

## Ian Collingwood

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The following chapters from the book are available:

- [Chapter 1](#) MULTICLASS TEACHING: A summary of points for and against multiclass teaching
- [Chapter 2](#) YEAR GROUP COMBINATIONS: Some possibilities for multiclass teachers and head-teachers to consider
- [Chapter 3](#) ORGANISING YOUR CLASSROOM: Efficient organization is always important - particularly in multiclassrooms
- [Chapter 4](#) PLANNING: Careful planning of work is the key to success for multiclass teachers
- [Chapter 5](#) CLASSROOM ROUTINES: The life saver of the multiclass teacher and how to set them up
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## CHAPTER 1

When multiclass teachers sit down and discuss their work with colleagues in similar situations, they usually find they have many problems in common. On the other hand, they also find the advantages of this way of teaching.

Here is a summary of points which multiclass teachers all over the world sometimes raise:

### **DIFFICULTIES OFTEN FACED BY MULTICLASS TEACHERS IN SMALL SCHOOLS**

Too many students in the classroom: some successful multiclass teachers feel a total of about 30 children in the classroom is the maximum possible to be effective as a teacher.

Classroom too small and crowded: efficient small-group work is not easy in a small, poorly-equipped room.

General shortage of teaching & learning resources -supplementary reading books, text books, library, audio-visual aids, art and craft materials etc. An adequate supply of the correct text books for each year is an essential requirement.

Reduced instructional time: teachers have less contact-time with children in basic subjects and so fall behind in the work planned.

Ineffective learning activities for one year-group while the teacher is busy with the other.

Distraction to the year-group working on its own -from the teaching to the other year group. They may listen to humorous incidents, or new subject matter and lose concentration.

Most curriculum materials designed for one year group only -e.g. maths: no maths book or teacher's guide is specifically written for a combined Year 1 + 2.

Lack of self-instructional materials: most curriculum materials, textbooks etc., unsuitable for unsupervised study by children. Children cannot easily get on on their own.

Exam pressures force teachers to concentrate on exam classes only, neglecting other year-groups.

Inadequate pre -and in-service teacher-training in the specific skills related to multiclassrooms.

Wide range of abilities and interest-levels in one classroom.

Parents worry about their children's progress and have little confidence in the teacher.

Not surprisingly, bearing in mind some of the concerns outlined above, there are teachers who fall into the trap of treating their two or more year- groups as completely separate groups who just happen to be in the same room.

They thus try to be at least two class teachers at the same time.

The children are kept completely apart all day. The classroom often has a big partition between the year groups and sometimes teachers even find a spare classroom, spending their day running from one room to the other. This cannot be efficient. The poor teacher is struggling to do his or her best and the children are bound to be under-achieving.

We will be looking later at how to improve this.

## **SOME ADVANTAGES OF MULTICLASS TEACHING IN SMALL SCHOOLS**

Very small schools, in particular those using a multiclass system, can meet better the needs of the individual child in his or her school work.

Children often develop healthier social relationships and more positive attitudes. They get on better with others, both children and adults.

Smallness provides a sense of belonging, where each individual is valued for his or her unique qualities. In the big schools, the individual can easily be lost in the crowd.

The same teacher teaches the same group of children each year. The teacher gets to know the child better as an individual and is thus able to give him the right kind of help and guidance.

Good multiclass teachers do not use just the chalk & talk style of teaching. They have to be flexible and use other excellent teaching- methods- individualised instruction, independent study, team-teaching, group project work, cross-age peer-group help etc. They become better all-round teachers, capable of tackling a wide variety of situations.

These flexible methods encourage children to be independent and to find out about things for themselves: they gain the skills and attitudes of "learning to learn".

It brings together children of different ages and development in a learning environment, which mirrors society and how it learns. This produces a more natural learning situation: for example, older children naturally help younger ones

In a sense, all teaching is multiclass teaching. Even in a straight class with just one year group, there is always a considerable range of interests, abilities, maturity and needs. No two children can be considered as being at the same level in all areas. In the multiclass situation this range is simply wider.

We could say, then, that all teachers in all classrooms should consider themselves multiclass teachers!

We could also say that if you can improve your effectiveness as a multiclass teacher, your new skills will be just as useful if you later find yourself in the straight class situation again.

## **CHAPTER 2**

Head teachers, often multiclass teachers themselves, in small primary schools, have to decide how best to combine their classes, to make the most efficient use of the teachers posted to their school. If you are the head teacher it is important to:

study the total numbers in your school and the trends in future enrolments in Year One.  
look carefully at the level of training, the competence and the attitudes of your teachers, as well as at their previous experience -in straight or multiclass- to check:

Which teachers have experience of teaching the year groups concerned?

Which teachers have received special in-service training for multiclass teaching?

What are the views -the hopes and fears! - of the teachers themselves?

Which straight class teachers in your school have special interests or talents that could be tapped to support the multiclass teacher through timetabled exchanges for certain subjects?

What is the advice of your district's education adviser? He or she may know more about that new teacher joining your staff next term and would be pleased to try to help you reach a wise decision

## **WHAT MAKES A GOOD MULTICLASS TEACHER?**

Successful multiclass teachers are people who like to be well organised and enjoy hard work! They need to be ready to try out new ideas and be flexible in their approach. They need to believe in the importance of creating a co-operative, family- type atmosphere in the classroom they should also have the ability to build solid, close relationships with the community so that, in time, parents will come to believe more strongly in the positive value for their child of the multiclass situation

All these possibilities, circumstances, skills, and attitudes must be weighed to arrive at the best combination of year groups in your school.

Here are some approaches:

### **SCHOOLS WITH YEARS 1 TO 4**

#### **Case A: A year 1 -4 school with one teacher**

Here you have a school with just the one classroom:

If the total number of children is small, you could group the class into three, like this:

small ones	- the newcomers (year 1 )
middle ones	- the year 2 and 3 children
big ones	- the older, more mature children capable of some working without the teacher, mostly year 4.

Every year the class would gain new Year Ones and lose Year Fours. This can work well in a very small school.

On the other hand, especially if total numbers in this one-teacher school are tending to increase, it might be best to admit new children to Year 1 only every two years, not every year. This is known as alternate year entry or biennial intake. In this way you avoid the considerable problems of teaching a large class of more than two groups. Alternate Year Entry is also often the best answer when the pattern of enrolment is uneven (e.g. very small numbers one year, more the next year, and so on).

For a Year 1 to Year 4 School with one teacher, using the Alternate Year Entry system, the pattern might look like this:

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
1990	Class		Class	
1991		Class		Class
1992	Class		Class	
1993		Class		Class

In 1990 you have combine Year 1 + 3 to teach.

In 1991 you have Year 2 + 4 to teach.

In 1992 you have Year 1 + 3 to teach.

In 1993 you have Year 2 + 4 to teach.

Of course, this system means that the age of entry of Year 1 will vary a little. In countries where entry age is six years old, children would have to wait until they are seven years old to begin Year 1. That new Year 1 would then, of course, have six-year olds and seven-year olds in it.

You certainly have a challenging task as a teacher. You always have children of very different ages and abilities in the classroom. Also, every year you must change from one work programme to the other.

Alternate Year Entry has to be carefully explained to parents if they are to accept and support its use. Naturally enough, parents are worried initially about the delayed start in Year 1. You will need to make time available to meet parents to explain the system and to reassure them that their children will not be left behind!

Alternate Year Entry is often used in areas of low population where there are simply not enough children to justify starting a whole new Year 1 every year. In Australia, for example, 11 is the minimum number of children needed to start a Year 1.

Starting a Year 1 class only every two years is sometimes the sole way a small school can be allowed to stay open.

### **Case B: Year 1 to 4 School with two teachers**

This school has two classrooms working

Alternate Year Entry is not usually needed in this situation. It is normally best to teach Year 1 + 2 together, and Year 3 + 4 together. You have two year- levels in the classrooms but they are closer together. There is more opportunity for combined activities, to which both groups can contribute equally well.

Such a school would work like this:

1990: Teacher One (Years 1 and 2) .....Teacher Two (Years 3 and 4)

1991 - New Entrants - Year 2 moves to Year 3 - Year 4 leaves school

The same pattern repeats itself every year. With this system, the students move from one year group to the next every year, but stay of course with each teacher for two years.

### **SCHOOLS WITH YEARS 1-6**

#### **Case C: A Year 1 -6 school with one teacher**

Here we have a tiny school with only one classroom and one teacher, but the whole age-range of children.

You could divide the children into three groups, broadly Years 1-2, Years 3-4 and Years 5-6. This grouping could be based largely on age, but maturity and ability could be factors too. A one-teacher school with such a wide range of ages can work efficiently, but only if the total number of children is quite small.

In some of our Pacific countries, the age-range is even wider than in this example from Vanuatu. In Kiribati, we find that primary schools go up to Year 8 so the age-range for one teacher in a very small school can be enormous!

**Case D: A Year 1 -6 school with two teachers**

1990 Teacher One (Years 1, 2, 3) Teacher Two (Years 4,5,6)

1991 New Entrants Year 3 moves to Year 4 Year 6 leaves school

The school has two classrooms operating. The children move from one year-group to the next every year, but will stay with the teacher for three years.

**Case E: A Year 1 -6 school with three teachers**

Teacher One TeacherTwo Teacher Three

1990 Years 1 + 2 Years 3 + 4 Years 5 + 6

1991 New Entrants Year 2 moves to Year 3 Year 4 moves to Year 5 Year 6 leaves school

Here, the school has three classrooms operating. Again the children move from one year group to the next every year, but of course stay with each teacher for two years.

Each teacher always has a multiclass to teach.

It is possible to use the Alternate Year Entry system here too. Then each teacher would teach only one year group. The pattern would look like this:

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total classes
1990	Class		Class		Class		3
1991		Class		Class		Class	3
1992	Class		Class		Class		3
1993		Class		Class		Class	3
1994	Class		Class		Class		3
1995		Class		Class		Class	3

In 1990, the school has a Year 1 + 3 + 5

In 1991, no new Year 1 is admitted. Last year's Year 1 becomes Year 2 etc. You have Years 2 + 4 + 6.

In 1992 a new Year 1 is admitted. Last year's Year 2 becomes Year 3 etc.

Each teacher has only one year group at a time. He or she is a straight class teacher. For example, Teacher 1 teaches Year 1 in 1990, Year 2 in 1991, Year 1 again in 1992, and so on.

## CHAPTER 3

No matter how well your lessons are prepared, a badly organised classroom makes your teaching much less effective.

With the wide range of age, ability, maturity and interests among the children, it is vital for both you and them that your classroom is a highly organised, highly-structured environment where everyone understands where to find things, how to store things, where to sit for different activities, where to put completed work .....

This chapter is divided into three sections:

[GENERAL GUIDELINES ON CLASSROOM ORGANISATION](#)  
[SEATING PLANS AND CLASSROOM LAYOUT - A CLOSE LOOK](#)  
[ORGANISING DISPLAY AREAS, AND OTHER IDEAS](#)

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

#### **A: Display Areas**

Decide which parts of the classroom are appropriate for display of the children's work, charts etc, Make the best use of the space available for display. It is not usually a good idea to block the light by covering up windows with posters and paintings. Display boards, soft boards painted white, are very useful. You can pin or staple work on them and change displays easily and quickly.

#### **B: Room to move**

Bear in mind that children and you also need to be able to move freely between the groups of desks with a minimum of disturbance to others Try to avoid jamming children's desks and chairs against the wall

#### **C: Light**

Arrange the desks as far as possible so that the children do not have to work facing into direct sunlight The light should come from the side of the child



## **D: Heat & Ventilation**

Make sure the children do not have to sit in the direct sunshine and that the classroom is properly ventilated at all times. Classroom corners can be very stuffy

## **E: Blackboards**

Two blackboards, one at either end of the classroom, are very useful for multiclass teaching. Portable blackboards that can be moved for group work can be very handy too.

Beware of mounting blackboards too high on the wall. Children should be able to reach the board easily to write on it.

Do not put the blackboard right next to a large window -the children will have great difficulty reading from it.

## **F: Children's Desks and Chairs**

Avoid the use of fixed desk/chair combinations. These make changing the classroom around for groupwork very difficult. Also make sure you match the size of the desks and chairs to the size of the various children in your class. Exchange furniture with other teachers so that your children sit happily in their desks and chairs.

## **G: The Teacher's Table**

This should be carefully placed to give you the teacher an unobstructed view of the whole classroom. Of course, the effective teacher spends very little time sitting at his or her desk!

## **H: Activity Corners**

You may want to have activity corners in your classroom. Decide carefully where they should best be sited. So that children can work in these areas without disturbing other groups, you might need partitions. Simple screens made from local materials like bamboo work very well. Here are some ideas:

### **The Reading Corner**

The children come to this area for quiet, personal reading or to receive reading instruction. Books, flashcards, reading games etc. should be kept here, along with books, flashcards, reading games etc.

The corner should be comfortable, with a piece of mat or carpet, plus chairs, cushions etc., if possible. A partition of bamboo and dress material could easily be constructed. Even though books may be in short supply, a good teacher must always be on the lookout for interesting reading materials for the children such as magazines, newspapers and so on. This corner could also house a puppet for presenting plays.

## **The Science & Nature Corner**

Children at primary school have an enormous curiosity about natural world around them. Every classroom should have a Science & Nature corner where they can collect together the things that interest them. They may grow seeds here, collect fruits and nuts, or display their leaf rubbings. They may keep insects, reptiles, small mammals or fish in transparent containers. Small river fish and course, tadpoles are very easy to keep in the classroom and are excellent ways to study the cycles of animal life.

## **Art & Craft Corner**

This is where the art and craft materials are stored and, if there is enough room, where art and craft activities can take place. If there is a sink and tap in the room, the Art & Craft corner should be located here. Scrap materials could be stored here -cardboard, string, wire, tape, pieces of dress material, plastic etc.

## **The Shop**

In lower junior classes the class shop is valuable for children's social, language and mathematical development. The children play the roles of shopkeeper and customer. Empty tins (with lids) and packets can fill the shelves, and coins and bank notes can be made from cardboard and paper. Avoid glass bottles or empty cans since they can be dangerous in the hands of young children.

## **Construction Play Corner**

For Year 1, a construction play corner could include building blocks, wheels, rollers, simple wooden materials for youngsters to build with. Young children learn about their world through practical activity - through doing. Here they will learn about solid shapes, weight, size relationships etc. They will use their imaginations to build their houses, bridges, boats.

## **Home Corner**

Here children could play at families or hospitals etc. This kind of role- play activity is vital for the social development of young children in Year 1 and 2. Simple dressing-up clothes could be collected and kept here.

## **I: Storage**

Make the best use of available cupboards and shelves by placing them sensibly to fit your needs. Children should have easy access to the books and materials they need. Clean out cupboards and dry everything in the sun from time to time to avoid the problems of damp and mould.

Facilities for storage vary. Many classrooms are short of space and short of proper, purpose-built storage units. Here are some general hints:

### **Store similar things together**

Classify according to size, shape, subject, frequency of use, etc.

### **Collect similar sized containers**

The children will help collect ice cream, margarine containers and other boxes. Sturdy plastic boxes or strong cartons of all shapes and size are excellent for storing maths and reading materials, art and craft equipment, spare paper and other things.

### **Label clearly all storage areas**

Also cupboards, shelves and all the various containers. This task could become a lively and enjoyable language and art activity for the children. Use broad felt pens or paint. Thorough labelling is helpful too when another teacher takes over your class, for example, the training student.

### **Let the children share in the storage routines**

They should know where and how things are stored. Draw up a rota of children's duties. Involve all the various age-groups in your multiclass. Every child can benefit from taking a turn at these kinds of responsibilities.

### **Check storage areas regularly**

Once a month, for example, put time aside to check over one area. Make sure everything is where it should be and in good, clean

### **Throw out things you don't need**

At the end of the year, if you find you haven't used this or that, then get rid of it, but perhaps not to the rubbish bin.

### **Useful storage**

If you have one, store any could-be-useful-one-day objects in a school storeroom. If not, then at least don't let these dead bits and pieces clutter up your classroom and take up valuable shelf space.

### **Personal space**

Make sure every child has personal storage for his or her own things. This could be a container, properly labelled and stored tidily on a shelf.

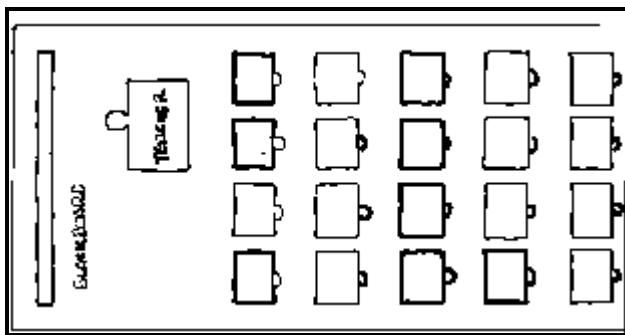
## Cleaning

Whatever personal storage units you have -desks, trays, cartons.....make sure they are cleaned out every week or so. If not, the children who are not naturally tidy (and that means most) will get into a hopeless muddle. Their desks or trays will gather an amazing collection of half-finished drawings, forgotten notes to and from school, rotting pieces of fruit, mislaid erasers, lost library books etc. Set aside a special time for this clean up, perhaps every two weeks.

## SEATING PLANS AND CLASSROOM LAYOUT

As we saw in the previous chapter, there are several different ways of grouping children in the classroom. In a single-year group classroom, the traditional seating plan, which is still used successfully in many classrooms, looks like this:

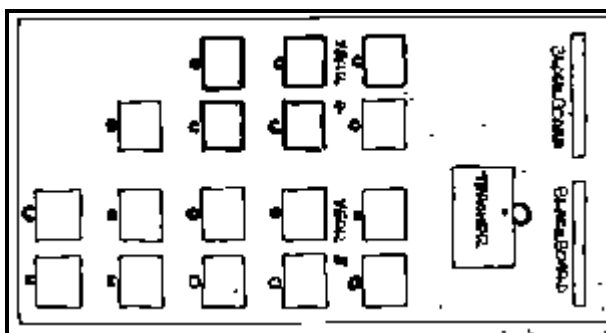
### Example 1: 20 children Year 4



This is a very formal arrangement. The children are facing the teacher and not their classmates. They are also all facing the blackboard.

A simple variation of this for the teacher with, for example, a combined Year 3 + 4, might look like this:

### Example 2: Multiclass Years 3 and 4 (10 children in Year 3 and 7 children in Year 4)



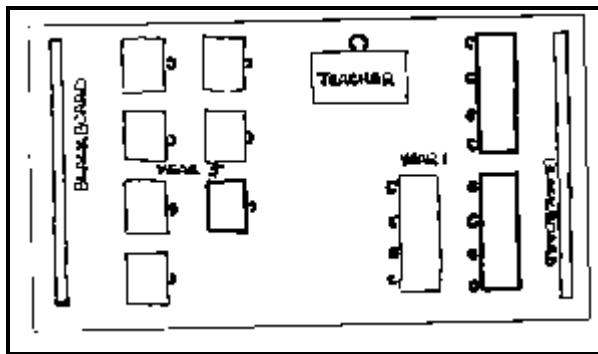
With this layout the teacher can easily teach the whole class at once; or, the two year-groups can be taught separately. The children all face the blackboards, but they are divided down the middle into two year-groups.

This is a common classroom layout in Vanuatu, for example. It can work successfully, especially if the year-groups are close together in age.

If, on the other hand, the year-groups are far apart in age, another layout is sometimes seen:

**Example 3:**

**Multiclass Years 1 and 5 (12 children in Year 1 and 7 children in Year 5)**

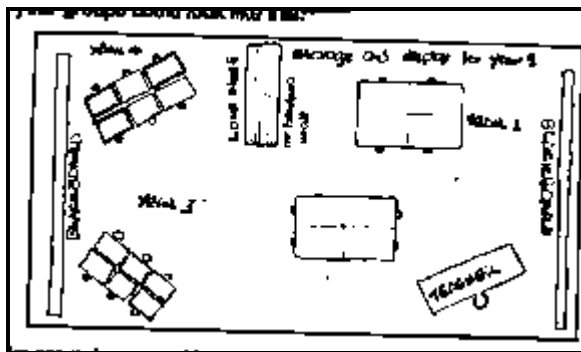


Here the two groups are at opposite ends of the room, with their backs to each other. There is enough space in the middle of the classroom for the teacher to bring the children together at certain times - for singing etc. However, most of the time the two groups work separately from each other. The teacher has to be very active, moving continually from one group to the other.

Another seating plan based on year-groups could look like this:

**Example 4:**

**Multiclass Years 1, 3 and 4 (6 children in Year 4, 6 children in Year 3, 8 children in Year 1)**



This is more informal. The desks are not arranged in rows all facing the teacher at the front. Here we have a more sociable way of seating the children. They sit in small groups next to and facing their friends. The teacher here is encouraging the children to talk together, to co-operate with each other in their school work. The children are not expected to be silent, only speaking when the teacher asks them a question. If the work they are doing is interesting and enjoyable there should not be too much of a problem from excessive noise or bad behaviour.

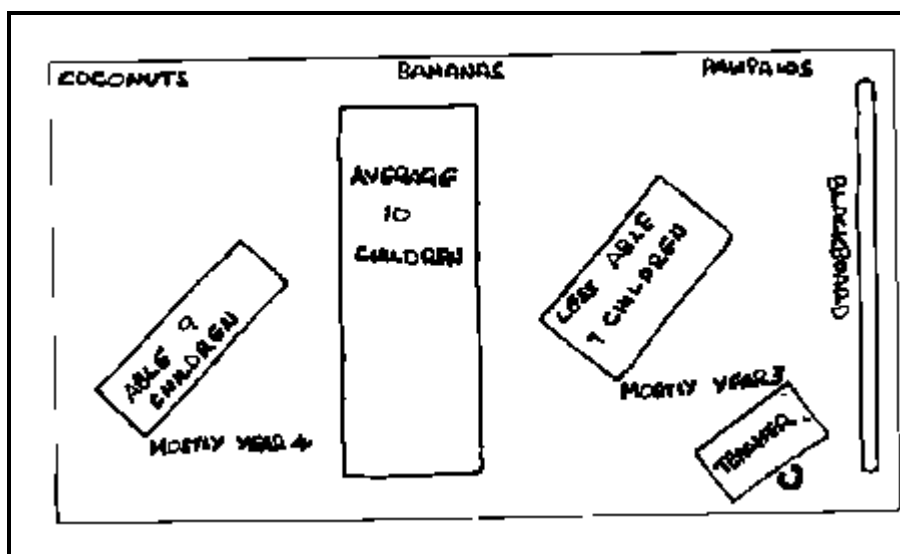
The classroom has been divided up into three areas. For example, year 1 has their own part of the room. They have a blackboard close by and their own area for displaying work and storing books and other teaching aids.

Notice the teacher's desk is near the Year Ones - this is probably deliberate. He/she knows they will demand much of his minute-by-minute attention. Of course, the successful multiclass teachers prefer to have no special desk and chair. Instead, they continually move around the classroom, talking to the children and helping them with their work.

Notice too the use of a simple partition to screen one group from another. This could be a low bookshelf, some spare desks or a small wall made of bamboo. This screen will help to prevent the Year Ones from disturbing the others or being distracted by them. This screen could also be useful in providing extra storage or display space.

Another layout we might look at is one based on same -ability groups, that is, groups based on the different achievement levels of the children in the various subjects. See Chapter 6 for more information.

**Example 5: multiclass Years 3 and 4 (10 children in Year 3 and 16 children in Year 4)**



The children in this classroom are grouped according to levels of achievement. It is assumed here that the brightest children will need less of the teacher's minute-by-minute attention than the others. For this reason the brightest children are placed furthest from the teacher.

The less able children are placed closest to the teacher and at the front of the room. There are two main reasons for this:

Some children have learning difficulties associated with problems of poor eyesight or hearing. The teacher can help these children by seating them close to the front of the class;

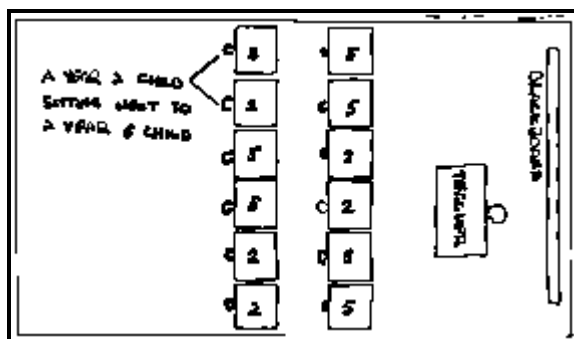
N.B. It is a good idea to look closely at your low group to identify why they are achieving poorly. Is it really low ability or are there other factors at work - physical, social or psychological difficulties for example?

(ii) The less able children can easily become frustrated and bored in the classroom. When they are seated near the teacher, he/ she can help them more easily with their work and make sure they are actively involved in the task set. Children who become restless and disturb others can be spotted early and action taken before the problem becomes bigger.

When the ages of the children in the classroom spreads over a very wide range, this kind of grouping makes a great deal of sense. Example 5 above is taken from a school in Vanuatu. In the outlying islands of Kiribati however, it is common to find a teacher with, say, 16 children in the room ranging in age from 6 to 15 years! Here the teacher normally works with three broad groups based on ability and maturity.

There are many other possible ways to arrange your classroom. Here is another final example -from a school on the island of Tanna, in Vanuatu.

### Example 6: Multiclass Years 2 and 5



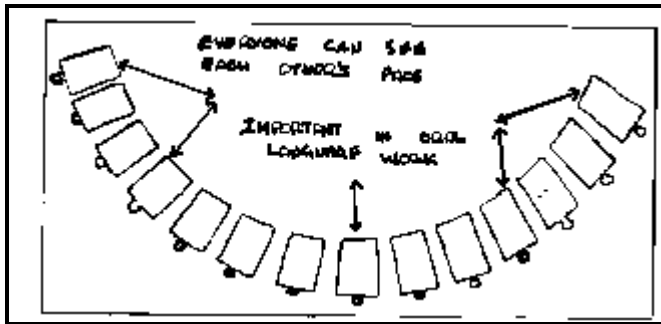
This teacher knows that older children can help the younger ones in their learning. Children teaching children is called peer teaching. It is talked about in more detail in Chapter 7.

In this example, a child in Year 2 is sitting with another Year 2 child and also with a Year 5 child! He or she turns to the older child when he needs help to understand something or perhaps to have an exercise checked. The older child can even help him to learn to read and write.

These Year 5 "teachers" can be a big help to the hard-worked multiclass teacher.

Here is an unusual pattern of desks in the classroom:

### Example 7



This layout is very useful for oral-language work -getting children talking! The children can see the eyes and mouths of everyone in the room. The teacher (or sometimes a child) leads the discussion, the story-telling, the vocabulary game etc. If this desk arrangement is not suitable as a permanent layout, you could re-arrange the chairs like this just for your special oral-language lessons.

How you arrange your classroom is up to you. It is not vital to follow exactly one of the set patterns shown in this chapter. What is important is that you have good reasons behind the layout you choose.

Be willing to change the arrangement whenever necessary. Some layouts work so well that you will keep them for a long time with only slight alterations. It is worth remembering that a change of classroom layout from time to time can liven the class up and give a boost to both teacher and children.

Whatever you decide, the layout of your classroom should help you in your daily work. It should make life easier for you, not more difficult!

### ORGANIZING DISPLAYS

Displays have a central part to play in making the classroom interesting and friendly

Proper display of your educational charts and your children's work should not be neglected. In some classrooms, the walls are empty and sad; in others they are over-decorated with poor quality work, carelessly displayed and left too long without changing



*The successful multiclass teacher maintains all interesting learning environment - an exciting and stimulating place for all the children to be in, whatever their age.*

Here are some suggestions to think about:

- It is essential with multiclassrooms to make full use of all display space available. Each year-group could well have their own special area for display.
- The classroom environment should be interesting for the whole range of children in it. All children should feel it is their classroom.
- Children's work should be shown carefully and thoughtfully so children may see that you value their efforts.
- Another teacher in your school may have a special talent for displaying children's work. You can learn from him or her. Also, when you visit other schools, look out for good display ideas.
- Children can learn something from discussing with the teacher which work should be chosen for display. In the multiclass situation, the whole class could discuss and choose together from works presented by various children - "What makes this picture attractive?" "Why is this story so exciting?"
- It is always essential to ensure that a balance of children's work is being displayed -from the brightest to the dullest, from the youngest to the oldest. Teachers must particularly avoid the trap of displaying only the work of the brighter, older children.
- Remember too that children like to see their names by their work. It makes them feel proud. The teacher, or the child, could write a neat, attractive name label (and, perhaps, title of the work) on a small, separate piece of paper or card and display it with the work.
- It is never a good idea to leave the same display on the wall for too long. Change all the displays regularly. This keeps the children's interest up and allows all the class to have some good work shown at some stage during the term. Regular (but not too rapid) change of display creates a stimulating and exciting learning environment, to which the children feel they themselves are contributing.
- Display ideas using local materials. There are many classrooms throughout our Pacific region built of local materials in which proper display of children's work is not easy. Some schools may have no solid walls or much protection from wind and rain.
- Finding things to build display areas and for the children's creative work is often difficult too, particularly on coral atoll islands where little is available in the way of plant material like timber, fruits and seeds. Many teachers have however found their own excellent ways of overcoming these difficulties.

## CHAPTER 4

At the start of a school year, your planning should go through the following clear stages:

### **Stage One**

The teacher studies the syllabus. This is the broad outline of the subjects to be taught for each year group. After this the teacher prepares his or her TIMETABLE of daily lessons.

### **Stage Two**

SCHEMES OF WORK are prepared. The teacher now plans how to cover the work in the time available. The broad subject, maths for example, is broken down into topics and the time to be spent on each topic is estimated.

Schemes of work are usually monthly or termly programmes

### **Stage Three**

LESSON PREPARATION: This is the final stage, when the scheme work is broken down into individual lessons.

We will look closely in this chapter at two aspects of planning which give special problems to multiclass teachers:

The Timetable  
Lesson preparation

## **THE TIMETABLE**

In preparing your timetable, these are the first questions to be answered:

- 1. What are the subjects that must be included**
- 2. What are the school's working hours**
- 3. How much teaching time is available in the week?**

Here is an example from Vanuatu.

School working hours are as follows:

7.30 am to 11.30 pm (maximum break-time 30 minutes).

1.30 pm to 3.30 pm

Wednesday afternoons are set aside for sports activities. On Friday afternoons there is no school for students, but teachers work in the schools.

e.g. Monday 7.30 -11.30 = 220 mins + 20 mins break

1.30 -3.30 = 110 mins + 10 mins break

Monday 5 hours 30 mins

Tuesday 5 hours 30 mins

Wednesday 5 hours 30 mins

Thursday 5 hours 30 mins

Friday 3 hours 30 mins

**Total 25 hours 30 mins per week working time with children.**

**4. How much of this time available should be given for each subject and to each year-group?**

For upper primary classes you might divide the available time like this:

Language 11 hours

Mathematics 6 hours

Environmental Studies 4 hours 30 mins

Sport 2 hours

Practical Arts 2 hours

**Total 25 hours 30 mins per week**

Younger children could need slightly longer language time and less maths time. They might also need less time for environmental studies but more for practical arts. It may be up to you to decide these proportions or you may have strict guidelines on this from your education office.

**Break time:**

A maximum of 30 minutes per day is common. With older classes you might choose to take a 30 minutes break in the morning and no break in the afternoon. On the other hand, you might prefer a 20 minutes break in the morning and a 10 minutes break in the afternoon.

With Year 1, it could be a good idea to break the day up with three short breaks of 10 minutes each, two in the morning and one in the afternoon. This, of course, depends on the policy in your country.

**Other factors to consider**

Your timetable should be planned to make sure that you, the teacher, are able to give the maximum amount of attention to the different year groups in your classroom and that you are able to teach all the necessary subjects.

- Some subjects may be taught to the class as a whole (especially if the year groups are close). Such subjects might include language work, story-telling, creative writing and so on, and environmental studies.

Other subjects may be taught either in year groups separately or in same ability groups. These include aspects of language (reading, speech training, oral English, spelling, dictation) and mathematics. For example, while one group is doing a mathematics exercise you are able to concentrate on teaching the other group their Speech Training and Oral English Lesson A.

All timetables should be displayed clearly, and be familiar to pupils

When preparing your timetable, you must make sure that you balance teaching-time equally so that sufficient attention is given to all pupils at each level.

Consider the maturity and attention-span of the pupils. Young children need to change activity frequently, so their lessons must be shorter. They need more frequent physical activity too, both inside and outside the classroom. Remember -it's not normal for a six-year-old to sit still for long periods.

- Balance evenly the different areas of the curriculum and consider the sharing of the school resources. A multiclass timetable should perhaps provide longer time than usual for language and for maths to allow enough time within the day for proper organization and group teaching

There are two main types of timetable

### **TYPE ONE:**

In some of our Pacific islands the SPLIT TIMETABLE is used. Here, year groups work on different subjects at the same time.

For example, Year 3 work on maths while Year 4 work on English. The timetable is split at certain times. It is combined at others. It is possible to be flexible here e.g. a bright Year 3 child might be ready to join Year 4 for maths, and vice versa.

### **TYPE 2**

Another way of organizing the timetable is to have your year groups working on the SAME SUBJECT AT THE SAME TIME --all the children doing mathematics, but at their different levels. Organization can be simplified using this approach.

There are two possibilities here:

Same subject/same time but different topic

e.g. in maths Year 2 Addition

Year 4 Shapes

Here it is time for maths for everyone, but the different year groups work on different topics. This can be a useful approach when the groups are spaced well apart. In this example, Year 2 might be working in maths on addition, while Year 4 is busy constructing cardboard models of solid shapes.

Same subject/same time but same topics

e.g. in maths Year 3 Measurement

Year 4 Measurement

The teacher plans carefully so that Year 3 can do work on the measurement chapter in their textbook while Year 4 work on the measurement chapter in their own book. The advantage here is that the teacher can sometimes talk to the whole class about measurement. Whole class discussion can be helpful for everyone -a Class Theme approach in maths. Also, the same teaching aids can be prepared just once by the teacher, for use by the whole class.

One more idea:

*Ability-groups, instead of year-groups*

Year-groups are the usual choice because, with limited textbooks and other learning materials, they make teaching easier -see Chapter 6. If however you do try ability-groups this should be clearly marked on your timetable and in your Lesson Plan/Work Book.

Many teachers in the Pacific region develop a timetable which is a mixture of the types outlined above. During one day a teacher might split the timetable for certain subjects (e.g. singing) and also Ability-group the class for yet another (e.g. reading). Provided the whole class is being taught in a balanced and efficient way, this mixing of approaches makes a great deal of sense.

Your timetable is a tool to help you to work efficiently. At the start of the year, tryout your new timetable. After a week or two you might want to make some improvements. Adjust it until you are happy. Then your timetable will work well for you for the rest of the year.

Some examples of multiclass timetables found in our primary schools are on the following pages. They are not models for you to copy. They are simply to give general ideas as to the possible ways to construct your timetable. They have some strengths and some weaknesses.

Look at them closely and ask yourself some questions:

- Do they give enough time to language and maths?
- Is there a balance of work between the year groups?
- Are the lessons too long, too short or just right -think of the age of the children?
- Are all the necessary subjects properly covered?

MULTICLASS YEARS 1 AND 2

TIME	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
7:30	Assembly Roll Call									
7:40	Speech/oral A	Maths 1								
8:00	Maths 1	Speech/oral A								
8:20	Pre-reading & Reading									
8:55	P.E.									
9:15	Oral A	Handwriting								
9:30	BREAK									
9:55	Maths 2 (groups)									
10:10	Handwriting	Oral B								
10:35	Maths 3 (groups)									
10:45	Living Together									
11:15	Music: poem/ rhymes									
11:30	LUNCH									
1:30	Pre-reading & Reading (groups)				Sport				No school	
1:50	Health		Religious Stories		Sport		Language Games		No school	
2:10	P.E.		P.E.		Sport		P.E.		No school	
2:30	Art & Craft		Nature Studies		Sport		Art & Craft		No school	

MULTICLASS YEARS 1 AND 3

TMC	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	Year 1	Year 3	Year 1	Year 3	Year 1	Year 3	Year 1	Year 3	Year 1	Year 3
7:30	Assembly Top Call		---		---		---		---	
7:45	Oral A	Maths A	---		---		---		---	
8:05	Maths A	Oral A	---		---		---		---	
8:30	Handwriting	Reading	---		---		---		---	
8:55	Handwriting	Maths B	---		---		---		---	
9:15	- P.E. -		---		---		---		---	
9:30	BREAK		---		---		---		---	
9:40	Oral B	Handwriting	---		---		---		---	
10:10	Handwriting	Oral B	---		---		---		---	
10:40	Maths C	Maths C	---		---		---		---	
10:45	- P.L. -		---		---		---		---	
11:15	Music		---		---		---		---	
11:30	LUNCH		---		---		---		---	
1:30	Handwriting	Writing/Spelling	---		---		---		No school	
1:40	Maths C	Spelling	---		---		---		No school	
2:10	Art & Craft		Health		---		---		No school	
3:30	Story		Story		---		---		No school	

MULTICLASS YEARS 1, 3 AND 5

TMC	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday		
	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
7:30	Assembly Roll Call			---			---			---			---		
7:40	Oral A	Oral A	Maths B	---			---			---			---		
8:05	English (w)	Maths (w)	Maths (w)	---			---			---			---		
8:30	Handwriting	Reading	Whole Day	---			---			---			---		
9:00	- P.E. -			---			---			---			---		
9:30	Story Time			---			---			---			---		
9:40	BREAK			---			---			---			---		
9:50	Handwriting	Oral B	Maths B	---			---			---			---		
10:05	Maths (w)	Maths (w)	Oral	---			---			---			---		
10:25	Maths C	Maths C	Handwriting	---			---			---			---		
10:50	Oral B	Handwriting	Whole Day	---			---			---			---		
11:10	Music			---			---			---			---		
11:30	LUNCH			---			---			---			---		
1:30	Art & Craft			Health			---			---			No school		
2:05	Free Activity	Reading	Whole Day	Handwriting			---			Living T			Living T		
2:40	BREAK			---			---			---			---		
3:10	Living T	Living T	Reading	Living T			---			Art & Craft			No school		

MULTICLASS YEARS 3 AND 4

TMC	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3	Year 4
7:35	Assembly Top Call		---		---		---		---	
7:45	Speechcraft A	Maths 1	---		---		---		---	
8:10	Maths 1	Speechcraft A	---		---		---		---	
8:40	Oral B	Handwriting	---		---		---		---	
8:55	Handwriting	Oral B	---		---		---		---	
9:10	- P.E. -		---		---		---		---	
9:25	BREAK		---		---		---		---	
9:35	Environmental Studies		Environmental Studies		---		Health		---	
10:25	Reading 2 (with work groups)		---		---		---		---	
10:50	Maths 2 (groups)		---		---		---		---	
1:10	Music		Story Telling		Music		Story Telling		Language Games	
1:30	LUNCH		---		---		---		---	
1:50	Reading 3 (with work groups)		Discussion		Sport		Environmental Studies		Children's Home	
2:05	Art & Craft		Environmental Studies		Sport		Sports		Teachers work at School	
2:25	Art & Craft		Environmental Studies		Sport		School Maintenance		---	

MULTICLASS YEARS 5 AND 6

TMC	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6
7:30	Assembly Roll Call		---		---		---		---	
7:45	Oral Language		---		---		---		---	
8:10	Maths Lesson	Maths Exercise	Maths Lesson	Maths Ex.	Maths Lesson	Maths Ex.	Maths Lesson	Maths Ex.	Maths Lesson	Maths Ex.
8:30	Oral Ex.	Reading	Reading	Oral Ex.	Oral Ex.	Reading	Reading	Oral Ex.	Oral Ex.	Reading
8:50	Spelling Dictation		---		---		Current Affairs		Spelling Dictation	
9:20	BREAK		---		---		---		---	
9:40	Maths (groups)		---		---		---		---	
10:00	- P.L. -		Creative Writing		Technology/Art		Disenchantment's Library		P.E.	
11:00	Health		Creative Writing		Story of our Islands		Disenchantment's Library		Music	
11:30	LUNCH		---		---		---		---	
1:30	Environmental Studies (No P.E.)		Environmental Studies/Time		Sport		Story of our Islands		No school	
2:30	Art & Craft		Science (Art & Craft)		Sport		Story of our Islands		No school	

## LESSON PREPARATION

It is absolutely clear that careful preparation of the lesson is the key to effective teaching and learning.

Lesson preparation is a thoughtful process in which the teacher asks him or herself three questions: Who? What? and How?

### 1. Who will be learning?

What is the CHILDREN'S age and ability?

Is it for the whole multiclass or just for one of the groups?

Is it a mixed ability group or not?

What do they already know?

What is the level of their English, French or Vernacular language?

### 2. What new knowledge, skills or attitudes should the students acquire in the lesson?

What will they know and understand?

What will they be able to do?

What new attitude or value do you hope to have encouraged?

These are your **OBJECTIVES**. You need a clear idea of exactly what learning you want to take place in your lesson.

You will usually be able to check during your lesson whether you have reached your objectives or not. Some objectives, especially those which deal with attitudes and values, are difficult to measure and may take a long time to achieve.

e.g. A nutrition lesson for Class 2.

Title: Custom story -"Yuli and the Pawpaw Tree".

Objectives:

The children will be able to describe the life-cycle of the pawpaw tree.

The children will be able to demonstrate how to gather the fruit and prepare it for the table.

The children will come to appreciate the value of the pawpaw as a highly nutritious food and thus its importance in a well-balanced diet.



### 3. How can these objectives be achieved?

This is where you decide on the **CONTENT** of your lesson and the **METHODS** you are going to use. Here are some points to consider:

*You need a clear plan of how the lesson will develop. You can usually see this as a number of stages:*

Brief revision of the previous lesson leading to an introduction and clear starting point.

The lesson then takes the form of a series of stages of learning through which the child passes. It's a good idea to try and vary your methods here to make the lesson more interesting for the children (and for you!) and thus more effective.

Towards the end of the lesson, students usually make some kind of assessment. You want to know whether or not your lesson has been successful, so you ask the children to use their new knowledge or skills. The activity may be a written exercise, a class discussion or a practical task.

*Getting the length of the lesson right is very important:*

In a lesson which is too long the children lose interest and "switch off" -especially if they themselves are not playing an active part.

If a lesson is too short the children do not have enough time to take in and understand properly all that is being taught.

*Preparing all your teaching & learning aids before the children come in is always a good idea. Many lessons fail because of inadequate preparation of the blackboard (so important for the multiclass teacher).*

*Making your own collection of teaching-aids and materials:*

A lesson is more interesting and more easily understood if you can find some useful teaching-aids to help bring it to life.

Many excellent teachers gather their own collection of useful teaching aids over the years and are always on the look-out for new ideas. These might be pictures, photographs, posters, newspaper clippings, natural objects (rocks, fossils, birds' wings, eggs), man-made objects (metal tools, wooden tools). For example, some pieces of lava for the children to feel in their hands go a long way to making your lesson on volcanoes a success whatever the age of your multiclass children.

Children themselves love to collect things: don't hesitate in asking for their help

## Lesson notes

Writing your Lesson Notes in your Lesson Plan/Work Book is the end-product of the thoughtful business of lesson preparation. It is not a substitute for it! Lesson Notes are an essential part of good lesson preparation for the following reasons:

They ensure that the teacher has thought clearly and deliberately about the lesson. Improvisation -making the lesson up as you go along -can be a dangerous thing and is seldom the mark of a good teacher. It should never be relied on as a regular technique!

They provide a useful record of work done and work planned, for the teacher himself, and for other professional visitors to the classroom. It is vital to keep your lesson plan/work book up-to-date. A visiting teacher, a stranger to your classroom, should be able, by reading from your Lesson Plan Book, to carry on confidently with your lessons planned for that day.

They give the teacher time to concentrate on the reaction of children during the lesson and to adapt easily to the different needs of the class as they arise.

They help the teacher to evaluate the day's work -in the evening and before preparing the next day's lessons -and to provide a position from which to look back at the achievements of the day.

e.g. Was the lesson successful?

Who needs more help?

Will some general revision be needed?

How can the teaching method be improved?

In this way the teacher can keep a check on the progress and difficulties of the students. They aid the memory of the busy teacher. The main steps of the lesson are noted down and can easily be glanced at whenever necessary.

## CHAPTER 5

What do we mean by routines?

Classroom routines are those rules and procedures, set up by the teacher and well understood by the children, which govern their day-to-day behaviour and actions.

Having clear rules and ways of doing things is particularly vital to the multiclass teacher. It can make the difference between drowning and surviving in the complex multiclass situation !

Routines should come into all aspects of classroom life and indeed, of school life in general. Time taken at the beginning of the year to get rules and routines firmly established with children will be time very well spent.

## **THE TEACHER'S OWN DAILY ROUTINES**

As well as setting up rules and procedures for the children to follow, you as the teacher should also have and keep to your own daily routines in order to be efficient.

We have already looked at planning timetables and the importance of proper preparation of lessons. Alongside these, you need to establish your own everyday routines. These should include adequate preparation time after school, or in the morning before the children arrive.,

It is vital, for example, to have a plan of the day's activities clearly in your mind before the children come to school.

You need also to have completed your preparation of:

- blackboard(s), setting out the tasks for the class and the various groups within it.
- all the teaching or learning resources needed that day: textbooks, stationery, teaching aids

Effective routines here enable the children to start work quickly and purposefully in the morning. The children feel good and get off to a good start, knowing they are starting a well planned day of purposeful activity under the guidance of a properly organised teacher.

You should try to plan your day's work so that you have time to give some individual help (marking, discussing, listening to reading etc.) to a variety of children in the different groups within the school day.

It is always best to check a child's work books with that child by your side. This is a truly educational activity -a time for praise where due as well as constructive criticism. For children at the primary stage, to check their books after school when they have gone home is of doubtful value.

## **THE CHILDREN'S CLASSROOM ROUTINES**

These should cover:

**A: How they know what work they should be doing at anyone time.**

The teacher needs to establish routines with the children for the setting of work. These may be for the whole class, for the group, or for the individual -blackboard instructions, worksheets, spoken instructions

**B: How books and other learning materials are distributed, collected and stored.**

Children can be given responsibilities here as Monitors to help make the multiclass teacher's life easier.

**C: Children knowing what to do when they need help but the teacher is unavailable.**

Procedures that allow children to help themselves or each other when they're stuck on a piece of work or when needing directions to begin a fresh activity. The use of stand-by activities to avoid time being wasted is discussed below.

These routines need to be carried out without disturbing the teacher who is working with another group and without distracting the other children.

**D: Accepted procedures about:**

- how to get the teacher's attention -calling out or putting hands up
- levels of noise
- general behaviour expected
- co-operating with classmates (borrowing pencil sharpeners' etc.)
- leaving the classroom to go to the toilet, to have a drink, to fetch the scissors from the office
- etc

**E: Having work marked or checked:**

Teachers should try to avoid long queues at their desks of children waiting for work to be marked. These children are wasting good time. They quickly get bored and become restless. It's useful for you to have other activities ready for them to carry on with on their own (see Part Two). This allows you to call up one child at a time to your desk.

Many teachers find it more satisfactory to actually leave their own desk and move around the room. They sit beside individual children and help them and check their work in this way. This is a friendlier, less formal approach -particularly appropriate in the family atmosphere often found in the best multiclassrooms.

*Some ideas:*

Why not let children mark some of their own work?

or make self-check workcards with:

- answer keys
- a progress sheet in an exercise book or on the wall

What about introducing routines for children to mark their friend's work- partner marking -or for older; children to check younger ones? (See chapter 7 for more about peer teaching -children teaching children)

These kinds of approaches can relieve the busy multiclass teacher of some of the tedious, mechanical marking that is always necessary .In this way, you are left with a little more time to spend in helping individuals with problems and in monitoring general progress.

### **F: Stand-by activities - children knowing what to do when they have finished their set activity**

While they are waiting for the next main session to begin, children need to have something to do. So they must be able to get going on an activity without disturbing or interrupting other children or the teacher.

Early finishers: these should carry on with a task that they know about and with which they can continue without the teacher's help. They should know where to go, what to do, and why they are doing it!

This could involve a sort of contract with children

e.g, "Tevita, you must re-write your holiday news before then end of the day:

or "Coconut Group, you must do maths exercises 10 and two reading cards each by Friday lunchtime"

or "Ofa and Toa, it's Tuesday, so don't forget it's your turn to water the tomatoes when you have time this afternoon:

On the other hand, it could be a chance to finish off other incomplete work:

e.g. "Carry on with the maths exercise you started this morning

or "Banana Group, you could finish your picture about the visit to the copra drier."

Another idea is a bank of emergency activities

This should be a prepared reserve of stand-by things to do, which is always ready. They don't have to be on the same subject as the main lesson, but see that they are

- educationally sound
- geared to the children's ability levels
- easily monitored by the teacher
- seen as interesting by the children

Some examples of such activities are to be found in Part two at the back of this book.

### **G: Change-over times**

It is important with multiclassses for the children to move speedily from one activity to another with as little fuss and disturbance as possible.

Children should have clear routines for when:

- they enter the classroom and begin work - lining up, walking in, class register, daily news, announcements, beginning tasks
- they change from one activity to the next - rules about talking, disturbance, moving around the room ...
- they finish work and leave the class - tidying worktables, collecting homework assignments, sweeping the room...

An example here might simply be to establish a regular pattern in a lower junior class of beginning every afternoon session with a short story for the whole class.

The children know the routine. They enter the room with purpose and sit on the floor around the teacher in the book corner. After the story, they move to their appropriate group for the next session.

The whole class routine is a useful one. The children enjoy and benefit from the story. They also start the afternoon off by settling down as a class together before going to their main tasks, based more closely on age and ability.

N.B. The routine could be varied and perhaps made more interesting by the teacher organising that the story reader shall sometimes be one of the older students.

A lower junior multiclass would enjoy a visit by a story teller from the older class of upper juniors next door!

## **H: Giving Responsibility**

Multiclass teachers sometimes do not realise what a valuable human resource they have in their own classrooms -the children themselves.

Multiclass teachers can help themselves and at the same time greatly help their children by giving them real responsibility in the classroom. They should share with them the duties and tasks involved in efficient classroom management

The responsibility given may be that of

- a teacher of younger children
- a maths group leader
- a sports team captain
- a classroom Monitor -who could help in keeping the reading Corner tidy, watering the plants, pruning the tomatoes in the vegetable garden

It is important to remember that all children. Not just the brightest or the most "sensible" can and should benefit from being given real responsibilities at school.

Children with learning difficulties or behaviour problems will in fact often respond very positively when responsibilities are given to them.

Duties entrusted should be changes on a regular basis to give all children a chance to benefit and to avoid the task becoming boring to the child. All children should take their fair turn.

Of course, the multiclass teacher has many young people among whom to distribute classroom responsibilities. There is usually a broad range of abilities and of physical and emotional maturity. He or she must try to see, however, that even the youngest take their turn at shouldering real responsibilities, chosen with care.

Routines are useful in all aspects of classroom activity and are referred to again elsewhere in this handbook. See:

Chapter 6 "Teaching in Groups"

Chapter 7 "Peer Teaching"

Chapter 8 "Using Outside Help"

TIME PUT IN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR ON ESTABLISHING CLASSROOM ROUTINES WILL BE TIME WELL INVESTED BY THE WISE TEACHER.

WITH THE GREAT VARIETY OF CHILDREN'S AGE AND ABILITY IN TYPICAL SMALL SCHOOLS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT A STRUCTURE IS SET UP BY THE TEACHER, TAUGHT THOROUGHLY TO THE CHILDREN, AND THEN FOLLOWED CONSISTENTLY BY EVERYONE.

MOST CHILDREN RESPOND WELL TO A SENSIBLY ORGANISED SCHOOL. THEY LIKE TO KNOW WHERE THEY STAND AND EXACTLY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM IN TERMS OF BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM. THEY WILL FEEL RELAXED AND SECURE: THIS WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK AND THEIR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT AS YOUNG PEOPLE.

## CHAPTER 6

We will see in this chapter that the grouping of children within the classroom is a vital consideration for the multiclass teacher.

You have a very wide range of abilities, and often ages, all together in the same room. It is not just going to be effective to try and teach the class as a whole in all subjects and all the time.

We could say that multiclass teachers can use three teaching strategies available to them:

WHOLE CLASS TEACHING  
INDIVIDUAL TEACHING  
SMALL GROUP TEACHING

### **WHOLE CLASS TEACHING**

Here you teach all the children in the class as a whole.

This is the simplest approach for the teacher. You have only one lesson to prepare, so you are saved both time and effort. You aim this lesson at the average level of ability in the class. You have fewer teaching aids and other material to get ready.

You can base your work on the main class textbook for that particular subject. It is easier for you to keep a close eye on progress and mark children's work and to keep good discipline.



However there are significant disadvantages for the multiclass situation - serious traps that can easily be fallen into by an unthinking teacher who uses whole-class teaching for most of his work, particularly in the basic subjects of language and maths.

The whole-class teaching approach is usually very teacher-centred.

A lesson is presented -often in the chalk/talk style (with the teacher doing all the talking) - and then either a written exercise is set for the whole class or a verbal question & answer testing is used.

The main problem here is that *the entire lesson is aimed at the average child in that room.*

As we know, in the multiclass situation the range of achievement level is often very large -certainly far wider than in most straight classes. Inevitably, in a lesson like this, there will be low achievers failing to keep up with the work and becoming more and more despondent day by day. There would also be high achievers, bored by the teacher's lesson which is not "stretching" them intellectually or providing them with any new skills or knowledge.

Both groups -the low achievers/younger ones and the high achievers/older children -will become a problem to the teacher in terms of discipline. As they rapidly lose interest in the lesson, they start distracting the others and becoming a general nuisance.

And, most importantly, these children are being ineffectively taught.

The low achievers will lose confidence in themselves when they fail in this lesson every day of the week! The high achievers will lose interest, and this may well affect their attitude to school and learning for a long time. Many straight class teachers see these dangers too and choose to group the children for certain activities.

We must still remember that whole class teaching has a place and an important one -in the multiclass school. It has a key role to play in the multiclass child's day.

Whole class teaching can work particularly well in the following areas:

- spoken language work -e.g. story reading and telling;
- children's news;
- making up stories together;
- prepared "talks" by children on different subjects;
- general discussions generated by the teacher, language and problem-solving games (see Part Two);
- physical education;
- music -singing, playing, dancing;
- drama -class plays: great fun -there can be roles for children of all shapes, sizes and ages!
- environmental studies;

art and craft.

The multiclass covers of course a wide range of ability, age and interest. Working together as a completely mixed group for part of the day can improve children's relationships with each other.

The situation is not as competitive as the straight class (with one year-group only) often is. The children, too, feel as if they really belong to a class.

They also benefit from exchanges of ideas, opinions and skills far broader than those found in the normal straight class. These collective discussions can be an enriching experience for children at all levels.

### **INDIVIDUAL TEACHING**

Here, the teacher works with a child on a one-to-one basis. The child might be working on the same task as the rest of the class or might have been given special work to suit his/her particular level.

Of course, the rest of the class must be engaged in purposeful work while the teacher gives personal attention to this child. This is quite possible in classrooms with small numbers, but much harder to organize if classrooms are bursting with children.

Although all children need and benefit from individual attention, teachers often only have time to work individually with those children who have learning difficulties in language or maths i.e. remedial teaching. In crowded classrooms, even this is very difficult to organize.

The more able children need individual attention from you too. Over a set period of time it is good to aim to spend some one-to-one time with every child in the class.

How many days this takes depends on how many children there are in your classroom. Many multiclass teachers make sure they listen to every child read aloud, in a strict non-stop rotation.

### **SMALL-GROUP TEACHING**

Here the teacher divides the whole class into smaller groups for teaching purposes. And using small groups is a particularly useful strategy for the multiclass teacher.

You have to prepare several different lessons and assignments for children to work on during one teaching period.

Although life is more complicated for you than when Whole Class teaching, it can be more effective for the children's education and thus more rewarding for you.

But you need to be highly organised and well-prepared. Successful small-group teaching takes a great deal of effort and the multiclass teacher cannot reasonably be expected to use this approach all the time.

**A wise multiclass teacher uses all three strategies at different times during the week:**

**sometimes whole class teaching ;  
sometimes individual teaching  
sometimes small-group teaching**

**Indeed teachers with just one year-group -a straight class -do not restrict themselves to Whole Group and Individual teaching alone. Small group work can be seen in successful classrooms all over the world.**

Let's look now at the different types of group possible in the multiclass situation:

### **1. The mixed ability group**

Here the group is across the range of ages and contains also a mixture of children from low to high ability.

This group provides a pool of human resources with a variety of skills and strengths. It can work particularly well in Project work, where the teacher involves the children in a theme which deals with many subjects.

Low achievers usually have strengths in some areas. It is your job to find these strengths and build on them. The mixed ability group can then draw on these strengths.

E.g. The football expert who gives valuable help to the group's project on "Sport in our Village".

Less able children without much self-confidence, can often benefit greatly from the small group situation. They can feel important and proud because they have something useful to offer.

Peer teaching (children teaching children) is common in this type of group instruction. Sometimes teachers choose certain high-achieving and/or older children to work with the younger or less able ones in the group.

### **2. The same age group**

This kind of grouping is based on the chronological age of the children. It is normally the Year Group, sometimes called grade level or just Class. This grouping is made on the assumption that children of the same age all make progress at more or less the same speed. This is the common grouping found in multiclass schools in the Pacific.

For example, a Year 3 + 4 combination is usually divided into two groups

- the Year 3 group and the Year 4 group - and taught separately in many subjects.

This year -grouping has its advantages. For a start, in all our island schools, the curriculum materials -the textbooks and other learning resources -are designed for straight class teaching only, rarely for multiclass.

On the other hand, this grouping gives the teacher other organizational headaches! Within each year-group he has slow, average and fast learners. Indeed there is always an overlap between, say, the brightest in Year 3 and the weakest in Year 4.

### **3. The social group**

This grouping is based on the compatibility of children. Pupils who get on well together or who have close friendships or family ties are grouped together.

There is a harmonious, non-competitive feeling about the group. In a one- teacher school, for example, a group might include an eleven-year-old boy and his six-year-old sister.

This type of grouping is again useful in building self-confidence in the weaker class members. You will also be thinking here of helping children with social problems - perhaps disruptive children or children who are shy and find it hard to get on with others. You might group them with other children whom you think might help them to overcome their problems.

Of course, this kind of grouping, based on the sociability of children, overlaps with the mixed-ability grouping already mentioned. In other words, you probably think of social factors when you plan the membership of your mixed-ability groups.

### **4. The same ability group**

Here the children are grouped broadly into Advanced, Average and Low ability groups across the whole age range.

Before we go any further, let's remember that the term 'ability' can be misleading. It might be better to talk here about ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS.

Some children might have high ability in a subject but only manage to achieve a low standard. Various reasons for this are possible:

- a child's social, psychological or physical problems
- lack of suitable learning resources
- failure on the teacher's part.

In other words, don't forget that a "low ability" child might in fact be of average or even high ability, but only achieving at a low level for a certain reason. (An example would be a child with impaired hearing who might be very bright but under-achieving because of this un-noticed handicap.

The big advantage of ability group teaching is that children are able to work together with others at the same level. They can share the same learning materials and be given the same tasks.

You will need of course to prepare work for the different groups at their different levels.

It is common to have three ability groups -low, average and high achievers. This is not a hard and fast rule, however, and you must decide for yourself what seems best.

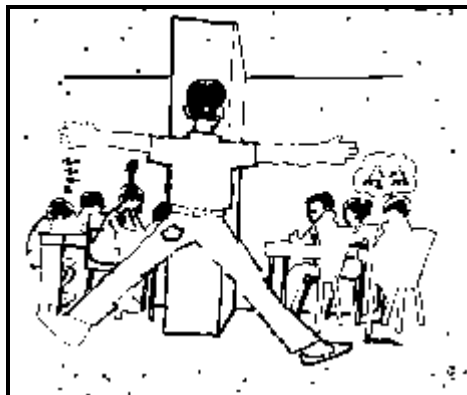
You may, for example, have three main groups plus a pair of children working at a fourth level -maybe very slow readers or High-fliers doing advanced maths work. The children will work well because they are operating at the speed and level they feel happy with. We could call this a child's Instructional Level.

The work is neither too hard nor too easy for them. The child is comfortable with the work set. It is a challenge for them, but within their reach.

Stimulating work based on ability-level grouping can bring with it a healthy working atmosphere where problems of discipline are few and children feel happy, interested and relaxed.

## **BREAKING DOWN THE WALL**

There is often a feeling of a wall dividing multiclass children according to year groups. When the age-range is not too great you should make efforts to break this down.



However, in the basic subjects of maths and language, many multiclass teachers are reluctant to consider mixing the year groups together according to ability levels.

Even when the year groups are close in age (e.g. Year 3 and 4), they prefer to teach them separately in same age groups Year 3 has a maths lesson with the teacher while Year 4 does an English exercise.

This preference for keeping the year group separate in basic subjects, unfortunately takes many children a long way from their instructional levels.

It remains common, though, in Pacific Island schools because of several factors, which include

limits set by the teaching resources available in schools. For example, the basic textbooks are usually designed for straight classes only. On top of this, even these are often in short supply. lack of organizational know-how on the teacher's part. He/she may lack the confidence to use more educationally- efficient groupings, so prefers to stay with what he knows -the easier, but often less sound, separation into year groups.

We might say that some multiclass teachers have a Wall in their minds which separates the children by age into their year groups only, rather than grouping them by other, better criteria. Such teachers believe that children should not at any cost be allowed to cross over this wall between the year-groups in the multiclass. And especially not in such basic subjects as language and maths!

It is felt strongly that Tekon (for example), an exceptionally bright maths student in year 4, should never work on the Year 5 maths exercise with the Year 5 children, even though he finds the work of his own year-group far too easy and is learning nothing!

Or take Patti, a Year 6 girl with severe problems with reading. She cannot manage the Year 6 reading books and struggles with all her language work every day.

We are suggesting here that sometimes -not all the time -you might group your whole class according to achievement levels in, say, reading and language work and ignore the wall altogether.

An example of this can be seen in Example 5 of classroom layouts in Chapter Three. Here the teacher has ignored the barrier between year- groups.

Most of the able group ("Coconuts") would be Year 45, but with one or two bright Year 35 added. Most of the less able ("Pawpaws") would be Year 3 children, with perhaps one or two weaker Year 4s.

In the average group ("Bananas") we would normally find a half-and-half mixture of Year 35 and Year 45. In this example, then, the children are working at their correct Instructional Level. They are happy at their level and normally make good progress.

Multiclass teachers might only choose ability-grouping for certain subjects, or aspects of certain subjects.

Ability grouping for all subjects at all times is not a good idea. It would be too much for you to prepare and organize and it would not be good for the children educationally.

If you are not using ability-groups at the moment, you might be interested to try it in Reading, for example, or as part of your wider language teaching programme. If you like it and feel it is helpful for the children, then you could either extend it to more of your language programme or try it for part of your maths programme.

A child in your class thus might find himself in the "Crayfish" group (high achievers) for language on Tuesday mornings and the "Octopus" group (average achievers) for maths on Thursday mornings. The rest of the week you may be teaching your maths and language in year-groups, following the text books. In your environmental studies, you might use mixed ability- groups but then social groups in art and craft.

Sometimes teachers use the expression Setting for grouping children by ability. It's common to find mixed ability classes all over the world where children are grouped for maths and/or language work. This is to ensure they are working at their own speed and at their right level.

Let's look at an example of Setting. Imagine a very large primary school which takes in three straight classes into its first year every year -a triple entry-school. Here, teachers often find their large classes unmanageable without grouping by ability in maths and/or language. The three teachers of the three Year 1 classes might decide to look at all the children (say 90 of them), divide them into three ability-groups, and each take one group.

For example, John, in Miss Sule's class, goes after morning break to Mr Tofu's classroom for his maths lesson with an average-ability group. His friend, David, stays with Miss Sule for maths -the top group.

### **How ability-group teaching could be tried out in your classroom.**

Let's look at an example and begin with 30 minutes session where three language ability groups work on three different activities.

#### **Multiclass 3 + 4**

*2.00pm*

##### **Taro group**

- writing
- pair discussion
- picture sequence
- creative writing

##### **Yam group**

- shared reading (with teacher)

##### **Kumala group**

- card games
- matching sentences
- word recognition

2.30 pm

The teacher first carefully prepares activities for the two groups who will be working on their own (Taro and Kumala). He or she then prepares a lesson for the third group (Yams) in which he/she plays an active part. These groups could cut across the Year-group wall if necessary.

If this is successful, the idea can be extended to, perhaps, a whole afternoon's session once a week.

Now there could be:

**THREE SESSIONS OF HALF AN HOUR EACH DURING THE AFTERNOON.**

Each group will now do three different activities at their own level during the afternoon. This means the teacher has to prepare nine activities. He or she will lead an activity with one group while the other two groups work independently.

When these three activities are finished, after say 30 minutes, all groups change activities and the teacher moves on too!

At the second change-over, the teacher moves to the third group.

**THE TEACHER THUS HAS THREE ACTIVE TEACHING SESSIONS TO PREPARE, AND SIX MORE ACTIVITIES FOR GROUPS TO WORK ON INDEPENDENTLY.**

Here is an example:

An afternoon's programme of language activities in ability-groups



## MULTICLASS 4, 5, 6 ON A THEME OF HEALTH

This health theme might be started off by the school nurse's visit or a class trip to the village dispensary and a talk from the health worker there.

	Group 1 (high)	Group 2 (middle)	Group 3 (low)
10 mins	A whole class activity - e.g. a song <i>Heads, shoulders, knees and toes</i> followed by brief instructions for the afternoon's programme		
30 mins	Silent reading	Creative writing - hospital emergency (using key words and a photograph)	Shared reading with teacher "The day I went for my injection"
5 mins	Change-over time		
30 mins	Creative writing - picture sequence ("cooking-fire, terror")	Shared reading with teacher ("Tiki likes fruit")	Language card games - sentences matching (from the shared reading book)
5 mins	Change-over time		
30 mins	Oral language - discussion with teacher (first aid in the home)	Written exercise - memory matching (healthy food - vocab.)	Drawing & Colouring - the village dispensary
10 mins	whole class language activity		

### **SOME GOLDEN RULES FOR SUCCESSFUL ABILITY GROUP TEACHING**

#### **Beware of branding children as slow learners**

Avoid calling your groups names which suggest levels of failure and success. It's always a good idea to let the children make up their own names for the groups e.g. Bananas, Pawpaws, Coconuts.

Avoid "labels" such as the Slow Readers, the Top Maths group etc. If you do name them in this way, their morale and self-confidence will quickly fall and their work will get worse, not better.

Children who feel they are failures in their teacher's eyes will soon settle to that expected level of work. They will lose interest in school in general. They begin to believe that they simply don't have the ability to do better. On top of this, higher-group children might sometimes tease those branded as low-achievers.

Parents too become anxious if they feel their child has been labelled as Slow, especially if the child is working on easier books, with children in a lower year-group in the multiclass situation.

All of these problems of attitude can be overcome over a period of time by the patient and wise multiclass teacher. The Golden Rules will help you.

### **Encourage positive attitudes among children and parents too**

Children in lower groups will always know that their work is easier than other children's, but they will make positive progress if the work is challenging and interesting and they feel valued by the teacher.

Higher group children will soon get tired of teasing weaker classmates if their own work is demanding and enjoyable. Indeed, they will often develop a responsible attitude towards group children, helping them when they face difficulties or through organised Peer Teaching on a regular basis -see Chapter 7.

Take time to explain to anxious parents why their child is grouped in a certain way for, say, maths. Explain the positive benefits -the ways you believe it will help this child in the long run.

### **Be flexible. Move children between groups**

Do not forget that children are individuals and make progress in different subjects at different speeds. The wise multiclass teacher is flexible in his approach. He or she watches the children's progress in the ability-groups and moves them up or down from time to time when appropriate.

For example, Siu might be moved in Term 2 from the low-reading group to the average one. On the other hand, his friend, Moses, still finding reading a struggle, might be kept working in the lower group on easier material for the rest of the year.

You need to check and re-check continually the membership of your ability- groups to ensure that each child is in the most suitable group for him or her. This continual monitoring is essential and ensures that no child's progress is forgotten.

### **Use various types of group**

Children gain a great deal from being grouped in different ways at different times. They should have the chance sit and work with as many of their classmates as possible - young or old, clever or dull.

Even if most stay in the same ability-groups nearly all the time for language and maths, life is more interesting for children if they are grouped differently -mixed-ability, social, whole-class, interest groups at various times during the week.

To take the most extreme case, it is generally agreed that keeping low achievers together, separated from the rest of the class all the time, has a very negative effect.

These children gradually lose interest and become a problem for themselves and the teacher.

We all, children and adults alike, benefit from a change of scene now and then! We start refreshed on the new task.

### **Vary your subjects**

Remember- it's not essential in multiclass for the various ability groups to be all working on the same subject at the same time, as in the language example earlier. Your Banana group, for example, could be working on maths while the Pawpaw group finishes their wall story about the class visit to the dispensary.

### **Ability-group teaching isn't an extra programme**

Don't think of this approach as an addition to your normal year-group lessons.

It can be viewed instead, as just a different way of teaching the existing curriculum in the multiclass situation. In the example above, then, the group-activities should be part of the existing language programme -i.e. within the total timetable hours for language.

### **Be realistic about your resources**

You should base your use of ability-groups on a practical view of what resources are available to you. Very few learning resources in our island classrooms are easily adaptable for group work across the Year Wall.

The different year-groups have their own textbooks, and these are often the only resources the children work from. While Year 3 has their lesson on fractions with the teacher, Year 4 does silent multiplication tables work from the Year 4 textbook.

Shortage of funds and the difficulty of obtaining suitable books and resources (even when a school has raised the necessary cash) is largely to blame for this.

Shortage of preparation time for busy multiclass teachers is another factor. The effective multiclass teacher, however, tries hard to provide meaningful, interesting work for the groups and uses his or her imagination to succeed in this.

He/she devises activity worksheets (speedily marked by teacher or children), problem-solving cards etc. based on what is available not only in the school but also in the environment around it -the land, the sea, the people.

## **GROUP TEACHING -SOME ADVICE**

### **Make your group activities lively, stimulating and varied**

In the language example we see that each group carries out three very different activities during the afternoon.

Ideally, you should be able to provide for all your groups a wide variety of materials that are self-teaching or give interesting practice!

Many of the best multiclass teachers feel that activities which groups work on alone should not be just mechanical repetition exercises like mathematics and language drills. More active, creative involvement by the children is recommended. Problem-solving activities which involve creative thinking are suggested -see Part Two.

### **Make your group activities as quick to prepare as possible**

Remember that games, work-cards and other activities though they may be time-consuming to make, can be used over and over again. They can last for years if handled and stored properly. Good classroom routines again!

### **Make sure your group activities are easy to run**

You should be able to start off groups on their tasks with a minimum of explanation. Once the groups are working, it should be easy to monitor progress. Any marking or recording of children's results should also be kept simple and be a speedy business.

### **Think beforehand about your classroom layout**

How best can the furniture be arranged, quickly and easily, for effective group work

### **Remember that children like to have a working base**

Make a particular place for them to sit in the classroom which is "theirs". They will come back to this place after working at other tables for maths, reading, art or whatever else you have been teaching.

### **Make sure routines are firmly established**

Children will need a clear understanding of how to move to the group, how to get started, what to do when they have finished their task. This we have talked about under activities for early finishers etc -see Part Two also.

Children can be given the responsibility of leading groups. They have a key role to play in helping the multiclass teacher -passing on instructions, distributing materials, leading the group through the activity, feeding back to the teacher etc.

Group leaders should be changed on a regular basis, to give as many children as possible the chance to take the responsibility. In the multiclass situation, older children might lead short sessions with a younger group: 4 here they could play a very active role as teacher.

### **Ensure groups not being taught are working purposefully on their own**

One of the greatest problems every multiclass teacher faces is how to keep all the children purposefully busy while he or she concentrates on teaching basic skills such as reading or maths to one particular year-group or ability- group.

When you have set all the groups working and you begin direct teaching with one group, do not forget about the groups working on their own.

You have to keep one eye on them all the time, to make sure the work is going as planned with no problems blocking progress -and of course, no children misbehaving! At the end of the lesson, all work done without the teacher's supervision should be checked at a glance and marked thoroughly later: this should be done with the children, if at all possible.

To conclude this chapter, let's come back to this idea of *being flexible*.

We talked earlier of teaching-strategies -Whole Class, Individual and Small Group teaching and then of the various types of group possible. We concentrated on ability - groups and how they could play an important part in your multiclass teaching.

Try to be as flexible as possible in both your choice of strategy and of group type.

Ask yourself these questions:

Do you use a mixture of all the three strategies in your class- room?

If so, are there any better ways to combine them that you might like to try out?

Are you, for instance, giving enough individual help to your slow learners?

Do you group your multiclass by year-groups simply because it seems easiest?

Do you use any other kind of grouping?

Have you tried cutting across year-groups and dividing the children up by, say, reading-levels?

What about mixed ability groups for art and craft?

Are you making an effort to help those children with social ~ problems?

*The best multiclass teachers the world over try to combine a number of strategies and approaches. This provides for children's individual needs and makes the classroom a lively, challenging and friendly place.*

## CHAPTER 7

Children have always picked up considerable knowledge and skill just from being with other children. This starts in the home and continues naturally throughout their school life.

This is a natural process that happens without any adult involvement. Think of playtime games, for example, and the way they are passed on from generation to generation.

Today, many children around the world teach their friends about computers and calculators -and sometimes do it quicker and better than adult teachers would. Children learn very well from other children, especially in solving problems through discussion and activity.

Children teaching children (peer teaching) is not a new idea: it has been with us for thousands of years. In nineteenth-century England, much instruction was given by students who helped younger, less able students in overcrowded classrooms. In more recent years, peer teaching has been common in small rural schools in New Zealand, Australia and the USA.

Nowadays, peer teaching is recognized as a very worthwhile educational technique because:

(a) It helps meet the individual needs of students. Children's explanations to each other can sometimes succeed where the teacher has failed. Children obviously look at problems in a different way from adults.

(b) It promotes a co-operative rather than competitive approach to learning. Mutual respect and understanding are built between the children working together:

the helping child takes pride in his teaching and he himself learns from the situation. Children benefit greatly from being given recognized responsibilities in the classroom. for the young learner, on the other hand, building a relationship with his own, older 'helper' can be a rewarding emotional experience

Peer teaching in multiclass schools usually involves older children helping the slower or younger learners in their number work or reading.

Abler and older children might finish their own work and then help the younger learners. Or, you might set a special time each day for maths or language help in small groups. Older children (even of only average ability) can gain a great deal from helping younger children with their work.

## PEER TEACHING IN READING

In reading, it is common to find peer teaching used to help slow readers or to provide extra reading for all the younger children in the class.

It can have a positive effect, both educationally and socially, on the child teacher or tutor and the child learner.

It can be a very practical way of bringing individual help to reading.

Also, perhaps surprisingly, the "teacher's" reading level often improves! Reading tutors can sometimes be slow readers themselves: to help younger ones gives their own confidence a lift.

The amount of time the younger child is actively involved in reading is increased by using this technique. The younger -or weaker -child benefits greatly from the undivided attention of the other. The multiclass teacher himself or herself often does not have enough time to give this kind of individual help to every child.

You must, however, explain carefully to the child tutor exactly what you want him or her to do. Tutors must understand what you expect of them. They should work with the youngster in a quiet, friendly and supportive way. Impatience and teasing, for example, should be avoided at all costs.

Here is an example of a peer-teaching technique in reading.

The paired reading technique:

This technique is based on reading which:

- (a) alternates between joint reading aloud by both tutor and learner, and independent reading by the learner .
- (b) uses positive comments to reinforce correct and independent reading.

The child tutor is trained

- to introduce the book in an encouraging way
- to delay correction of errors until the learner has tried to correct them for himself
- to discuss the passage after it has been read
- to check up on his or her own performance as a teacher, and on the progress of the learner, by completing report cards and check-lists.

This approach follows the Shared Reading idea gaining popularity in many Pacific Island schools through the introduction of schemes such as Ready to Read.

The thinking behind it is that, even before coming to school, most children have been told or read stories by their family and friends. Why not carry this invaluable learning into the first years of primary school, the teacher sharing a book with the children by reading it with them?

This is sometimes called Shared Book experience and often involves large books with print big enough for the whole class to read with the teacher. Some island teachers have attended in-service training in this technique and have actually written and constructed their own "big books".

The multiclass teacher could consider using an older child as the teacher in shared reading experience to a small group. In this way the teacher is free to work with another group.

## **PEER TEACHING IN OTHER SUBJECTS**

Peer teaching can be effective in other subjects too. It can work in other language areas, in maths, music, physical education, environmental studies... *Why not try it?*

## **CHAPTER 8**

We are thinking of regular, reliable and practical help from other adults outside the classroom. This could be from:

- Other teachers in your school
- Your headteacher
- The children's parents
- Other members of the community

## **HELP FROM YOUR HEADTEACHER AND OTHER TEACHERS**

You will find (we hope!) that all staff in a school feel that they should support their friend working in the multiclass situation.

Multiclassing should be thought of as a challenge to be faced by the school as a whole. They are not just a burden for a particular teacher! Multiclass teachers need the support and practical help of their straight class colleagues and their head teachers:

HEAD- TEACHERS may find that they themselves can help you out by teaching one of the year-groups or ability-groups for, perhaps, a certain subject at certain times in the week.

Another possibility is for the STRAIGHT CLASS TEACHER with special strengths in a certain subject, to help you by taking a year- group out on a regular basis and teaching them that subject together with his own class.

Let's look at an example



e.g. Year 1 + 3 multiclass One teacher- Mr Suni 30 children

Year 4 straight class One teacher- Mrs Kalsakan 30 children

Mrs Kalsakan is an excellent environmental studies teacher.

The head could ask her to take out the Year 3 Group every Tuesday and Thursday morning and teach environmental studies to Years 3 and 4 together.

This would give Mr Suni the chance to concentrate on language skills with his Year 1 group.

There might be another teacher who is excellent with action songs and rhymes and would take Year 1 -another possible way to help out Mr Suni.

## **HELP FROM THE COMMUNITY**

**The multiclass teacher, with the support of the headteacher, needs to build a good relationship with parents and with the community as a whole.**

It is vital to convince parents that multiclass teaching can really work: that it is not putting their child to any disadvantage.

There are several ways to try and achieve this:

It is important to hold MEETINGS with parents and the community as whole to explain what multiclass teaching is, why it is necessary and, importantly, how it can benefit the children. But, sometimes actions speak louder than words!

**Multiclass teachers can gain the confidence of parents by actively involving their children in COMMUNITY PROJECTS of various kinds.**

Here the multiclass children regularly get out and about in the village and give practical help to the community e.g.

a clean-up campaign to remove litter and anything lying around that might collect standing water for mosquitoes to breed in

fetching water from the well for the old lady who can't walk

for older children, building a new bamboo kitchen for the nurse who has just been transferred to the village

collecting firewood for the widowed lady with three youngsters to look after

working in the school garden growing taro, cassava, bananas and pawpaws - nutritious food to give to the village sick

OTHER ACTIVITIES could be more directly related to school work.

You could design school work that requires children to go out into the community and talk to people, for example:

- simple questionnaires about the history of the village, traditional customs, stories, dances, present day occupations
- maths problems -how long is the maneaba ? how high is the nakamal? how far is it all the way round the village banyan tree?
- interviewing the old chief famous for his collection of old money
- reef walks, bush walks, garden demonstrations involving knowledgeable villagers.

Through all these various activities the community will come to learn that you have a well-organized multiclass, that the older children help the younger ones, and that they all co-operate well together.

You and your children are putting something into the community. You will soon find that the community will be more and more willing to help in return by coming into the school.

You have built up a healthy working relationship.

The community has come to believe in you as a multiclass teacher and what you are trying to do. People will be willing now to come to the school to help you. They will be proud to come, knowing that you value their contribution, whatever it may be.

Their help might be in making some new desks, repairing the leaking roof, putting up bookshelves, building bamboo partitions for the reading corner, or even building a new classroom.

Or, on the other hand, the help could be more directly educational, with people actually being IN THE CLASSROOM and working face to face with the children.

Here are a couple of examples:

- the local Expert who gives a talk: here a person comes to speak to the class on his or her special knowledge or particular work. The Doctor, the Nurse, the Village Chief, the Pilot, the copra ship's Captain, the Fisheries Manager.....
- the Teacher-helper: This person comes regularly, say once a week, to help the teacher. This is perhaps for one hour or half the day

- a mother helping the girls make pandanus mats
- a father helping train the football team
- an older brother helping with cricket
- an older sister helping children with reading difficulties, or reading stories to the "Flying Fish"

group.

- an old man teaching the youngsters traditional stories, songs, or how to carve model canoes.

In some of our Pacific countries, we have young people in the villages who either missed the chance of secondary schooling or left at, say, Year Ten but have been unable to find work. You might know someone like this who would be pleased to help you sometimes in the classroom. Such a person could be very useful to you. They, in turn, are likely to feel proud of themselves for helping others and doing something useful. They will like to be praised for their efforts, to be shown that you and the children value their efforts.

Bringing voluntary helpers into the classroom can help the busy teacher in many ways. The helper works with individuals or very small groups. This gives the teacher a "breather" to catch up with some remedial work or marking with individual children.

The children will benefit too from hearing a different voice occasionally and meeting a different personality. Some may well gain new interests and motivation.