

Chapter 8

Quality

Chapter 4 pointed out that double-shift schools are not necessarily qualitatively inferior to single-shift schools. Indeed, if the choice is between single-shift schools with huge classes and congested facilities or double-shift schools with smaller classes and a more personal atmosphere, the double-shift schools may actually be better.

Nevertheless, educators raise many legitimate concerns about the quality of double-shift schooling. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on ways that their concerns may be met. It looks first at the main curriculum, then at extra-curricular activities, and thirdly at links between school and home.

1. The Main Curriculum

As noted in Chapter 4, double-shift systems are threatened by many qualitative problems. Seven possible strategies to deal with these problems are particularly worth highlighting.

1. *Increase the number of school days.* One way to compensate for a shortened school day is to increase the number of days in the academic year. Thus double-shift schools in Senegal have 10 extra school days in the academic year, and double-shift schools in Hong Kong operate on alternate Saturday mornings.
2. *Improve teaching methods.* Arrangements to lengthen the school term and week will generate little benefit if the quality of teaching is poor and if children are bored. Authorities should therefore try hard to ensure that lessons are lively and meaningful. Improvements may be achieved through strengthened supervision and support systems, pre-service and in-service training, better teaching aids, etc.. These inputs are needed in all systems, but may be especially desirable in double-shift systems in order to compensate for the constraints that double shifts impose.

3. *Improve the efficiency of the system.* In many systems, official teaching hours are rather different from actual teaching hours. Especially in the rural parts of poor countries, teachers who are inadequately supervised start school late and finish school early. The real school day, therefore, is even shorter than it appears at first sight. Authorities may be able to improve efficiency by strengthening supervision. If distances prevent central authorities from checking rural schools, the task can perhaps be delegated to community members on Boards of Management.
4. *Encourage out-of-school learning.* The classroom is not the only place in which students learn. Even in traditional single-shift systems, pupils are usually given homework. In double-shift systems they can be given more homework. Of course, homework needs to be corrected. But this does not always have to be done by the teachers. Education authorities can design self-teaching materials. Alternatively, they can design materials for group work and peer correction. Research has demonstrated that pupils often learn a great deal when they correct the work of their peers. Peer-teaching can therefore be an effective educational strategy as well as a way to reduce the workload for the teachers.

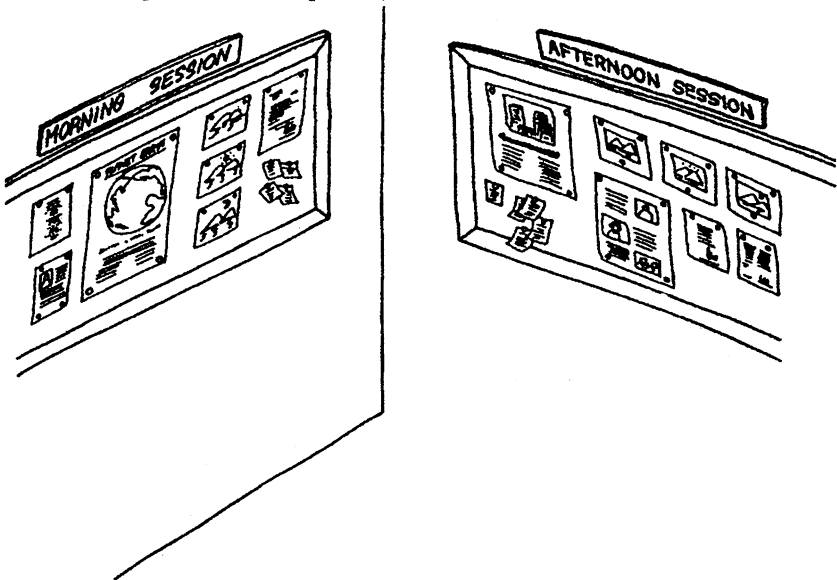
Authorities may also invest in public libraries, and may encourage establishment of study areas in mosques, churches, temples, community halls, etc.. The facilities may cater for pupils whose homes are too crowded or noisy for private study, but who cannot stay on the school compound because it is occupied by the other shift.

5. *Give schools at least one extra room* which is not in constant use for regular lessons. The room can then be used for remedial or other work outside the hours of a particular shift. Many teachers stay on the school compound after the morning shift or come long before they have to commence lessons for the afternoon shift. The teachers are often happy to conduct extra individual and group work with pupils who need it; but they need space to do it in.
6. *Ensure that teachers make full use of classroom walls* for display purposes. Good use of walls to display supplementary lesson material and pupils' work is one of the key indicators of a lively and effective teaching process. Posters and other colourful items brighten the atmosphere, encourage pupils' sense of belonging to their classrooms, and promote learning outside lesson time.

Wall space in double-shift schools is often neglected. Because classrooms are used by two or more sets of pupils, teachers and pupils have less feeling of ownership of those classrooms. They may fear that displays put up by one set of pupils will be damaged by the other set. Teachers may also fear that wall displays will confuse pupils of the other shift. This is especially likely when the different shifts cater for pupils of different grades. Thus, if a classroom caters for Grade 4 in the morning and Grade 1 in the afternoon, teachers may fear that the Grade 4 pupils will find Grade 1 wall displays too juvenile, and that the Grade 1 children will find the Grade 4 displays too complex.

Teachers may also be sensitive about each others' work. If one teacher puts up many displays and the other puts up nothing, interpersonal relationships may be uncomfortable. Ideally, a good example by one teacher would improve the work of the other. But sometimes the good teacher gets discouraged, and in the end nothing is put up by either teacher.

Failure to put up wall displays is a missed opportunity for qualitative improvement. Especially when the two sessions serve pupils of



Wall displays brighten the classroom atmosphere and promote learning outside lesson time. When classrooms are shared by two or more shifts, teachers should divide up the wall space between them. Children can learn a lot by looking at the displays of the other shifts.

the same grade, children can learn a lot from each others' displays. In this respect, the double-shift system could actually be beneficial. The morning shift of Grade 4 may gain reinforcement by looking at the wall displays of the afternoon shift of Grade 4 as well as by looking at their own.

7. *Ensure that staff rooms are large enough.* Ideally, all teachers should have their own desks, whether they work in the morning or the afternoon sessions. If staff have their own desks, they will be more willing to come early or stay late, to undertake thorough preparation of lessons, etc.. If space is so constrained that morning staff must share desks with afternoon staff, the authorities should at least try to provide a few spare desks for displaced teachers.

Box 17: The Extra Problems of Inspecting Double-Shift Schools

Double-shift schools are sometimes 'short-changed' in inspections. This happens for two reasons:

- In many systems, the morning and afternoon shifts are considered part of a single school supervised by one headteacher. The schools are often very large, and it is difficult to assemble correspondingly large teams of inspectors to conduct full evaluations. The inspectorate may neglect double-shift schools, instead concentrating on smaller schools which are less demanding.
- The hours of schooling may not match the normal hours for inspections. For example, the normal working hours for inspectors might be 8.00 am to 4.00 pm. Inspectors could easily assess the morning shift, but might neglect at least the second half of the afternoon shift.

This type of problem requires careful attention from the authorities. It can easily be solved by making a special effort to form large teams and by adjusting the inspectors' working hours when necessary. But it may require this special effort.

2. Extra-Curricular Activities

Chapter 4 also highlighted the problems facing extra-curricular activities in double-shift schools. Table 8 presents some possible solutions to these problems.

Table 8: *Extra-Curricular Activities – Problems and Possible Solutions*

Problems	Solutions
School compounds are too crowded. There is no space for extra-curricular activities.	Conduct activities outside school compounds. Use community facilities for football, drama, music, etc.. Organise visits to museums, factories, country parks and so on.
Drama, group music and sports teams cannot be formed for the whole school because when some pupils are free, the others are studying.	(a) Designate one day a week on which morning classes finish an hour early and afternoon classes start an hour late; or (b) hold activities on Saturday mornings (if there are no classes that day).
Teachers who serve more than one shift have to rush from one shift to the next.	Ask senior pupils, parents or other members of the community to supervise extra-curricular activities.
The school compound is large enough, but some activities (e.g. music practice) disturb pupils who are studying	Find a place outside the compound or, if sufficiently prosperous, construct a sound-proof room.

This list shows that few obstacles to effective extra-curricular activities in double-shift schools are insurmountable. If staff make the effort to find ways round the obstacles, extra-curricular activities in double-shift schools can be at least as good as those in single-shift schools. Indeed in some respects they may be even better, for, as noted in Chapter 4, the larger population of double-shift schools makes it easier to justify investments in basketball courts, musical instruments, sports equipment, etc..

3. Links between School and Home

The home environment is a third determinant of educational quality. If children spend more hours at home because of a double-session system, the home environment becomes more important.

This fact implies that double-shift schools may need especially strong Parent-Teacher Associations and other bodies for liaison between school and home. These bodies need to address such questions as:

- *Use of Out-of-School Time.* Do pupils waste their time hanging around on the streets or watching too much television when they could be doing other things? How can parents help children with

Box 18: Using Saturdays for Extra-Curricular Activities

Many double-shift schools have little time for extra-curricular activities on Mondays to Fridays. They therefore make use of Saturday mornings.

This system has the strong advantage that sports teams, Scout and Guide troops, school choirs, etc. can be recruited from all shifts. Apart from enlarging the pool of talent, the arrangement helps to promote pupils' identity with the whole school rather than with just their particular shifts.

One problem, is that school compounds may not be large enough to accommodate all pupils at the same time. To deal with this difficulty, many schools organise activities in rotation. Staff only ask pupils to come when the pupils are actually involved in activities on that particular day.

their studies? Homework may become even more important in a double-shift system than in a single-shift system.

- *Sleeping Times.* When should the afternoon-shift pupils do their homework? Should they do it the same evening, even though they may be tired and may be distracted by other family activities? If so, they may go to bed late, knowing that they can also get up late since they do not have to go to school until mid-day. Or should the children go to bed early, and do their homework the following morning? If they do this, their minds may be fresher; but there may be fewer adults available to supervise and help them.
- *Waking Times.* Teachers often complain that because the morning shift starts quite early, children come to school without having eaten proper breakfasts. Pupils in the morning shift often need to get up before anybody else in the family, with the result that they are inadequately cared for.
- *Changing Shifts.* In order to make the system more fair, some education authorities like to alternate pupils between shifts. It is essential in these cases for the authorities to inform parents and other family members.

Many of these measures to improve quality are of course desirable in *all* systems; but they may be especially important in double-shift systems.