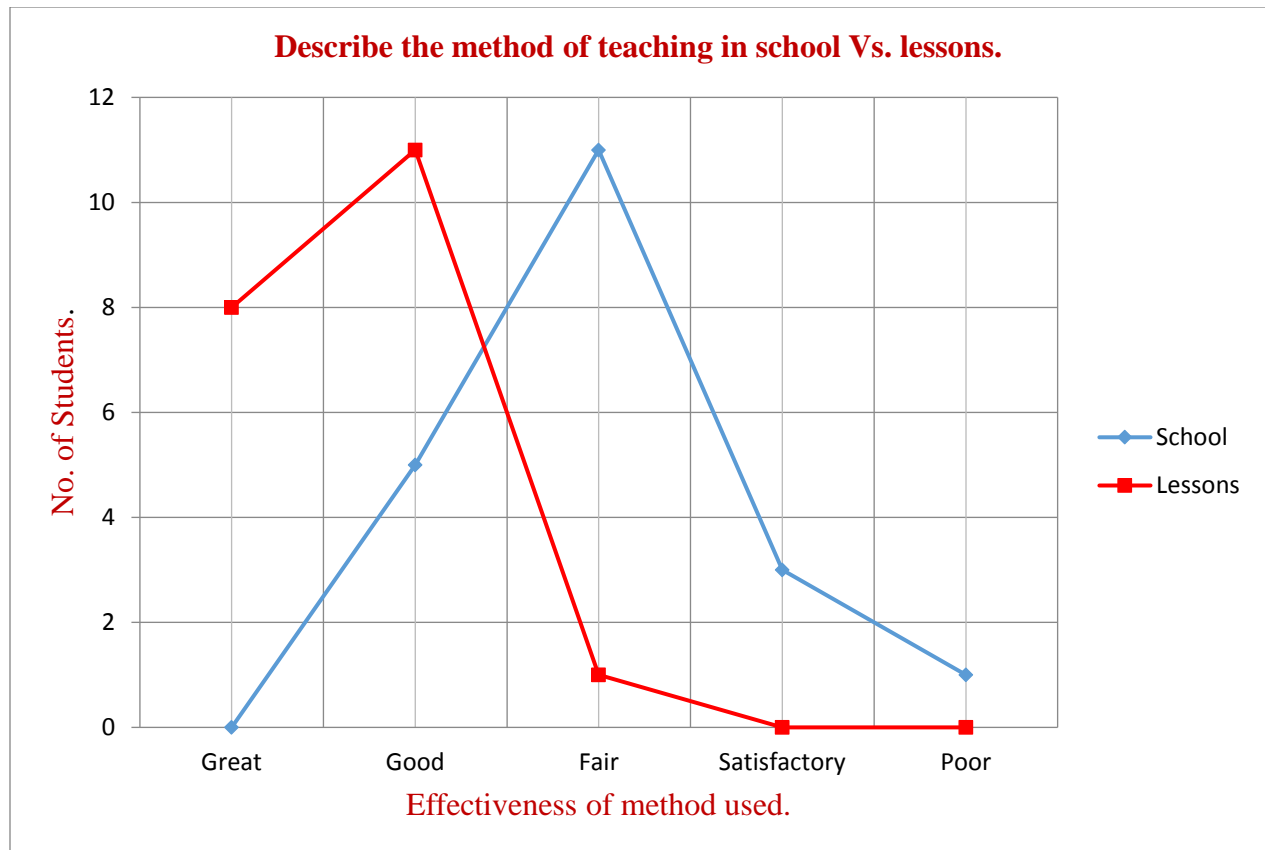


Fig.6: Line graph showing the comparison of the method of teaching style used in schools and lessons.

The line graph above compares the method of teaching style used in school to lessons. From the data related to school, no students said great, 5 said good, 11 (majority) said fair, 3 said satisfactory and 1 said poor.

From the data related to lessons, 8 said great, 11 (majority) said good, 1 said fair and none said satisfactory or poor.

ANALYSIS OF DATA:

The research data from Figure 1 showed the majority of students indicated that they take lessons to enhance knowledge. The number of respondents who went lessons because of parents or because of teacher's incompetence is significantly lower. Therefore the data reveals that most students take lessons to understand topics better than in school.

The data also shows from Figure 2 that the majority of responses for the negative effects of lessons indicated that students were too tired to do homework or study. This was found to be because of the late hours of lessons students were tired and couldn't do homework. There were also a high proportion of students indicating they couldn't participate in extra - curricular activities and poor management. These were the consequences of lessons revealed by the respondents. However the majority noted that these effects have no significant consequence on their academic performance.

From the data relating to Figure 3, the majority of respondents were unsure if lessons have an economic strain on their family, the minority of respondents indicated that lessons had an economic strain on their family. Therefore the data shows that while the majority was unsure, lessons do have an economic strain on a significant percentage of the responses.

In Figure 4, the majority of students (55%) claimed that they appreciated and understood the work taught in schools. The data found in this diagram was inconsistent because of the results from figure 1 which shows that the majority of students take lessons as a choice. This therefore is obvious that while the majority of students take lessons and they understand and appreciate the school work it is because of the lessons that cause them to understand.

An analysis of the data in Figure 5 shows the opinions of students on the reasons why teachers give extra lessons and the majority of responses (70%) were to gain extra money. The minority said it was because of the incompetence of the school teacher and they were able to access more resources from the lessons teacher. Based on this data, it gives insight into the reasons for teachers giving lessons. This opinion was made on the basis of how teachers teach in schools as opposed to in lessons.

From the data provided for figure 6, a comparison was made based on the collected data to show the method of teaching style used in schools and compare it to lessons. The data in relation to school revealed that the majority of respondents claimed it was fair while in lessons the majority claimed it was good. This data reveals that students prefer the method used in lessons.

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Discussion of Findings

The research indicated that 70% of teachers give lessons to gain money (refer to figure 5). This is supported by Dang and Rogers (2008) who distinctly identified that private lessons are done on a payment based tutoring support to students. This may prove to be a negative thing in such that the lessons teacher may only care about the money instead of actually teaching to the best of their ability and this will affect the students involved.

The research data also shows that 25% of students in the study were affected financially by the private lessons with 40% unsure and 35% not affecting (refer to Figure 2). This is in harmony to Foondun (1992) who indicated in his study that finances are a major challenge in most households, and this challenge also arises with private lessons with the possibility if a student can't afford to take lessons because of the high prices associated and may or may not have an impact on their academic performance.

The study also found support of Bray (1999) who argued that work may be taught faster in lessons and reduce the workload of conventional teachers. These findings were meaningful with this research because it generated similar data. Bray referred to lessons as a shadow in his study because it relied on schools to be successful. This entails that lessons are being manipulated as an unofficial education system in which most students are benefitting. This is also supported by Hackett (2009) when he claimed in his article that schools no longer stand supreme due to competition from lessons which have saturated our education system.

This study also concentrated on the impacts of private lessons comparative to academic performance. The data shows that the majority (17 responses) of students alleged that they were too tired to study or do homework. The other effects noted were can't participate in extra – curricular activities, poor time management, can't go to outings with family and friends and increased homework from lessons. However the majority of students outlined that these effects have no major consequence to declining their academic performance.

The research specifies that 55% of students understand and appreciate the work taught in schools, 25% don't understand or appreciate and 20% understand but don't appreciate (refer to Figure 4).

This is an anomaly to the information found by Bray that lessons allows all students to fully understand and appreciated what was taught. While the majority understood and appreciated, in this study the percentage that didn't understand or appreciate were not a small percentage and this contradicted Bray's study. This disparity of findings is due to this study being more recent, therefore yielding more accurate results.

The data found also explained that the dominant proportion of students preferred the method used in lessons to teach rather than in schools. The students rated the method used in schools with a majority saying it was fair, while in lesson the majority said it was good. It is evident that lessons received a higher rating than schools. This therefore implies that lessons have a positive impact on students' academic performance. This was contradicted by Sam (2013) when he said parents are spending their money on lessons but lessons teachers are not teaching things associated with the school and this may cause confusion in the mind of a student.

Conclusion, Limitations & Recommendations.

CONCLUSION:

The research indicated that private lessons is used an informal education system by countless students'. The study showed that while private lessons had its negative effects; it played no major declining of the students' academic performance. The majority of students outlined that the main negative effects was students being too tired to study or do homework. The study also showed that private lessons had positive effects which reflected on the academic grades of students'. It was discovered from the data that private lessons was used mainly to enhance knowledge.

LIMITATIONS:

This research had several limitations that must be considered. The research was limited by small sample size in which 20 questionnaires were given out and this restricted assumption of the study. The study could have been expanded to include a wider range of participants but it was an oversight on the part of the researcher and the timing at which study was conducted. This made it arduous to attain substantial relationships from the composed data because numerical requires a large sample size.

Some questions were left unanswered in the questionnaire. This caused difficulty in assembling the data.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The research should have been carried out at an earlier time frame to engage in a larger sample group which would yield more accurate results.

Further research of the impact of private lessons should be done especially in the lower forms of secondary schools and as well the primary education sector.

The Caribbean Examinations Council (C.X.C) along the various ministries of education should consider adjusting the different syllabi of the various subjects so that it can be covered in a more timely fashion so students and teachers could finish the syllabus in time for exams with more time to practise questions, so there would be no need for lessons.

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Appendix

Dear Respondent,

My name is Student name and I am a Lower six student of school. I would like your permission to answer the following questions in aid of completing my Caribbean Studies Internal Assessment: “To what extent do private lessons affect academic performance in a form six class?” I would like to request that you answer the questions honestly. I also want you to know that ALL answers would remain confidential and would not be shared with any other stakeholders.

Thank You,

Student Name.

Questionnaire

1. Gender:

- Male Female

2. Age:

- 13 – 16 17 - 19

3. Do you take lessons for any subjects? If yes, please List the subjects:

- Yes No

4. Why do you take private lessons? If other, please specify

- To enhance my knowledge Parents said I had to Peer Pressure

Other _____

5. Do you do revision at HOME based on studies at school?

- Yes No

6. How often do you do homework, projects and other assignments given by school teachers?

- Always Never Sometimes

7. How much hours a day do you spend studying on your own? (*Does not include lessons*)

- Less than 1 2 – 3 hours 3 or more

8. Do you get assistance from family members when doing studies, projects or revision?

- Yes No Sometimes

9. How much money do you spend a month on private lessons?

- \$250 or less \$300 - \$500 \$600 - \$1000 \$1000 or more

10. Do private lessons have an economic strain on your family?

- Yes No Not Sure

11. In your opinion, why do teachers give extra lessons?

12. How much days a week do you go to lessons?

- 1 2 3 4 or more

13. What are some of negative effects of lessons? If other, please specify (tick as many as apply)

- Can't go to outings with family & friends can't participate in extra – curricular activities
 Too tired to Study/do homework Poor Time Management
 Other _____

14. Does the negative effect(s) outlined above affect your academic performance in school? If yes, please specify.

- Yes No

15. If yes to 14.), what do you think can be done to solve this problem?

16. Do you think taking private lessons influence you in ANY positive way?

Yes No Maybe

17. If yes/maybe to 16.), please specify:

18. Do you do think more work is done in lessons than in school?

Yes No

19. Describe the method of teaching style in lessons. (5 – Great, 4 – Good, 3 – Fair, 2 – Satisfactory, 1 – Poor).

1 2 3 4 5

20. Describe the method of teaching style used in schools. (5 – Great, 4 – Good, 3 – Fair, 2 – Satisfactory, 1 – Poor).

1 2 3 4 5

21. Do you appreciate and understand the work taught in schools?

I understand & appreciate I understand but don't appreciate I don't understand or appreciate.

22. Do you think private lessons show social stratification in Trinidad and Tobago?

(Social stratification refers to a system by which a society ranks people into categories based on race, wealth etc.)

Yes No I don't know

23. Do you think students would do as great in examinations if private lessons didn't exist?

Yes No

24. Please explain your answer above.

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