

Introduction

This book must begin with some comments on focus and definition. The title refers to double-shift schooling. In a double-shift system, schools cater for two entirely separate groups of pupils during a school day. The first group of pupils usually attends school from early morning until mid-day, and the second group usually attends from mid-day to late afternoon. Each group uses the same buildings, equipment and other facilities. In some systems the two groups are taught by the same teachers, but in other systems they are taught by different teachers.

Some education authorities extend this model into a triple-shift system. Three groups of pupils study e.g. from 6.30 am to 10.55 am, from 11.00 am to 3.25 pm, and from 3.30 pm to 7.55 pm. A few education authorities also operate quadruple-shifts, though Chapter 1 will explain that these systems usually have overlapping rather than end-on shifts.

The first edition of this book was entitled *Multiple-Shift Schooling* rather than *Double-Shift Schooling*. This was to make clear at the outset that discussion focused on triple and quadruple shifts as well as on double shifts. However, the term multiple-shift schooling is not so familiar to many practitioners. With this in mind, the title of this second edition has been adjusted to use the more familiar term. The book does discuss not only triple and quadruple shifts but also single shifts. In the process, it analyses the advantages and disadvantages of different types of arrangements. However, the main focus is on double shifts.

Variations in Terminology

Further variations in terminology may also be noted at the outset. Single-shift schools, for example, may also be called:

- single-session schools,
- unisessional schools, and
- full-day schools.

Correspondingly, double-shift schools may also be called:

- double-session schools,
- bisessional schools, and
- half-day schools.

Sometimes the difference in terminology implies a difference in meaning, as noted in Box 1. This requires care when using terms in different contexts. However, in most contexts the terms can be used interchangeably. It is particularly common to interchange the terms 'shift' and 'session'.

Box 1: What's in a Name?

In most contexts, the terms single-session, single-shift, unisessional and full-day can be used interchangeably. The same applies to the terms double-session, double-shift, bisessional and half-day. But this is not always so. Examples from Botswana and Singapore demonstrate the point.

In *Botswana*, the term 'double-session' has been used to describe schools which have different pupils in the mornings and afternoons, but the same number of classroom hours as pupils in single-session schools, and different teachers for each session. 'Half-session' schools have been formed in Botswana with different pupils in the mornings and afternoons but in which total classroom hours are reduced, and the two groups are taught by the same teachers.

In *Singapore*, single-session schools operate on the traditional pattern from 7.30 am to 1.00 pm. They are different from 'full-day' schools, which were an experiment (now abandoned) in the early 1980s. Full-day schools had an extended curriculum, and did not close till 3.30 pm.

These terminological distinctions are not found in all countries. It is therefore necessary to check the precise meanings of terms in different contexts.

Some countries also have evocative unofficial terminologies. In Zimbabwe, double-session schooling is also called 'hot seating' because the school seats are said never to have time to cool down! And staff in Mexico have been known as 'taxi teachers' because many jumped straight into taxis at the end of each morning session in order to teach afternoon sessions elsewhere. In South Africa and Namibia, double-shift schooling is called 'platooning'. This seems to imply a sort of military-style regimentation.

What are the Purposes of Double-Shift Schooling?

The main purpose of double-shift schooling is to increase the supply of school places while avoiding serious strain on the budget. Introduction of double shifts allows a single set of buildings and facilities to serve more pupils. This may be especially important in urban areas, where land is scarce and buildings are expensive. Double-shift schooling has helped many countries to move towards universal primary and secondary education.

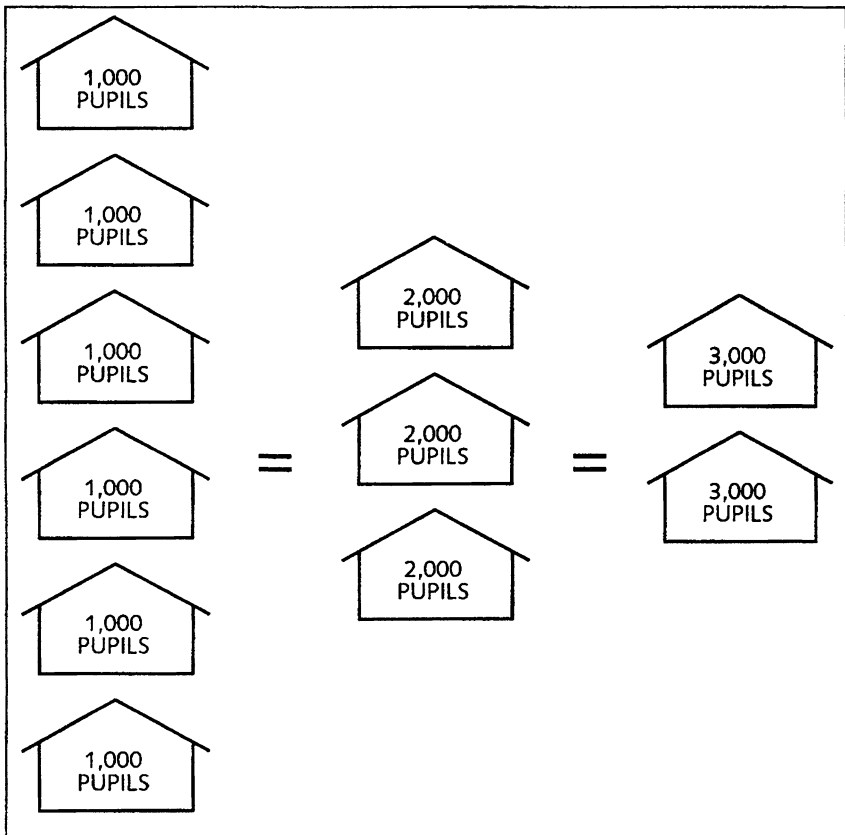
Double-shift schooling may also have subsidiary functions:

- Expansion of the number of school places broadens access. This helps governments to achieve goals of social equity.
- Where there is a shortage of teachers, staff may be encouraged to teach in more than one session. Double-shift schooling may enable the authorities to make better use of scarce human resources.
- When staff teach in more than one session, they usually have higher earnings. Double-shift schooling allows teachers to increase their incomes, and reduces the political tension that arises from low basic salaries.
- In many societies, some children are too poor to spend the whole day in school. They cannot afford the school fees, and they cannot afford to lose the incomes they could gain from working. Double-shift schooling reduces costs, so can also reduce school fees. It also allows pupils to work for more hours in the day, and thus to earn money to support themselves and their families while also enrolling in a school. Systems which have evening shifts can cater for pupils who have to work during the day.
- If enrolment rates are already high, double-shift schooling may be introduced to reduce overcrowding. The system can permit reduction of class size, and can also alleviate pressure on sports facilities, libraries, school canteens, etc.

However, multiple-shift schooling may also create problems. The school day, especially in triple-session systems, is often shortened. This implies that quality is being sacrificed for quantity – that pupils are losing some classroom teaching and extra-curricular activities. Also, if teachers work in more than one session, they are likely to be tired. This can cause a further deterioration in quality. And multiple-shift systems are sometimes accused

of causing social problems because children are only occupied in school for shorter periods and so have more time to roam around the streets and cause trouble.

In the view of many people, these problems outweigh the benefits. Public opinion often opposes introduction of double shifts on the grounds that the system can save money but creates educational and social problems. However, this book will point out that such opinion is not always valid. Double-shift systems require more careful and balanced consideration than they often receive.



A single-shift system might require six schools to accommodate 6,000 pupils. But a double-shift system would require only three schools, and a triple-shift system would require only two schools. Multiple-shift schooling can permit considerable savings of buildings and land.

Box 2: A Model for Poor Countries or Rich Ones?

Double-shift schooling is most common in poor countries. Financial pressures in these countries are so severe that administrators are forced to investigate all ways to minimise costs. But all administrators wish to maximise cost-effectiveness. For this reason, double shifts may also be found in rich countries. Singapore is one example.