

Chapter 7

Staffing and Management

Introduction of double-shift systems may raise major questions of staffing and management. Policy-makers have to decide whether staff should be shared among shifts, and practitioners have to find ways to make systems work efficiently and effectively. Management is particularly challenging in overlapping shift systems.

1. Staffing Double-Shift Systems

(a) Headteachers

In some countries double-session schools have only one headteacher, but in other countries they have two. Which type of system is better?

The answer to this question depends on the viewpoint of the observer, for each type of system has good and bad sides. The advantages of one system are mirrored as disadvantages in the other.

Advantages of having only one headteacher:

- The headteacher can guide the operation of the whole school. She/he can transfer pupils and staff from one session to another, can supervise maintenance of facilities, can avoid duplication of purchases for morning and afternoon sessions, and can encourage the growth of an overall school spirit.
- The morning session might be more prestigious. Education authorities might find themselves pressed to appoint the best headteachers to morning sessions, leaving the afternoon sessions with the second-best staff. This is avoided if there is only one headteacher.
- Parents who have children in both sessions can approach a single headteacher to discuss problems.
- The school has more flexibility in class organisation. For example, it would be difficult for a school with two headteachers to have

Grades 2, 4 and 6 studying in the morning and Grades 1, 3 and 5 studying in the afternoon. Such a system would lack continuity, for headteachers would “lose” their pupils when they were promoted each year to the other session, and would then “regain” them the year after.

- If separate sessions each have their own headteachers, the education authorities have to find a large number of appropriate individuals for these senior posts. If both sessions are combined under one head, the demand for talented headteachers is not so great. The system is less threatened by limitations in the supply of good leaders.

Disadvantages of having only one headteacher:

- The working hours may be very long – from the beginning of the morning session to the end of the afternoon session. The long day could be very exhausting, and the headteacher might not do the job well.
- In most systems, the salary for a headteacher of a large school is greater than the salary for a headteacher of a small school. In addition, supplementary payments might be necessary to compensate for the long working hours; and in large schools it is essential to appoint deputy headteachers. The system might be more costly than the alternative of having two lower-level headteachers for separate sessions.
- Headteachers in charge of both sessions have many staff and pupils, and cannot know individuals so well. Headteachers of separate sessions can know their teachers and pupils better.
- The number of promotion posts is smaller. A system which has separate headteachers for separate sessions has a larger number of promotion posts.

These advantages and disadvantages have been presented here from the angle of a single headteacher for a whole school. In most cases, the opposite advantages and disadvantages apply to systems which have separate headteachers for each session. The decision on which system is most appropriate will depend on the preferences of the education authorities concerned.

Box 15: Pairing Headteachers – Tips from an Educational Administrator

When double-session schools have separate headteachers for each session, the schools often suffer from poorly organised maintenance of buildings and equipment. Headteachers may also find it difficult to liaise over the employment of ancillary staff.

One experienced administrator in Hong Kong uses two strategies to reduce these problems:

- Knowing the personalities of her staff, she avoids placing two strongly competitive headteachers in the same school. She looks for one individual with strong leadership qualities, and then for another person who will accept the leadership of the first one.
- She instructs the headteachers to draw up clear divisions of responsibility. For example, one may take charge of typists while the other takes charge of cleaners, maintenance and security.

(b) Teachers

Chapters 1 and 3 pointed out variations in systems for utilisation of teachers. Staff may teach in:

- only one session,
- the whole of one session and part of another,
- in part of two (or more) sessions, or
- in the whole of two (or more) sessions.

The choice of system partly depends on (i) whether or not there is a shortage of teachers, (ii) whether or not the teachers' union agrees that staff should work in more than one session, (iii) whether the sessions are short or long, and (iv) whether schools have one headteacher for all sessions or separate headteachers for separate sessions. Sharing of teachers is particularly common in triple-shift systems because the sessions are short. Sharing is less common when separate sessions have separate headteachers, because the framework imposes practical difficulties.

The extent of teacher sharing also depends on the specialisms of the staff. For example, while there is usually enough work in single sessions for teachers of English, mathematics and social studies, this is less likely to be true for teachers of music, home economics and technical drawing. Specialist teachers are often asked to take classes in the second half of morning sessions and the first half of afternoon sessions.

Staff may also work across sessions when supervising extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils from both/all sessions may jointly participate

in football matches, music competitions, athletics, field expeditions, etc..

Box 16: How do Teachers view Double-Shift Systems?

The attitudes of teachers are of course a crucial determinant of the success or failure of double-shift systems. If teachers like or are at least prepared to cooperate with the systems, then the machinery can work smoothly. But if teachers feel over-worked, inadequately compensated and professionally frustrated, then the innovation is unlikely to be successful.

This highlights the need for policy-makers to be realistic in their expectations. Many teachers like half-day schooling because they retain the same basic salary but have more free time for their own affairs. Teachers may also like the opportunity to increase their incomes through extra teaching in a second shift. However, teachers sometimes feel frustrated by the professional constraints that double shifts impose, and staff in tropical countries are unenthusiastic about teaching on hot afternoons.

(c) Ancillary Staff

Many double-shift schools which have separate teachers for separate shifts nevertheless have single teams of typists, cleaners, nightwatchmen, cooks, messengers and other ancillary staff. This may permit a substantial saving of salaries.

This type of system may require special arrangements to ensure that duties are covered appropriately. Take, for example, a country in which normal working hours for clerical staff are 8.00 to 4.00 pm. A double-session school might operate from 7.30 am to 5.30 pm. This implies:

- either that the school office is closed for part of the school day (and that the afternoon session suffers more severely than the morning one),
- or that the clerical staff themselves work on an overlapping shift system, with one or more staff arriving early and then leaving early, while others arrive later and leave later.

2. Managing Double-Shift Systems

Many of the challenges and techniques of management have already been mentioned. However, it is useful to make several additional points.



single shift



**end-on
double shift**



**multiple
overlapping
shift**

The problems of school management greatly increase when extra shifts are added. Overlapping shift systems are the most difficult to manage.

It will have become obvious that management tasks are more challenging in double-shift schools than in single-shift ones. This is true in end-on double-shift schools, but is even more true of overlapping double-shift schools. Chapter 6 highlighted a school in the Philippines that had 8,300 pupils in four overlapping shifts. Management of this school must be an extremely difficult task.

This fact has implications for recruitment and training. Before a double-shift system is introduced or extended, authorities would be wise to check whether they have a sufficient supply of appropriate people to run the schools. They might also wish to organise short training courses to discuss ways of:

- deploying teachers between shifts,
- deploying ancillary staff between shifts,
- promoting a feeling of school unity
in institutions divided between two or more shifts,
- managing movement of students, especially
 - in end-on shifts at the times of change-over, and
 - in overlapping systems when two or more groups are on the campus together,
- ensuring that extra-curricular activities are given appropriate attention,
- adapting the main curriculum (if it is necessary to reduce daily teaching time), and
- liaising with parents over such matters as nutrition, safety in travel to and from school (especially if the shift system requires travel during hours of darkness), rotation of shifts, etc..

Such training courses might last for only a week, or they might be longer. Leadership could be provided by headteachers and their assistants who have themselves run double-shift schools and have found solutions to the difficulties.