EDUCATION FOR ALL AND MULTIGRADE TEACHING
Education for All and Multigrade Teaching

Challenges and Opportunities

Edited by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge support from the UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID) for the funding of several of the research projects reported in this book and their dissemination through conferences and seminars. I also thank DFID for its support for the establishment and maintenance of the website on Learning and Teaching in Multigrade Settings (LATIMS) that accompanies this book (www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade).

I thank a number of persons and institutions who have collaborated with us over several years, including Carmen Montero and the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, Lima; M.Sibli and the National Institute of Education, Colombo; N.H. Chau of the National Institute of Education Sciences, Hanoi; Kate Owen of the British Council, Hanoi; and H. Bhajracharya of the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, Kathmandu. Most of all I thank the many students who welcomed us into their classes and their teachers with whom we spent many hours talking and reflecting on the challenges and opportunities of multigrade teaching. I am also grateful to Brigid Hamilton-Jones for her copy editing of the text and Chris Purday and Abdul Mukith for translating photographs from many sources into a common format. Photo credits are due to the Fundación Escuela Nueva Volvamos a la Gente and to the contributors to this book.

Finally, and on behalf of all contribution, I thank our respective institutions for the time to make visible the largely invisible, marginalised and widespread phenomenon of learning and teaching in multigrade settings.
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APEID</td>
<td>Asia and the Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAGET</td>
<td>Bachelor of General Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>Before Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPEP</td>
<td>Basic and Primary Education Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERID</td>
<td>Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERT</td>
<td>Centre for Education Research and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DANE</td>
<td>Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIJIN</td>
<td>Dirección de Policía Judicial</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEO</td>
<td>District Education Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DNP</td>
<td>Departamento Nacional de Planeación</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management and Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCUBE</td>
<td>Free, Compulsory, Universal Basic Education</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>Foundation Studies</td>
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<td>GDCA</td>
<td>Ghana Danish Communities Association</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>Ghana Education Service</td>
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<td>GMR</td>
<td>Global Monitoring Report</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>HMG</td>
<td>His Majesty’s Government of Nepal</td>
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<td>HMI</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Schools</td>
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<td>IDS</td>
<td>Institute of Development Studies</td>
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<td>INSET</td>
<td>In Service Education and Training</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IREDU-CNRS</td>
<td>Institut de Recherche sur l’Education, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique</td>
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<tr>
<td>LATIMS</td>
<td>Learning and Teaching in Multigrade Settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
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<td>LLECE</td>
<td>Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education</td>
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<td>MECEP</td>
<td>(Spanish) Special Programme to Improve the Educational Quality of Primary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIITEP</td>
<td>Malawi Integrated In-Service Teacher Education Programme</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOEC</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Culture</td>
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<td>MOECSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare</td>
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<td>MOEHE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Higher Education</td>
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<td>MOET</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Training</td>
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<td>MUSTER</td>
<td>Multi-site Teacher Education Research</td>
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<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Education Commission</td>
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<td>NEP</td>
<td>(Spanish) New Pedagogical Approach</td>
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<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrolment Ratio</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NIE</td>
<td>National Institute of Education</td>
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<td>NIER</td>
<td>National Institute for Educational Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIES</td>
<td>National Institute of Educational Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>New Literacy Studies</td>
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<td>NUT</td>
<td>National Union of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMP</td>
<td>Primary Mathematics Project</td>
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<td>PTR</td>
<td>Pupil Teacher Ratio</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTTU</td>
<td>Primary Teachers’ Training Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCA</td>
<td>Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>QT</td>
<td>Qualified Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>REV</td>
<td>Rural Education Volunteer</td>
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<tr>
<td>SABER</td>
<td>Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATs</td>
<td>Standardised Assessment Tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCF-UK</td>
<td>Save the Children, United Kingdom</td>
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SEAMEO INNOTECH  Southeast Asian Ministers of Education
Organisation Regional Centre for
Educational Innovation and Technology
SFL  School For Life
SLA  Self Learning Activity
SPLM/A  The Sudan Peoples’ Liberation
Movement/Army
SSA  Sub Saharan Africa
ST  Student Teacher
SWA  South and West Asia
TCI  Turks and Caicos Islands
TDU  Teacher Development Unit
TSO  The Stationery Office
UK  The United Kingdom
UPE  Universal Primary Education
UN  United Nations
UNESCO  United Nations Education, Science and
Cultural Organisation
UNICEF  The United Nations Children’s Fund
USA  The United States of America
USAID  The United States Agency for International
Development
VDC  Village Development Committee
WCEFA  World Conference on Education For All
LIST OF PLATES

1. Colombia: self-learning guides encourage learners to use books from the class library, Escuela Nueva programme
2. Colombia: students learn together using self-learning guides, Escuela Nueva programme
3. England: in the monitorial system in 19th Century England students, grouped by achievement level, were taught by monitors. A single teacher taught and supervised the monitors.
4. Nepal: a student receives personal support from a teacher in a small multigrade school
5. Malawi: students enrolled in Standard 1 (Grade 1) class: same class, same grade but clearly not same age
6. Malawi: where resources are scarce, what you bring from home makes a significant contribution to pupil diversity. Here, students without pencil and paper are encouraged by their teacher to learn to write in the sand.
7. Peru: children learn after school
8. Peru: girls learn together to become literate
9. Sri Lanka: One teacher is responsible for three grade groups, working in a temporary classroom in rural Sri Lanka
10. Sri Lanka: Grade 1 students work together in a multigraded class
11. Turks and Caicos Islands: the teacher divides the blackboard space between two grades: students work individually on individual grade-level work
12. Turks and Caicos Islands: students work collaboratively
13. Vietnam: a grade-group monitor takes charge of her peers while the teacher works with another grade-group
14. Vietnam: A typical multigrade school in the Northern Highlands
15. Sudan: The El Shiekh teacher with his sheep, Darfur
16. Sudan: Large Class of learners in temporary classroom, Darfur

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CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Multigrade realities and histories

ANGELA W. LITTLE

MAHESWARI: A MULTIGRADE TEACHER

It is 7.30 and Maheswari, the school principal, unlocks the door to the single-room school in the tea estate where she resides. Schoolchildren have been arriving since 7.15: some alone or in small groups; others in a long snaking line, led by an elderly retired labourer. Maheswari’s colleague, Siva, a young untrained teacher, lives 25 miles away and will arrive at the school by bus at around 9.00. But the bus often arrives late, and sometimes not at all.

The school day runs from 7.30 to 1.30, and there are 120 pupils on roll. After a short assembly, Maheswari fills out the attendance registers for each of the classes. Today one-third of the children are absent. Each grade occupies its own space in the open hall, and each is treated as a class. No class has its own walled room, but each class has its own blackboard.

It is now 8.30 and the children await direction from the teacher, quietly and expectantly, their books piled high on their desks. The five classes reflect the graded structure of the national system of education. Officially children enter Grade 1 in the academic year following their fifth birthday, but many in Maheswari’s school start later. Others repeat a year because of low academic achievement, resulting in mixed ages within the same grade. The national syllabus is organised into content and learning objectives for each of the five grades, and textbooks and teaching guides are produced for each.

Maheswari moves from grade to grade, giving instructions, opening text and exercise books and writing exercises on the blackboard for the upper grades. Siva will assume responsibility for Grades 4 to 5 when he arrives. Maheswari tries to keep the children in the upper grades occupied by asking them where yesterday’s lesson finished, setting a related exercise, or asking them to read the text of the next lesson. Even though several of the children were absent yesterday, this does not influence the tasks she sets for the...
whole class, because the children are expected to proceed through the textbooks together.

Meanwhile, the children in Grades 1 to 3 still wait, quietly, patiently. Maheswari hands out maths work cards to Grade 3. There is no time for any introduction to the tasks, and she offers them as exercises in practice and reinforcement. She asks the children in Grade 2 to read out loud from their reading books in unison. At last she reaches Grade 1 and begins their lesson on letters and sounds, writing letters on the blackboard, sounding out the letter and asking children for words that start with the same sound.

Siva arrives at 9.30 and relieves Maheswari of the responsibility for the upper grades. Maheswari continues similarly through the rest of the day, trying to work through the teacher’s guidebook as best she can, teaching each of the grades in turn. The guidebook is designed for teachers who work in schools where a single teacher is responsible for a single grade. Maheswari tries to reproduce faithfully this graded structure in her two-teacher school.

Later that morning an education official arrives to check the attendance registers and school logbook and to convey information about a forthcoming training course for the teachers and examination dates for pupils. Maheswari attends to his questions and, with the help of two children, offers him a cup of tea.

In the meantime, Grades 1 to 3 are finishing their set work and becoming a little restless. She sends Grade 1 outside with an older child to practise their letters with sticks in the sand. A monitor from an upper grade supervises Grades 2 and 3, darting around quickly, distributing verbal punishment here, physical there. The official leaves and Maheswari continues teaching, stopping briefly only when the children break for half an hour in the late morning heat.

Across the official school year of 190 days, Maheswari is absent for 30 days and Siva for 40. When these days coincide, the school is closed.

Maheswari’s experience is similar to that of hundreds of thousands of teachers worldwide. Such multigrade teachers are responsible for the organisation of children’s learning in more than one grade, within a national system of education in which the curriculum is prescribed for each separate grade. The schools in which these teachers teach are multigraded through necessity – too few teachers and students to justify the allocation of one teacher per grade.
EDUCATION FOR ALL

Education for All (hereafter EFA) is a worldwide movement that promotes the expansion and quality of learning for all children, young people and adults. Building from many national and local movements over time, the contemporary movement resonates at the global, the regional, the national and the local levels. It has six goals (www.unesco.org/education/efa). These are:

- access to and improvement of early childhood care and education
- access to and completion of free and compulsory primary education of good quality for all, especially girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities
- appropriate and life-skills programmes for all young people and adults
- improvements in levels of adult literacy
- elimination of gender disparities
- improving all aspects of the quality of education.

In this book we are concerned mainly with the second and the last of these goals.

The EFA Framework for Action identifies primary schools as the institutional means through which these two goals can be achieved. Within primary schools learners are generally divided into grades for teaching purposes. The graded groups are known by different terms in different countries, for example, grade, year, class, standard, but they generally refer to cohorts of children who enter, progress through and graduate from school at the same time and who follow grade-specific curricula. In most primary schools around the world a single teacher is responsible for a class formed of students from a single year grade at any given time in the school day. This is known as monograded teaching. This may be contrasted with settings where a single teacher is responsible for a class formed of children from two or more year grades. This is known as multigraded teaching.

Many of the current shortfalls in achievement of the EFA goals are found among those communities who live at the margins of society and who participate in the margins of the formal education system. At many of these margins, schools either do not exist at all, or where they do, they often involve multigrade teaching.

*Learning and teaching in multigrade settings – invisible and persistent*

Maheswari is but one agent in the worldwide movement for EFA. Her school may be described as a multigrade school. Maheswari herself is a multigrade
teacher, i.e. a teacher who is responsible within the same time period for learners from across two or more year grades. She may be contrasted with a monograde teacher who, within the same time period, is responsible for learners from a single curriculum grade. Monograde schools, monograde teachers and the children who learn in monograded settings form the dominant and visible elements of all national systems of education worldwide. Multigrade schools, multigrade teachers and the children who learn in multigraded settings operate at the margins of these systems and are largely invisible to those who plan, manage and fund education systems. Yet they persist.

The rest of this chapter explores the invisibility and persistence of learning and teaching in multigraded settings in three ways. First, it collates evidence from around the world on its extent. Second, it analyses how monograde classes have come to dominate systems of primary education worldwide during the twentieth century. Third, it outlines the conditions under which multigrade classes arise and persist. The chapter concludes with an overview of the issues that arise from this analysis to be addressed in the rest of the book.

EXTENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MULTIGRADE TEACHING

So how prevalent are multigraded classes around the world? How many learners are in these types of class? How many teachers are teaching across two or more grades? How many schools have only one teacher? And why is it important for EFA to focus on the needs of these teachers and learners?

One of the difficulties in answering questions about extent is the absence of comparable, and, in some countries, any, education statistics. While some countries make available information about the number of one-teacher schools, others focus on the number of multigrade classes and still others the number of multigrade teachers. Still others make no information available.

Terms vary from country to country and can obscure similar settings. In our research (www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade) we have found the following terms used to describe what we would recognise as a multigrade class – combination class, composite class, vertically-grouped class, family-grouped class, un-graded class, non-graded class, mixed-year, mixed-grade class, mixed-age class, multi-aged class, consecutive class, double class, classe multigrade, classe unique.

Although these various terms have been used in a range of settings to indicate what we mean by a multigraded class the reader should not assume that the terms are always synonymous. Similarities in terms can often
obscure differences in meaning and hinder communication across cultural and national boundaries. Take the terms mixed-year and mixed-age for example. In England there is a close correspondence between ‘year’ and ‘age’. Children enter school at the same age (within a calendar year) and move through classes with their age peers. The number of children who repeat a year are few indeed. In such an education system the meanings of a mixed-year class and a mixed-age class coincide. But in many developing countries, despite an official age of school-entry, children enter at different ages and many repeat grades. In Malawi, for example, a recently stated government objective is the reduction of the age range in a class from 10+ years to 5 years (Croft, this volume Chapter 6). In Tanzania the ages of pupils in Grade 1 primary vary from 7 to 15 and that of entrants to Form 1 secondary from 12 to 17+ years (Lewin, this volume Chapter 12). In such settings it would be erroneous to equate the terms mixed-year with mixed-age.

With this caveat in mind, the following statistics reflect the current extent of the multigrade reality in very different countries, expressed in slightly different ways.

- In Australia in 1988, 40% of schools in the Northern Territories had multigrade classes.
- In Burkina Faso in 2000, 36% of schools and 20% of classes were multigraded; 18% of school children were studying in multigrade classes.
- In England in 2000, 25.4% of all classes in primary education were classified as ‘mixed-year’ i.e. two or more curriculum grades were being taught by one teacher; 25% of all learners were studying in mixed-year classes.
- In France in 2000, 34% of public schools had ‘combined’ classes; 4.5% of these were single-teacher schools.
- In India in 1996, 84% of primary schools had 3 teachers or fewer. Since primary schools have five curriculum grades this means that if learners are to be ‘on task’ for most of the prescribed school day, then some teachers must be responsible for two or more grades for some part of each day.
- In Ireland in 2001/2, 42% of all primary school classes comprised two or more grades. Of these 64% were composed of two consecutive grades and 36% three or more grades.
- In the People’s Democratic Republic of Laos in 2003/4 64% of all primary schools had multigrade classes; 24.3% of all classes were multigraded.
In Mauritania in 2002/3, 39% of all pupils were educated in a multigrade class; 82% of these pupils attended schools in rural areas.

In Nepal in 1998, the teacher–primary school ratio was 3.8. Primary schools comprised five curriculum grades. If learners are ‘on task’ for most of the prescribed school day, it follows that most teachers must be responsible for two or more grades for some part of each day.

In the province of New Brunswick, Canada, in 2003/4, 13.9% of all classes in Elementary schools (K–G8) combined grades.

In Northern Ireland in 2002/3, 21.6% of all classes (Years 1–7) were ‘composite’ classes (i.e. two or more grades taught together).

In Norway, in c. 2000, 35% of all primary schools were small schools using multigrade teaching.

In Peru in 1998, 78% of all public primary schools were multigrade. Of the multigrade schools 41% had only one teacher; 59% had more than one. In rural areas 89.2% of all public primary schools were multigrade, of which 42% had only one teacher and 58% more than one.

In Sri Lanka in 1999, 63% of all public schools had 4 or fewer teachers. Some are primary schools with five grades and some are primary and post-primary with up to 11 grades. If learners are ‘on task’ for most of the prescribed school day, it follows that some teachers must be responsible for classes spanning two or more grades for some part of each day.


It is clear from the above that learning and teaching in multigrade schools and classes is extensive in a wide range of countries.

These figures are significant for the achievement of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals in two main ways. First, most EFA planning and funding is predicated on the monograded classroom. In many respects learning and teaching in multigraded and monograded classes are similar. Teachers need training and support; students need stimulation, support, learning materials and feedback from assessment. But needs are also different. Teachers in multigraded classrooms need to support learning across grades – for which curricula, teacher education, and assessment need to be planned differently. Conventional norms on school resources and
teacher deployment to monograded classes do not necessarily map well onto schools where teachers are responsible for two or more grades. Second, access to primary education for all remains an elusive goal in many countries, and especially in geographically isolated, economically poor and socially disadvantaged settings. These settings are often those that give rise to multigrade, not monograde schooling, a fact that is frequently overlooked by EFA planners. Recent enrolment data place the numerical challenge in perspective. In 2000 it was estimated that 562 million primary age children were enrolled in primary schools in developing countries, 62.3 million in developed countries and 11.1 million in countries in transition. Among these 46.5%, 48.7% and 48.6% respectively were girls. Out-of-school children were estimated at 100.1 million, 1.8 million and 2.1 million in developing, developed and transition countries respectively. The corresponding percentages of out-of-school girls were 57%, 43% and 43% respectively. The majority of out-of-school children in developing countries were female; and in developed and transition countries male (UNESCO, 2003). A conservative estimate of 30% of children currently in multigrade classes in all countries yields a world total of 192.45 million. Add this to, say, 50% of the currently out-of-school children for whom opportunities to learn are most likely to occur in a multigraded class. This generates an additional 52 million children. This totals 244.45 million children worldwide for whom a multigraded pedagogy is likely to be the one through which they learn in primary school. For the developing countries alone the total estimate is 218.60 million. And this excludes children in monograded classes who are seeking opportunities to learn on days when teachers are absent. These estimates barely scratch the surface of the challenge, for EFA is concerned not only about access but access to good quality, completion of the primary stage and learning achievement.

THE PARADOX OF MULTIGRADE TEACHING

The significance of multigraded schooling for EFA is greater in developing than in industrialised countries. As the figures above indicate, learning and teaching in multigrade settings is widespread in many countries with well-developed education systems and very high rates of participation. Yet the pedagogic challenges appear to be fewer for reasons that will be explored in subsequent chapters. Elsewhere, we have suggested that these challenges represent a paradox (Little, 1995, 2001; Pridmore, 2004).

For children to learn effectively in multigrade environments teachers need to be well-trained, well-resourced and hold positive attitudes to multi-grade
teaching. However, many teachers in multi-grade environments are either untrained or trained in mono-grade pedagogy; have few if any teaching/learning resources; and regard the multi-grade classroom as the poor cousin of the better-resourced mono-grade classroom found in large, urban schools, staffed by trained teachers.

(Little, 2001: 477)

In the classrooms studied in the research undertaken for this book many teachers regarded multigrade teaching as the poor relation. In Peru teachers’ attitudes to multigrade teaching are generally negative (Ames, 2004 and Chapter 3 this volume). The monograde classroom is perceived as the ‘normal’ classroom; the multigrade classroom as a ‘second-class’ option. The teachers did not choose to work in the multigrade school and felt unprepared to work in these classes. They felt that children don’t ‘get the same’ as in monograde classrooms. The isolated and isolating conditions of work and the poverty of the communities they serve contribute to the negative attitude. In Sri Lanka attitudes of multigrade teachers to multigrade teaching are generally negative. This is partly due to unawareness about the effectiveness of multigrade teaching strategies (Vithanapathirana, 2005). In Nepal, teachers’ attitudes to multigrade teaching were generally negative. Fifty out of 56 teachers interviewed who were currently engaged in or had previous experience of multigrade teaching thought that multigrade teaching is more difficult than monograde teaching (Suzuki, 2004, see Chapter 5 in this volume). In the Turks and Caicos Islands, teachers reserved their most negative comments for the planning burden imposed by the multigrade classroom. One teacher commented that she ‘hates multigrade classes’ and ‘would prefer to teach a monograde class with fifty pupils in it’ because in the former she has to prepare a separate plan for each grade in the class. Only in our London study did we encounter some teachers with positive attitudes. While half of the multigrade teachers interviewed expressed a preference for monograde teaching, the other said they did not mind either way, expressed a clear preference for multigrade or gave qualified responses (Chapter 4 this volume).

Subsequent chapters of this book will explore these and other challenges posed by multigrade settings, and will outline contemporary attempts at resolving the paradox through planned interventions. Before that however this chapter steps back in time to explore how and why the monograde class emerged as the dominant form of school organisation around the world in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.
THE EMERGENCE OF MONOGRADE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The history of the emergence of monograded classes within primary education in different countries is long and complex. Historical texts remind us that many forms of so-called ‘traditional education’ were transacted in one-teacher schools with pupils of various ages and experience. Casual observations of children learning within families and local communities remind us how much and how effectively children develop certain skills and attitudes within mixed-age groups and how this form of learning is as old as mankind. A particular form of the multigraded school, the ‘one-teacher school’ has roots that dig deep into the histories of most contemporary education systems. The history of monograded schooling is much shorter.

This chapter constructs an account of the emergence of the monograded system of schooling in Europe during the late Roman, late Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. It draws on a variety of secondary historical sources and focuses on secular education for children in their initial stages of formal education beyond the home.

One-teacher schools in the late Roman and medieval periods

Morgan (2001) focuses her account of late Roman education on the arrangements made for literacy learning among young children. Drawing from Latin and Greek texts she explains how

\[ \text{[there were no designated school buildings in the Roman world; teachers taught in private houses, or in public places like gymnasia, wrestling grounds and town lecture halls or simply under a portico or in the street.} \]

(Morgan, 2001: 13)

‘Schools’ were generally run by an individual teacher, working alone or sometimes with a subordinate teacher. Children seemed to learn on their own with texts provided by the teacher. There appears to have been no notion of a curriculum in the modern sense of a legal framework of knowledge/skills to be addressed or in the sense of a course to be followed by children of similar ages together. At the elementary stage of education children did not appear to be grouped together as a class.

\[ \text{Children all seem to work on their own, though they talk to each other (and fall out). Except when a teacher dictates grammatical information, there is no sense of the group as a focused ‘class’ and this impression is reinforced when … pupils arrive and depart at different times.} \]

(Morgan, 2001: 13)
Unlike in contemporary Western education there was no notion of cohorts of same-age children entering school at the same time in order to learn to read and write. Children entered school at different ages. Learning was assessed by the teacher informally, as the work progressed. There were no entrance, aptitude or achievement tests, a fact that reflects the absence of any legal requirement that children be educated, nor any guidance on the ages at which children should enter or leave school (Morgan, 2001: 15).

The teacher’s focus on the individual child rather than the whole class was reinforced by educational theorists of the day. One of the most famous, Quintilian (c. 35–90 CE), advocated a child-centred approach to pedagogy in which the teacher

> must attend to the behaviour of the child and watch for his responses; by choosing tasks appropriate to the child’s age, and relating the size and difficulty of the task to his attention span and capacity, better results will be achieved.*

(Bowen, 1972: 202)

Although there was no legally prescribed curriculum for any stage of education, Quintilian’s text prescribes one that spans the elementary stages of literacy and language and the subsequent stages of grammar and rhetoric. Far from it being a wish list, Bowen maintains that Quintilian’s curriculum reflected current Roman and Greek practice.

> Education should begin with reading, progressing from letters through syllables to words and sentences; upon such a foundation the grammaticus can build with instruction in grammar – accidence, analysis, declension and conjugation – along with syntax and orthography. Literature too should be taught by the standard method of praelectio. To that verbal core Quintilian adds mathematics and music, though not for any intrinsic reasons: geometry’s value is in its exemplification of logical reasoning, music is useful as a social grace. Instruction in rhetoric, proceeding from those foundations, is detailed in nine books, following customary practices.

(Bowen, 1972: 201)

More advanced training, especially in rhetoric, appears to have departed from the individualistic approach of teaching and learning at the elementary stage. All pupils were expected to follow the same set of exercises. Teachers interacted with groups of pupils as a whole class, with pupils ‘declaiming’ to the whole class, and the teacher feeding back corrections for the benefit of everyone and not just the individual. A separate strand of education – athletic training – was also organised in groups divided strictly by age (Morgan, 2001). Over time two strands of the classical curriculum became

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* I am grateful to Andy Green for drawing my attention to Bowen’s volumes on the History of Education and for his comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
established – the trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy).

The course of elementary education in Europe between the end of the Roman period and the Renaissance is difficult to track. For some historians this is the period of the Dark and Middle Ages when classical education and culture were replaced by a cultural vacuum. Lawton and Gordon (2002) present a slightly more positive account of educational developments during the period. Roman traditions endured in some parts of Europe, despite the barbarian invasions. Islamic, monastic and other forms of religious education flourished. In non-monastic schools run by the Christian church a liberal curriculum comprising the classical trivium and the quadrivium was adopted. Also at this time the first Universities were being established.

Arès provides an account of schooling in Late Medieval France (c. AD 1300–1400). Medieval schools were ‘confined to the tonsured, to the clergics and the religious’ (Arès, 1962: 137). Elementary knowledge, he maintained, including reading and writing, was taught at home not at school. Nonetheless, many of the characteristics of the ideal-typical medieval school resonate with Morgan’s account of elementary education in the late Roman period. Formal learning was directed by a single private teacher, learners entered his tutelage at varying ages and all studied the same texts and subjects in the same room. There was no notion of a graduated curriculum, no precondition of age for starting or finishing a course of study, and hence, no link between age, class and curriculum level. Learners were differentiated only by the number of times they had repeated or memorised the same (few) books selected by the teacher (Arès, 1962: 141–50).

Hamilton’s description of the medieval school is similar:

A medieval school was primarily an educational relationship entered into by a private teacher and a group of individual scholars. Like guild masters and their apprentices teachers took students at all levels of competence and, accordingly, organized their teaching largely on an individual basis. Such individualization fed back, in turn, upon the general organization of schooling. First, there was no presumption that every student was ‘learning’ the same passage. Secondly, there was no pedagogical necessity that all students should remain in the teacher’s presence throughout the hours of teaching – they could just as easily study (cf. memorize) their lessons elsewhere. And thirdly, there was no expectation that students would stay at school after their specific educational goals had been reached. Essentially, medieval schooling was a loose-textured organizational form which could easily encompass a large number of students. Its apparent laxity (for example absenteeism, or the fact that enrolments did not match attendance) was not so much a failure (or breakdown) of school organization as a perfectly efficient response to the demands that were placed on it.

(Hamilton, 1989: 38)
The emergence of classes and classrooms during the European Renaissance

The shift from ungraded groups of learners, heterogeneous in achievement and age, to the present-day notion of classes graded by age and achievement was a slow process spanning five centuries. Ariès suggests that in France the shift began during the fifteenth century.

The heterogeneous body remained in a single room under the common supervision of the masters, but it was broken up into groups according to the extent of the pupil’s knowledge, and the masters got into the habit of addressing each of these groups separately. The pedagogic practice was the result of the passage from the simultaneous pedagogy of medieval tradition to the progressive pedagogy which would carry the day.

(Ariès, 1962:173)

The separation of groups based on the level of pupil knowledge was the beginnings of the notion of a ‘class’. In France the modern notion of pupils moving from the sixth or fifth class to the first class was established during the second half of the sixteenth century.

From the end of the sixteenth century it was generally accepted in France that every ‘class’ had its own teacher, but not yet its own classroom. The idea of a separate room for each class became established during the seventeenth century and seemed to arise from increases in the school population. Each classroom would comprise pupils separated now by their achievements and the difficulty of the subject matter but not yet by age (Ariès, 1962: 176–82). In England the shift to the teaching of single classes in separate classrooms would be slower. Describing the hesitation of the English grammar schools to increase the numbers of teachers, Ariès (1962: 177) illustrates his case with an example from Eton where, in the mid-sixteenth century, there were still only two teachers – the master and the usher.

The re-emergence of the idea of a graded curriculum

The idea of a ‘curriculum’ or course of study – implicit in Quintilian’s texts on education and in the liberal education of elites in medieval Europe – developed further during the Renaissance period. Bowen (1981) describes how the recovery of classical Greek and Roman texts and their translation into vernaculars by the Renaissance humanists and advances in printing and book production led to the dissemination of learning ‘now organised into pedagogical sequences’ (Bowen, 1981: 6). In the sixteenth century Erasmus
of Rotterdam wrote a treatise, *On the Right Method of Instruction*, in which he argued for

a graded progression of studies from an elementary grammar through a series of Latin and Greek texts to the study of selected passages of classical and Christian literature, with an emphasis on grammatical, syntactical and textual exegesis.

(Bowen, 1981: 8)

Bowen (1981) maintains that the principle of text grading was transferred to the schools where programmes of instruction were also graded. Joannes Sturmis and the city council of Strasbourg are credited with establishing the systematic organisation of schools by grade, a form that spread throughout Protestant Europe.

Pupils were grouped in a series of classes according to their fitness, promotions from one class to another were made annually with solemn ceremony, the classes were subdivided into sections of ten under the charge of an older pupil called a decurion.

(Boyd and King, 1975)

Linking the notion of a curriculum with the emergence of separate classes, Ariès notes how, by the beginning of the seventeenth century in France, classes had arisen in order to divide students by capacity and ‘the difficulty of subject matter’ (Ariès 1962: 182).

Hamilton (1989) traces developments in the notion of curriculum to the practices of the Universities rather than schools. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century records of the Universities of Leiden and Glasgow indicate that the curriculum referred to an entire course spanning several years of study prescribed for each student. Hamilton explains:

Any course worthy of its name was to embody both ‘disciplina’ (a sense of structural coherence), and ‘ordo’ (a sense of internal sequence). A ‘curriculum’ should not only be ‘followed’; it should also be ‘completed’. Whereas the sequence, length and completeness of medieval courses had been relatively open to student negotiation (for example, at Bologna) and/or teacher abuse (for example, in Paris), the emergence of ‘curriculum’ brought … a greater sense of control to both teaching and learning.

(Hamilton, 1989: 45)

Although almost all the schools referred to above conducted studies in the classical languages rather than vernaculars, and were attended by only a minority, developments in the way of organising pupils for instruction and the subject matter of what is to be taught would have far-reaching effects on forms of education throughout the modern world.
The expansion of educational opportunity, costs and the graded school

The gradual expansion of educational opportunity to the poorest (the social group on whom current movements for EFA are most focused) followed different routes in the countries of Europe. In England the processes of industrialisation in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the migration of populations from rural to urban areas led to changes in attitudes to formal education and the numbers of children who participated in it. Children were widely employed in factories, worked long hours under difficult conditions and lived unhealthily. The social reformers of the Enlightenment led movements for the expansion of education to the poorest groups in society. While there seemed to be general agreement about the need for education among the poorest groups in society – civilising, socialising, moralising and industrialising – there was a lack of consensus over responsibility for its provision. But if there was dispute over who should provide and pay for education for the poorest there was less controversy over the form that it should take. As Lawton and Gordon explain,

In 1796, Sir Thomas Bernard, one of the founders of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor, stated that the monitorial system was ‘the division of labour applied to intellectual purposes. The principle in schools and manufactories is the same’.

(Lawton and Gordon, 2002: 117)

As we shall see, the monitorial system combined the traditional idea of the single-teacher school with the emerging and progressive idea of separate ‘teachers’ for each curriculum grade. The monitorial system involved a single master responsible for large numbers of learners in one large room, assisted by a team of monitors. Learners were divided into ‘classes’ or ‘rows’, each the responsibility of one monitor. Each higher class tackled subject matter of a higher order of difficulty. Efficient use of pupil time and low teacher costs were central to this system. This was effected through a division of learners into homogeneous groups, differentiated from each other in terms of achievement level, each group working under the strict supervision of a monitor, the monitors working under the strict supervision of the master. The parallel between the division of labour in the factory and in the school was clear.

In England the monitorial system was promoted by two voluntary and rival bodies, their rivalry contributing to the expansion of mass primary education. The ‘Institution for Promoting the British System for the
Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion’ (otherwise known as the British and Foreign Schools society), employed Joseph Lancaster to promote the monitorial system. The ‘National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church’ (otherwise known as the National Society) employed Dr Andrew Bell to do likewise. Bell is credited by some to have ‘invented’ the method in Madras, India where, as chaplain to five army regiments, he had perfected a method of teaching reading and writing using bright pupils as monitors.

Taylor (1996) provides a detailed account of the monitorial school established by Joseph Lancaster in South London in 1804.

Each boy … sat in his place on a long bench shared with the other nine boys in his class. They were all at roughly the same stage of learning and all were under the guidance of one monitor … some children might only spend a few months at school. Every moment of their time was precious and Joseph endeavoured to see that none of it was wasted…. Every monitor concentrated on instructing his class in one or two carefully designated tasks and doing it thoroughly … the efficiency of the (Monitorial) Plan depended on the monitor knowing exactly what he had to do. It was essential that he was examined by the teacher before he undertook his duties. Some of the monitors were very young, and Joseph took care that their own education was not neglected. But, in teaching others, they were reinforcing their own learning. Each boy in each class knew the immediate goal at which he was aiming and was spurred on to master it by the enthusiasm of his monitor, by the rivalry of his classmates, and by the knowledge that a small reward would be his, once he had mastered the task. He would then move to a new class and a new goal. Each child was able to progress at his own pace and was not necessarily in the same class for every subject. The slow child spent longer at each stage than his quicker classmate…. The quick child was able to progress by leaps and bounds.

(Taylor, 1996: 4–7)

Monitorial schools were notable for their rigid and hierarchical differentiation or grading of classes and subject matter. Meritorious performance was encouraged through praise and points, the accumulated points leading, in Lancaster’s schools, to prizes of bats, balls and kites (Lancaster 1803: 49). Rows were differentiated by the levels of knowledge mastery of the learners rather than their age. The monitorial schools combined elements of what we would term today monograde and multigrade organisation. The monitor was responsible for a single grade at any one time; the single schoolmaster was responsible for organising the teaching and learning of multiple grades of learners.

Monitorial schools for girls were established in urban areas, though in terms of total enrolments boys would outnumber girls. Monitorial schools spread to many other countries. Lancaster promoted the system in the United