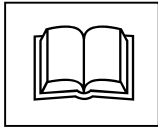


# UNIT 4: Classroom Organisation

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## Introduction

In the previous unit, we explained what a curriculum is. As you go through Unit 4, you will notice how curriculum and classroom organisation are related. This unit will help you to learn about various ways to organise a multigrade classroom.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define and describe classroom organisation.
2. Select a variety of seating arrangements that may be appropriate for your multigrade classroom.
3. Use display boards, chalkboards and learning centres effectively.
4. Arrange an effective classroom shop and reading corner.
5. Use a time-out area and learning centre effectively.

## Content

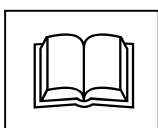
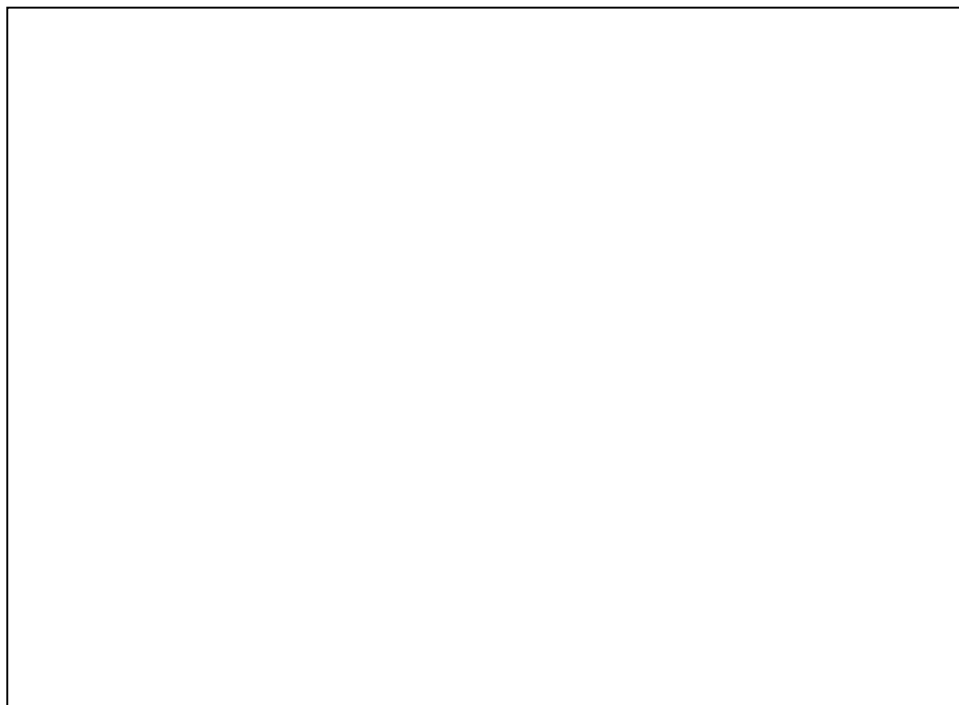
This unit will cover the following topics:

- classroom organisation
- seating arrangements, displays and chalkboards
- learning centres, shops and reading corners
- time-out areas.



## Introductory Activity

Please make a plan of your present multigrade classroom in the space provided. Label the various areas in your classroom, e.g., teacher's desk, students' desks and reading corner.



## **What Is Classroom Organisation?**

Classroom organisation is a way of arranging seating or sitting positions and various learning centres in a classroom.

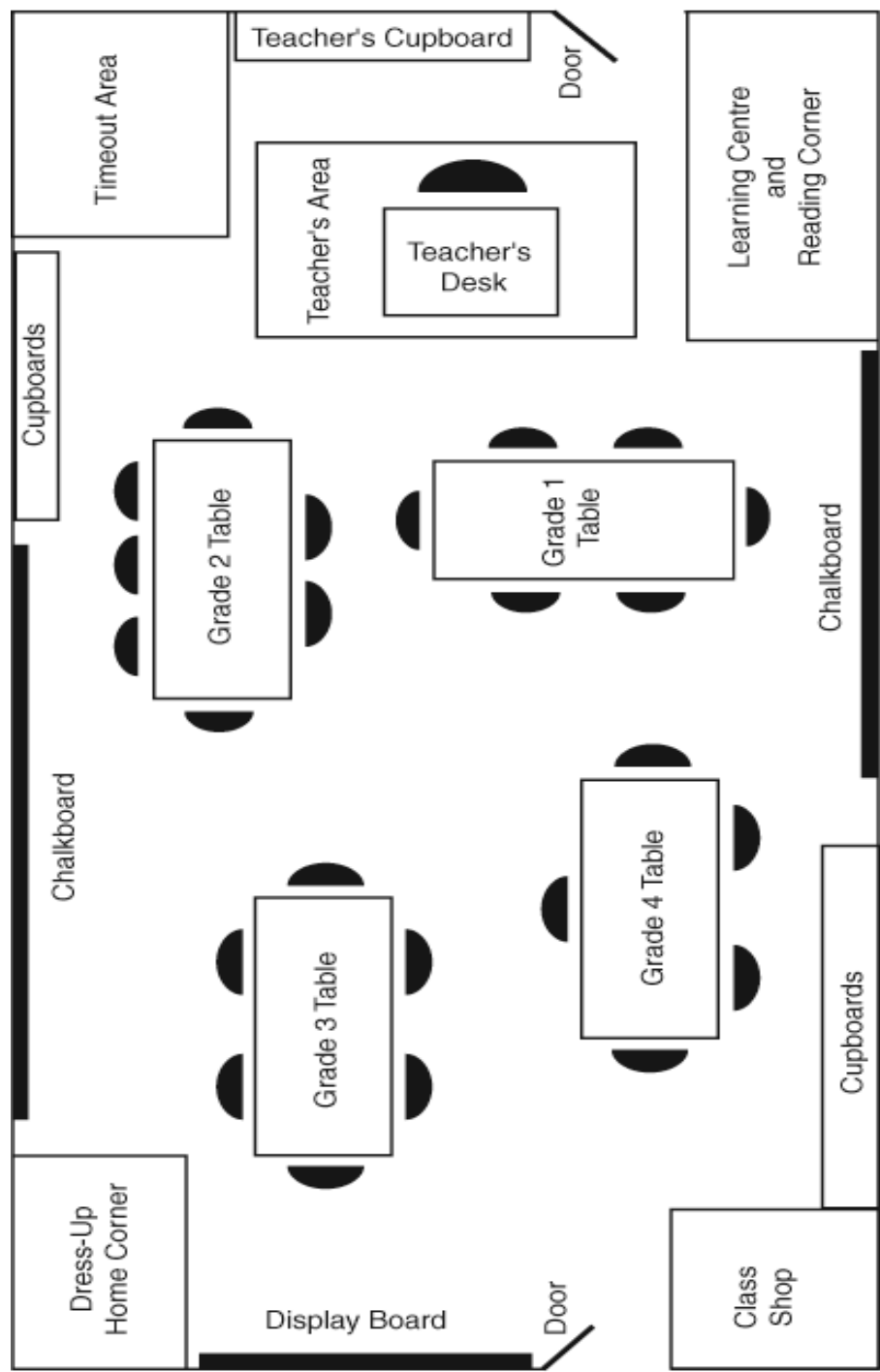
Classroom organisation in a multigrade classroom varies according to circumstances. The circumstances may include available resources, the learners, the environment, the curriculum, learner ages, the number of learners, the health of the learners, the training level and experience of the teacher and the number of grades in a class. The seating arrangement in a multigrade class is very important because it enhances the learning environment.

### ***Seating Arrangement***

As you organise your classroom, note all the factors that influence the plan of your classroom. In the previous unit, you learned that the timetable must be flexible. The same is true for the classroom. You must be able to rearrange the classroom furniture just as you are able to rearrange the furniture in your own home.

Let us look at Model 1 below which shows the arrangement of a classroom.

**Model 1:** A Classroom Arrangement



You will notice that the learners' and the teacher's sitting positions allow them to see the chalkboards. There is enough space for learners to move around. Notice that the teacher is also in a position where she or he can see all the learners. The youngest students are close to the teacher because they need help more often than the older ones. Young students are also at an age when an adult's presence is important to them. They need to be reassured. The time-out area is close to the teacher because the teacher must keep an eye on a child who has to be disciplined. Therefore, the teacher needs to be close to the child to ensure that the learner does what is required of him or her while in the time-out area. You must always remember that the learner must learn something from being disciplined. You must not forget the presence of the learner in the time-out area. The learner should return to his or her place after a specified period.

There are two chalkboards in two areas of the classroom. This means that all learners are close to a board. Such an arrangement is helpful for learners with poor eyesight. You should have low chalk and display boards so that the students can use them.

Special furniture, such as wheelchairs, may be necessary for some learners. There may be times when you will need to go to the authorities to request special items like wheelchairs.

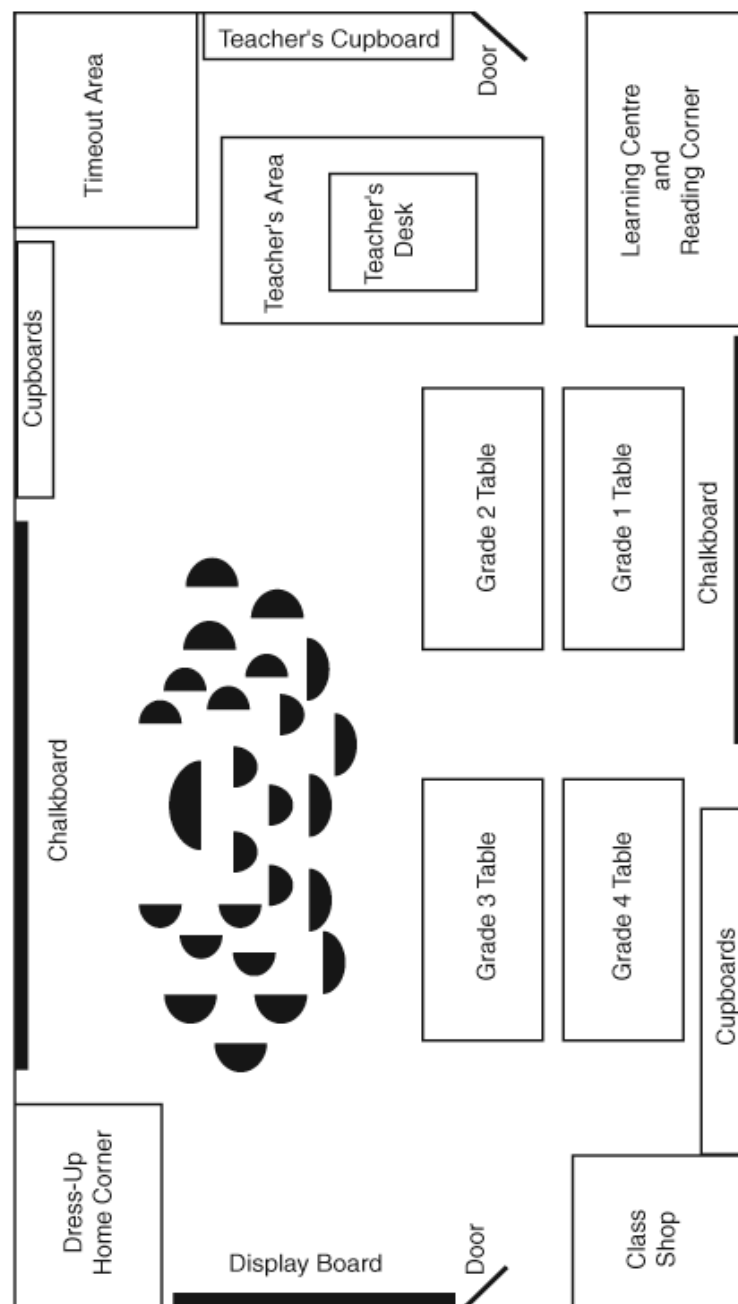
Now let us look at additional resources that are important in a multigrade classroom.

**Students' Desks.** Frequently, teachers tend to allocate desks or tables to learners but fail to guide learners on how to care for their desks. Learners need to know how to keep their desks tidy.

**Walls.** Although teachers are not always consulted when classrooms are built, you could still mention to the principal or school authorities that light colours such as white, light blue and light pink influence learning in a positive way. In some cases, the school can buy the paint and the Parents and Teachers Association can paint your classroom.

**Light in the Class.** In most parts of Africa, light and fresh air are easy to obtain. Learners should be reminded to open their windows in order to allow fresh air in the classroom. In some Southern African Development Community countries, it is very hot. If classrooms are not well ventilated, the learners will be drowsy.

## Model 2: Classroom Arrangement for Story Time



Remember you learned that a multigrade classroom should be flexible. Model 2 looks different because the learners will be listening to a story told by the teacher and the learners themselves. Therefore, the classroom furniture was rearranged to accommodate the story-telling session. You will need to keep in mind that the teacher will have chosen a story that the learners in all four grades will enjoy. There will be times when the story will only be appropriate for the youngest or the oldest learners. The arrangement will then change, depending on the story to be told and the learners involved. Do remember that you also have an outside classroom space that you could use

for story telling. The outside classroom space must also be arranged. You need to be sure that on a hot day, your learners will sit under shade. You also need to be close enough to keep track of the children who are working on their own in the classroom.

### **Shop and Display Corners**

In classroom Models 1 and 2, there are areas such as class shop, learning centre and reading corner and dress-up or home corners. These areas are described below.

**The Class Shop.** You can set up a make-believe store or market in your classroom. Students can pretend they are shoppers or shop-keepers in order to practise a number of skills, including language, social skills and mathematical skills.

The learners and you need to collect the following *empty* basic household items for your class shop: cans of beans, beef soup powder, cartons of milk, cans, boxes of matches and maize meal containers.

If your classroom does not have shelves, you will need to request the school or some parents for help. Some of the parents might volunteer to build them for you. Since your classroom is flexible, you might need movable mobile shelves.

Children can pretend to buy using coins and bank notes made from cardboard or, where possible, specimen or 'play money'. You and the learners need to prepare a price list for all the items. Make sure that all of the children have an opportunity to 'work' or 'shop' in the classroom store.

**Reading Corner.** This is an area to which you and the learners could bring relevant teaching material such as readers, magazines, games, stories and compositions written by the learners. This area must be comfortable. You could bring floor mats and cushions for the learners to sit on. Perhaps, the cushions could be donated by parents.

**Dress-Up or Home Corner.** Learners like to have space in which they can role play. For example, young learners like to pretend they are family members or other people in the community. This activity also helps in the development of their language skills. The older learners can help the younger ones develop these skills. You could have a box full of old clothes such as dresses, shoes and hats in the area. Learners enjoy dressing up when they do drama.

### **Learning Centres**

Learning centres can be used to enhance multigrade teaching activities. The centres can be arranged so that learners are in groups. Materials appropriate for different age levels could be placed in different areas so that the learners can work on their

own. If there is enough space, partitions could be used to separate the centres.

Consider using some of the suggestions on multigrade classroom arrangement in your own multigrade classroom.



### Self-Assessment 1

1. Now check how well you understand the organisation of a multigrade classroom. Indicate whether the following statements are true or false.
  - \_\_\_ a. A multigrade classroom has to be reorganised according to the activities or lessons that will be conducted.
  - \_\_\_ b. A multigrade class arrangement is permanent. It does not change throughout the year.
  - \_\_\_ c. The time-out area allows the teacher to take a break from the classroom.
  - \_\_\_ d. The class shop can help students to develop social, language and mathematical skills
  - \_\_\_ e. The chalkboards and cupboards can be any height in a multigrade classroom.

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 6: Classroom Management and Organisation*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

2. Describe how you would arrange your classroom for storytelling. You could include a diagram of the seating arrangements in your answer.
3. Describe how you would position your desk in your multigrade classroom and explain why you have selected this arrangement.
4. How would you use your 'outside classroom'? How would you prepare for the class?

Suggested answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### Practice Activity

Mrs Maru is an untrained teacher who teaches a multigrade class of thirty learners in a small village at Paje in North Central Botswana. She teaches Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4. Mrs Maru has requested your help. Her main concern is classroom organisation.

Draw a classroom plan that will help Mrs Maru to create a good learning environment for her learners. Please label the curriculum areas.

A suggested diagram of the classroom arrangement is provided at the end of this unit.



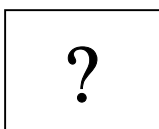
## Summary

In this unit, we discussed the organisation of a multigrade classroom. You learned how to arrange sitting positions and how to set up specialised areas such as learning centres. You learned that a good classroom environment enhances learning. If classroom organisation is done effectively, learners will learn beyond the areas that appear in the curriculum.



## Reflections

Look critically at your multigrade classroom. Are you happy with the way it looks? Would you say that your learners are stimulated? What would you do to improve your multigrade classroom?



## Unit Test

1. Why is the physical learning environment important?
2. List at least five areas that could be included in a multigrade classroom.
3. Why does the multigrade teacher need to be close to the youngest students in the classroom?
4. What is a 'time-out area' used for?
5. What is the importance of having a class shop in a multigrade classroom?
6. Why would you have a language arts centre in your classroom?

Answers for the unit test are provided at the end of this unit.





## Suggested Answers

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### Introductory Activity 1

Your plan should include the seating arrangements for the students and yourself, specialized areas such as learning centres, the location of important resources such as the chalkboard and the location of doors and windows. Review your diagram. Are there any improvements you would like to make?

### Self-Assessment 1

1. The answers to the true and false questions are provided below.

- a. T
- b. F
- c. F
- d. T
- e. F

2. Below is a description of a story-telling arrangement in a multigrade classroom.

The learners need to be seated in a semi-circle or horseshoe arrangement, with the teacher in front. The learners should be close to the teacher so that they can clearly see the pictures and read the captions in the teacher's story book. They also need to be able to hear the teacher well. Tables and chairs should be arranged in such a way that the learners and teacher can move freely.

An alternative to the above arrangement is to have the students gathered in a semi-circle under a tree outside of the classroom.

3. The teacher's desk should be located so that the teacher can see all areas of the classroom. The learners should also be able to see and reach the teacher's desk easily. The youngest learners will be close to the teacher because they need help more often than older students.
4. Outside the classroom in a multigrade class can be used for storytelling, physical education, some art activities and eating.

You should make sure that the area you are going to use is well shaded. The learners could sit outside on mats, benches or on the grass.

### Practice Activity

One possible arrangement for the classroom is provided in the illustration below.

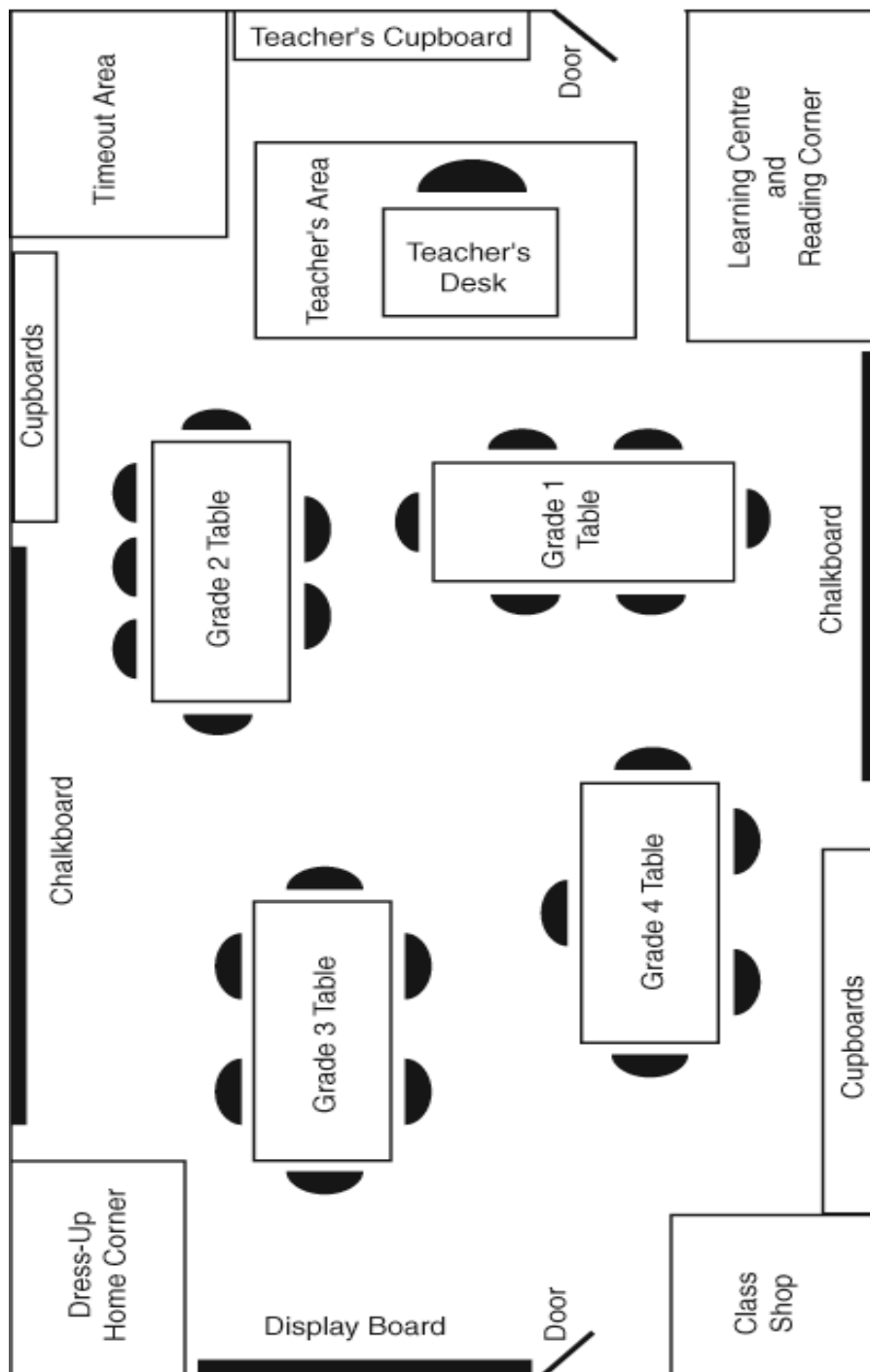


Figure 1. **Multigrade Classroom**

### Unit Test

1. It is important that children be comfortable so that they can move around freely. if the environment contains interesting items, their curiosity will be aroused. They should have a neat environment with light and fresh air.

2. The areas that should be in each multigrade classroom include the following:
  - students' desks or tables,
  - learning centre and reading corner,
  - dress-up corner or home corner,
  - teacher's area, including desk and cupboards,
  - class shop, and
  - display area and chalkboard.
3. The teacher needs to be close to the youngest learners because they need help more often than the older learners.
4. It is important to have a time-out area because a teacher has to have some way of disciplining the learners. The time-out area is meant mainly for discipline, as it separates the learner from other members of the class.
5. The three important reasons for the class shop are:
  - to develop learners' social skills,
  - to develop learners' mathematical skills, and
  - to develop learners' language skills.
6. The language arts centre would focus on the development of language skills, which are fundamental to all learning. This centre would contain books, magazines, stories and compositions written by learners.

# UNIT 5: Classroom Management

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## Introduction

This unit focuses on classroom management techniques that will help you to organize your classroom in such a way that the children in your multigrade class will learn effectively. You will be introduced to techniques that are necessary for effective classroom management.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define and describe classroom management.
2. Identify three dimensions of classroom management.
3. State and describe leadership styles commonly used by classroom teachers.
4. Identify behaviour problems and suggest possible solutions.
5. List physical resources and describe how to maintain them.

## Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- definition and description of management
- dimensions of classroom management
- leadership styles
- behaviour management
- management of physical resources.



## Introductory Activity 1

Please respond to the items below.

1. List three or four duties that the learners are responsible for in your multigrade class.
2. Do parents of your pupils come to your class?
  - a. If not, why not?
  - b. If yes, please explain some of the reasons for their visits.

Possible answers for this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## What Is Classroom Management?

Let us now look at the meaning of classroom management. Before we do, it is necessary for you to first understand what a

class is. Each class is like a large family. During the course of a year, learners get to know one another and their teacher well. In a family, members support one another and share responsibilities under the leadership of the parents. In a classroom, the learners are also together most of the time. They learn together and share responsibilities for their class under the leadership of an adult who is the teacher.

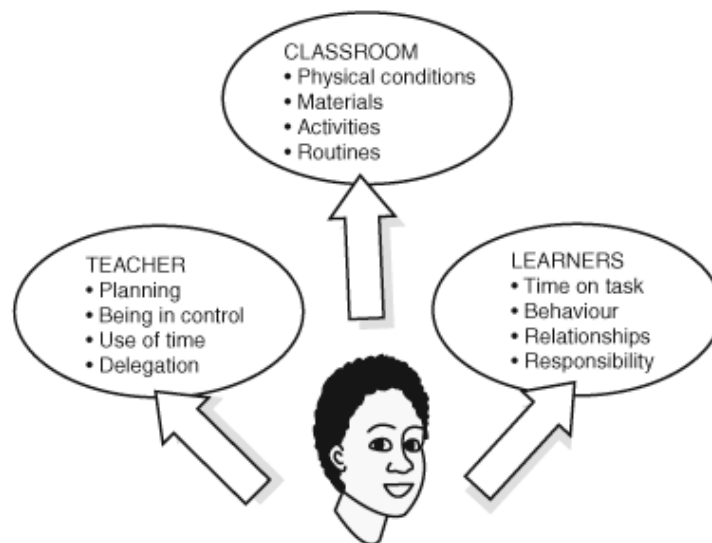
### **What Is Management?**

Management means organisation that leads to an orderly environment. It includes control and the application of rules.

In a multigrade classroom, the teacher, who is the head of the class, has to control his or her class and create a good learning environment for the children. The teacher must also make the learners understand how they can assist in making their class manageable. The learners also play a role in managing the class.

Classroom management can be viewed in three dimensions. The dimensions are the classroom, the teacher and the learners. Now look at the illustration below.

### **Three Dimensions of Classroom Management**



Source: Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. (1996).  
*Teacher Basic Competencies Manual*. Windhoek,  
Republic of Namibia.

In managing the classroom, the teacher has to keep in mind the above dimensions. These three dimensions must be managed effectively if learning is to occur. Each of these dimensions is described below.

### ***The Teacher Dimension***

Multigrade teachers must learn to manage themselves effectively. They must organise and plan their time so that they meet student needs yet cover the prescribed curriculum for each grade. Since they are unable to teach all the students all the time, they must delegate some of their teaching tasks to older learners who can assist the younger ones. However, multigrade teachers are ultimately responsible for all the learners, the activities and the resources that are in a classroom.

### ***The Learners Dimension***

Multigrade teachers must manage the learners under their care. They must ensure that the learners work diligently to complete their assignments, display appropriate behaviour and act responsibly. By guiding students and using themselves as exemplary models, the teachers help students to develop healthy communication and relationship skills. It is important that multigrade teachers manage a caring and nurturing environment so that students can develop their full potential.

### ***The Classroom Dimension***

Multigrade teachers also manage the physical conditions within the classroom, the materials, activities and routines. The physical conditions of a classroom include the desks, seats and facilities for storing material such as cupboard shelves.

The teaching and learning materials that both the learners and teachers need to enhance the teaching-learning process are also managed by teachers. Frequently, these materials are referred to as teaching aids.

Teachers are responsible for facilitating all the learning activities in the classroom and for establishing and maintaining routines.

Routines are procedures that are used to make learning and teaching easier. For example, routines may be established for cleaning the boards or changing displays.

The above dimensions are not the only areas we could consider. However, the three dimensions model is one of the ways we can help you as a multigrade teacher realize how much is under the umbrella of management.

## **Preventing Management Problems**

As a multigrade teacher, you should always try to prevent management problems. One of the ways of preventing these problems is to always remember that the learners are part of the community and that the school is an organisation that is influenced by other organisations. These organisations are also within the community. Therefore, you need to develop a good relationship with your community.

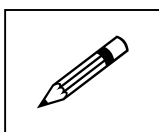
Below are a few ideas that you could use to increase community involvement in your school, followed by ideas that you could use to minimise challenges within the classroom.

**Community Involvement.** You could encourage parents and members of the community to visit your classroom. You could also encourage members of the community who have some skill, to visit your class and work with the learners. Such skills could be sewing, listening to learners read a story or story telling. This will be helpful in the sense that parents and members of the community will know you and your learners and the learners also will know the community. Having parents in the classroom will help to alleviate some of the management problems.

### **Classroom Management Hints**

- Organize your day such that you include activities appropriate for various levels of your learners' abilities.
- Motivate your learners through individualised teaching that includes praise, encouragement and an immediate feedback as soon as the learner completes the task.
- As a multigrade teacher, acknowledge the fact that learners have varied interests.
- After giving instructions to the learners, walk around the classroom to give special help to those who need it. Even though you are unable to give each learner that special attention, try to make all the children know you are aware of them by using eye contact and smiling or touching them lightly on the shoulder.
- Make sure all learners are occupied meaningfully.
- Create an atmosphere that will make learners know that apart from being their teacher, you are also like a friend, a parent, or an older brother or sister. Therefore, they can talk to you in that capacity.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat and Caribbean Community Secretariat. (1998). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 6: Classroom Management and Organisation*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

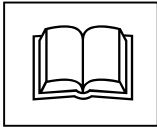


### **Self-Assessment 1**

1. Is your multigrade classroom managed effectively?
2. Is your classroom big enough to accommodate all your learners comfortably?
  - a. If your answer is no, how would you arrange your classroom so that your learners are comfortable?

- b. If your answer is yes, describe or draw your classroom plan.
3. Do you often have children with behaviour problems in your class? If your answer is yes, how do you handle those learners?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Leadership

It might be important for us to explain briefly what leadership means. **Leadership** refers to the responsibility for organising and coordinating the work of others. Generally, any group of people needs a leader: someone who links groups together, someone who represents a group and looks after the interests of others. We have given these types of people different names, including chairman, coordinator or representative. People frequently ask questions such as:

- Who should be a leader?
- Are leaders born?
- Can anyone be a leader?
- Is there a particular leadership trick or style which others can learn or copy?
- Is there a need for leaders?

Source: Handy & Altken. (1988). *Understanding Schools as Organisations*.

There are a lot of questions that could be asked about leadership, but we do not have the time to address these questions in this module. However, we will focus on the teacher as a leader.



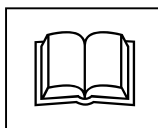
## Introductory Activity 2

Based on the above brief discussion of leadership, please respond to the following questions:

1. Is there anyone in your village, town, district or ward whom you would refer to as a leader?
2. What is his or her responsibility?
3. Do you think it is necessary to have him or her in that position? Please explain your response.

Possible answers to these questions are provided at the end of this module.





## **Leadership Styles**

Previously, we asked if there is a style that certain leaders follow in order to be effective. Let us discuss a response to that particular question. As a multigrade teacher, you are a leader in the class. You have a leadership style. By that, we mean you have a way or a pattern of doing things. In your case, you should have your own way of running your class.

Teachers are generally known to use one of three styles of leadership. Research has shown that each teacher tends to adopt one style. Let us look at these styles individually.

### ***Democratic Participatory Style***

Teachers who exhibit this style give the learners the opportunity and privilege to assist the teacher in the management of the classroom. For example, they will make classroom rules with the teacher, they will be allowed to choose projects and how their work will be organised, mounted or displayed. If you have a democratic participatory style, learners are more likely to offer suggestions and willingly take part in classroom activities.

### ***Autocratic Style***

Autocratic teachers make all the rules and plans. The teacher also selects assignments and decides on the materials that should be displayed in the classroom. The learners may be afraid of the teacher. If you follow this style of leadership, your learners may not ask questions, make suggestions or volunteer to do things for you.

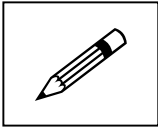
### ***Laissez-Faire Style***

If you follow this style of leadership, you will appear to have little control. Learners will do what they wish to do. There will be no order in your class. Many of your learners may see you as a friend, while others will feel constraint because they want and need your guidance.

In multigrade classroom situations, the democratic style of leadership is preferred because the learners have a chance to practise independent learning skills. Learners also make decisions and solve problems on their own. You will then have time to help those learners who might need special help.

It is important for you, as a multigrade teacher, to understand that the leadership style you select will depend on various factors such as your preferences, the background of your learners and the environment in which you work. Note that although you may exhibit a democratic participatory style most of the time, you may exhibit the other styles under certain conditions. If your classroom were on fire, you would exhibit an autocratic style and tell students to leave the class. You would not spend time discussing the issue or voting on what you should do. Similarly, you may display a laissez-faire style

during class breaks or when students are playing outside of the classroom. Everyone has his or her own style. Do you know what yours is?



## Self-Assessment 2

1. Explain what is meant by each of the following leadership styles:
  - a. Democratic participatory
  - b. Autocratic
  - c. Laissez-faire
2. Which of the above styles is preferred in a multigrade situation? Give reasons for your answers.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Introductory Activity 3

Read the case study below and answer the questions that follow it.

Phiwe, a Grade 2 learner in your multigrade class, is normally a quiet, well-behaved boy. You have noticed that for the past three days, he continually hits other learners. Every time you talk to him, he just cries, but the behaviour continues. When you investigate the issue, you find out that he is hitting the other learners because they are laughing at his torn trousers.

1. What would you do to Phiwe?
2. How would you help him to get his trousers sewn?
3. What would you do to the other learners?



## Management of Behaviour Problems

Some psychologists feel that most behaviours are controlled by how we respond to our environment.

Learners' behaviours are sometimes influenced by the culture or spirit of the classroom. They connect easily with a warm and friendly environment. You need to set boundaries in your class that will help guide your learners in cultivating desirable behaviours. You should help your learners develop self-control or discipline within themselves. Self-discipline is an integral part of responsible living, especially because your learners are going to work in groups.

Learners can display disruptive behaviour when they:

- experience physical discomfort,
- desire attention,
- have too much energy,
- find a lesson uninteresting,
- experience problems at home,
- have poor self-esteem, or
- are unable to do a task.

If you know your learners well, you will be able to identify their problems and act accordingly. If they are bored, change your methods. If they are sleepy in class, make sure they are getting enough sleep at night and ensure that there is fresh air in the classroom.

### ***Who Should Make Class Rules?***

You should ask your learners to assist you in developing class rules, as well as stating the consequences of misbehaviour. In this way, they will understand the rules better, own them and be more inclined to respect and obey them. After developing the class rules, you should ask your learners to hang them on the wall where everybody can see them. You will notice that they will reprimand each other before you even say a word. Make sure you lead by example and that the rules are applied fairly, without exceptions.

### ***Positive Approach to Behaviour Change***

Are you one of the teachers who goes home tired every day because you had to speak threateningly to your learners? Have you tried more positive approaches to change their behaviour?

In most countries in the SADC region, corporal punishment is not allowed. If you apply it, you could be jailed. Learners resent any form of punishment. It can destroy the relationship you have with your learners. Before punishing your learners, you should try the following ideas:

- Find the reasons for misbehaviour.
- Make them think about the people around them and how what they do affects others.
- Counsel your learners and show them different ways of solving their problems.
- Treat all your learners equally.
- Reward good behaviour because
  - learners need attention,
  - it develops self-confidence,
  - learners like to please the teacher, and
  - reward is more effective in changing behaviour than punishment.
- Be a positive role model.

### ***Effective Use of Punishment***

You may need to use punishment when you ask a learner to do something that he or she does not want to do, or you need to correct his or her bad behaviour. After reading the ideas mentioned previously, you should know that punishment should be your last resort. When administering any form of punishment, you should keep the following in mind:

- Learners should know the reason for their punishment.
- Apply punishment as soon as possible after the misbehaviour. The punishment must be directly related to the bad behaviour.
- The punishment must fit the offence committed. It must not be too light or too heavy.
- Don't be emotional when administering the punishment.
- The punishment should come as a natural consequence. If the learner spills water, she must clean it up. If the learner hits another student, he should be placed in the time-out area away from the other students.

***Forms of Punishment.*** There are different forms of punishment that you can administer. A few are outlined below:

- *Detentions.* Keep learners in the classroom during a break or after school. Ask them to do an assigned task. Remember to give them five minutes to relieve themselves. They can also have their lunch in detention.
- *Loss of Privileges.* Place them in the time-out area or isolate them in some way.
- *Work.* The learners can work in the classroom or schoolyard or in the community. The type of work they do is frequently not what they would do on their own.
- *Interview or Learner Conference.* The learner, teacher and principal could discuss the misbehaviour. Then the learner signs a contract explaining what he or she will do to address the misbehaviour or how he or she will act in the future.
- *Parent Conference.* The learner, teacher, principal and parent can discuss the misbehaviour. Again, the learner signs a contract. If the learner breaks the contract, she or he can be suspended.

You should get to know your learners and promote a good relationship with them and their parents. You want to avoid negative behaviours, as they can be very disruptive in a multigrade class.

## Duty List

There are many duties that must be completed in order to maintain a neat and organized classroom and school. You and your learners can make up the duty list together. The learners should have a say in it, just as they should for making the class rules. Remember to keep changing the duty assignments so that all your learners get a chance to be close to you by tidying your desk or table. You can show your learners that you trust them by delegating some decision-making chores to them. This will help them to:

- keep busy and out of trouble,
- be more responsible and accountable for their actions, and
- link duties that they perform at school with duties that they are required to do at home.

Make up a duty list and ensure that all learners participate in maintaining a clean classroom and schoolyard environment. Let the learners clearly explain what you want them to do and why it must be done. Observe while they conduct their duties and, if required, offer suggestions. Thank learners for their diligent efforts.

## Management of Physical Resources

Many multigrade schools are located in communities that are very poor, so you must learn to manage the few physical resources you have. There are four golden rules of managing these limited resources. These are:

- Check everything regularly.
- Repair damage immediately.
- Use the right tools.
- Teach your learners how to handle and take good care of the limited resources you have.

The following must be maintained regularly.

### Buildings

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Roofs:   | Check for leaks on corrugated iron roofs.<br>Re-thatch roofs. Parents can help with re-thatching. |
| Wood:    | Paint or varnish regularly.   |
| Doors:   | Tighten all screws and hinges.<br>Oil the hinges and locks.                                       |
| Windows: | Close windows properly.<br>Replace broken window panes.   |
| Walls:   | Smear or whitewash regularly.   |

Floors: Smear or polish regularly.

Chalkboard: Clean it regularly with water.

Paint it when it becomes difficult to write on.

### Equipment

The following material should be replaced as soon as possible so that school activities can proceed.

- furniture
- teaching aids
- sports equipment
- tools.

**How to Acquire Equipment.** Most materials can be bought, but some materials can be made from waste or discarded materials such as old calendars, wood, nails and bottle tops. Teaching and learning materials can be made by teachers, learners, parents and village experts.

**Storing Materials.** If materials are stored well, they can last for years and save you the trouble of buying or making the same materials over again. You can store your materials in:

- a storeroom
- lockers or on shelves
- storage boxes
- glass bottles with covers
- trunks
- cupboards.



### Summary

In this unit, we discussed classroom management, which is a process through which you manage yourself, your learners and your multigrade classroom. If you manage your multigrade classroom well, you are less likely to experience disciplinary problems.

If you use the appropriate leadership style and effective management skills and involve your learners when making your class rules and duty list, your learners will respect you. You also need to manage your limited physical resources effectively so that they can last longer.



### Reflection

Have a good look at your multigrade classroom. Is it properly managed? Does it have leaks or broken windows? Are your teaching aids properly and neatly stored? Are your learners well behaved? Are they following the classroom routines and

completing their duties? Are you being a good role model for them?

?

### **Unit Test**

1. Describe the three dimensions of classroom management.
2. a. List and explain three leadership styles.  
b. Which of these styles is to be preferred in a multigrade situation? Explain your response.
3. a. List five causes of disruptive behaviour.  
b. Describe five ways to prevent or control disruptive behaviour among learners.
4. Is punishment the best way to address behaviour problems? Explain your response.

Answers to the unit test are provided at the end of this unit.



## Suggested Answers

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### Introductory Activity 1

1. Learners may be responsible for:
  - cleaning the chalkboard,
  - washing dishes after lunch,
  - changing displays, and
  - counting pencils at each work table.
2. No, parents don't come to the school. They may:
  - be too busy,
  - not be interested in their child's progress, or
  - be afraid of coming to school.

Yes, parents of my pupils visit my class. They come to school so that they can:

- take the learner to a local clinic,
- pay school fees,
- pay lunch money,
- explain why the learner was not at school the previous day, and
- ask how their son or daughter is doing in school.

### Self-Assessment 1

1. You may or may not manage your multigrade classroom effectively.
2. a. No, my classroom is not as comfortable as it could be. Perhaps I could provide mats, cushions and specialized areas around the classroom.  
b. As a multigrade teacher, my class is arranged according to Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each grade is on its own for some subject areas, and sometimes the learners go into social groupings. I have made provisions for a class shop, learning centre and time-out area. On Fridays, I arrange for a dress-up corner.
3. Yes, there are children with behaviour problems in my classroom. I sometimes ask a learner to go into a time-out area for a specified period of time.

### Introductory Activity 2

There are many possible answers to this activity. However, your answers may include the items below.

1. Yes.
2. The chief leads the village.



3. a. Yes, the village needs a leader.
- b. There is a need to have a chief in the community because he is responsible for making sure that there is order in the village. He also represents the community in council meetings. He ensures that there is the delivery of basic services such as water, electricity, roads and health services. He is also a role model.

## Self-Assessment 2

1. a. In a democratic participatory classroom, learners have a say in the management of their classroom. They take part in decision-making.
  - b. In an autocratic classroom, the teacher makes almost all the rules and the learners are expected to follow the rules. The teacher also makes all the decisions regarding the types of assignments learners should do.
  - c. In a laissez-faire classroom, the teacher gives very little direction to the learners. Learners are free to do as they wish.
2. The democratic participatory style is preferred in a multigrade classroom because it encourages learners to be more independent. The learners make decisions and solve problems on their own.

## Introductory Activity 3

Your answers may include the responses below.

1. You would counsel Phiwe privately and tell him that he should not solve his problems by violence. When other learners tease him, he must report them to you. If he agrees that his behaviour is due to his being upset because others are commenting on his torn trousers, then I would assure him that I would get his pants sewn. However, he must promise not to hit other learners.
2. You could go to his home and talk to his mother. Perhaps she was not aware that the trousers were torn. She needs to know how the state of his trousers is affecting other students and her son. Or, if you have a sewing kit at school, you could sew his trousers during your free period or break and give Phiwe a note of explanation for his parent.
3. You would counsel the other learners by telling them that they should not tease children who are less fortunate than they are. They should be sensitive and sympathetic. Instead of laughing at Phiwe, they should help him.

## Unit Test

1. This module outlined the following three dimensions of classroom management:

- the teacher, who must plan, lead and delegate classroom activities and assignments. The teacher must also use time effectively.
  - the learners, who must keep their minds on learning tasks, act properly, develop relationships and act responsibly.
  - the classroom, in which activities and routines are conducted in an environment that usually has limited resources.
2. a. Three leadership styles are outlined below:
- Democratic participatory. The teacher and learners share in making decisions about the classroom activities.
  - Autocratic. The teacher controls everything. The teacher may be feared by the learners.
  - Laissez-faire. There is lack of leadership in the classroom. Learners do as they please.
- b. The democratic participatory style is the preferred mode for a multigrade situation. Learners have a greater sense of involvement and commitment, develop decision-making and problem-solving skills and are more highly motivated.
3. a. Disruptive behaviours can occur when learners:
- experience physical discomfort,
  - desire attention,
  - have too much energy,
  - find a lesson uninteresting,
  - experience problems at home,
  - have poor self-esteem, and
  - are unable to do a task.
- b. In order to prevent disruptive behaviour, you should:
- get to know your learners. Investigate their backgrounds and home circumstances.
  - communicate with them both verbally and non-verbally.
  - use a consistent system of rewards and punishment. Be fair and firm at all times.
  - show learners that you care about them and be sincere about it.
  - treat all students equally. Don't play favourites.
  - provide a caring, non-threatening and safe environment.

- ignore some of their behaviours. Remember that children are children, not adults.
4. Punishment is not always the best way to address behavioural problems. It is better to be positive and reward good behaviour. Students may not like a teacher after receiving severe punishment, and this feeling may affect future teacher-learner relationships.

# UNIT 6: Assessment and Evaluation

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## Introduction

When you have an experience, you may make judgements about it. You may make judgements about the food you eat, whether it tasted good or bad, films that you saw or a football team's performance. In each case, you are evaluating a situation.

In a school, you are constantly involved in evaluation. You evaluate the learners' progress, and you evaluate the effectiveness of your teaching.

This unit will introduce you to the skills needed to conduct effective assessments and evaluations in your multigrade classroom.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define the terms 'assessment' and 'evaluation'.
2. Determine when, what and how assessment and evaluation should be done.
3. List the purposes of assessment and evaluation.
4. Identify ways of keeping records of assessment and evaluation.

## Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- the description of assessment and evaluation
- the purposes of assessment and evaluation
- conducting assessments and evaluations
- record keeping and reporting.



## Introductory Activity 1

Benson Frank is in a supermarket. He is reading labels written on two packets of rice in order to decide which to buy. What information is the man looking for?



## What Are Assessment and Evaluation?

### Assessment

What do you think when you observe your friend riding a bicycle without falling off? Maybe you think, "He didn't fall off this time!" This is assessing even if you did not give him a

mark. Whenever you observe an event and make a judgement about its status or success, you are assessing. Therefore, assessment refers to the collecting of information about the learner to find out how well the learner is performing. When assessing, the learner is judged on his or her own performance over a period of time. The learner is not necessarily compared with other learners.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation is the process by which a teacher measures the performance of the learners and himself or herself in order to determine what has been accomplished. Evaluation describes the learners' performance based on additional factors such as:

- the expectations regarding particular learners,
- their present performance compared with their past performances, and
- how well particular learners perform compared with the rest of the class.

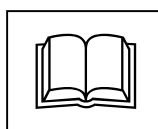
So, evaluation is the judgment made about a learner's performance and is based on a number of factors, including how well a learner has done when compared to other learners.



### **Introductory Activity 2**

Mr Owen gave an English test to his class and awarded marks to each learner. Mr Owen noticed that Otilia had scored 70% on the test. He described Otilia's performance as 'just satisfactory'.

What did Mr Owen do? Why did he describe Otilia's performance in such a way?



### **When Should You Conduct Assessments and Evaluations?**

You can use assessments and evaluations in a number of situations, such as those described below.

- Before a new topic is introduced in order to determine what experiences or understanding the learners already have about that topic. This information will help you decide what new information they need to be taught.
- During an individual lesson. You may want to find out if the learners understand and are learning the concepts being taught. If you note problems, you may be able to help your learners overcome them.
- At the end of a topic, a term or the school year. You want to know if your learners have successfully achieved the programme objectives.

## Why Evaluate?

The main purposes served by assessment and evaluation in the school situation are listed below.

- Assessment and evaluation are very important tools for a multigrade teacher:
  - They provide you with knowledge about how effective your teaching has been.
  - Evaluation helps you to make decisions about what to teach and how to teach.
  - They help you to manage and organize your classroom, schedule your subjects, plan and map out your teaching strategies and decide on suitable instructional resources.
- Assessments and evaluations help the learners.

Remember when you were a learner and were given a test. Do you remember what the results revealed to you? Perhaps the results:

  - helped you to realize how much you knew or did not know,
  - indicated how much you needed to study, or
  - indicated what the teacher expected you to know.

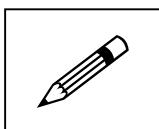
Carefully planned and timed assessments and evaluations can provide useful feedback to the learners about their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, learners are encouraged to develop good study habits that will help them to become self-directed learners. Helping students to learn how to learn is one of the aims of multigrade teaching.

- Assessments and evaluations are important to the school administration.

They play a crucial role in providing school administrators with information for making decisions about learners. For example, administrators need information that will help them determine where to place learners and in which subjects they demonstrate the greatest aptitude. Assessments and evaluations may also point to the need for remedial classes. If need be, school administrators can also identify areas in the school programme that are strong or weak and where action should be taken.
- Evaluation and assessment provide important information for parents.

Results from classroom tests are important sources of information for parents. This information helps parents monitor their children's progress and therefore make informed decisions about their children's progress in a class or a school. As a multigrade teacher, make sure

that the results parents receive are timely, accurate and reflective of the child's performance.



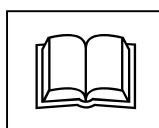
## Self-Assessment 1

In preparation for Sports Day, Miss Ruvarashe spent several sessions teaching the learners in her class how to throw a ball. In the first session, she measured how far each learner had thrown the ball. She noticed that Roy threw the ball a distance of 40 metres while Prosper threw it 50 metres. After the children had practised for two weeks, she again measured how far each learner could throw the ball. Both Roy and Prosper threw the ball a distance of 60 metres.

Miss Ruvarashe then made the statements below about Roy and Prosper.

Place a tick in a box to indicate which item is a statement regarding assessment and which deals with evaluation.

|  | Assessment               | Evaluation               |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. During the first session, Roy threw the ball 40 metres.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Prosper's performance has improved from 50 to 60 metres.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The progress made by Prosper is not satisfactory.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Both Roy and Prosper are good at throwing the ball.                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. At the end of the period of training, Roy and Prosper threw the ball for equal distances. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



## What Do You Assess and Evaluate?

Evaluation and assessment in schools should focus on cognitive, psychomotor and affective outcomes. These outcomes are explained below.

### **Cognitive Outcomes**

Look at the two objectives below:

- Learners should be able to calculate correctly.
- Learners should be able to identify colours.

What do you notice? Do you realise that they both deal with thinking or cognitive skills? The learners are expected to calculate correctly and identify colours. These are called cognitive outcomes.

### **Affective Outcomes**

As a multigrade teacher, try to observe and describe other aspects of the learners' development such as the learners' willingness to:

- assist in doing classroom tasks,
- share resources with friends, and
- organise their own work.

These outcomes which deal with the attitudes are known as affective outcomes. Frequently, these outcomes are not measured, yet they are probably the most important outcomes. You want your students to develop a positive view about themselves and about learning. You want them to be independent learners yet be able to socialise with others. All these are affective outcomes.

### **Psychomotor Outcomes**

Examples of psychomotor outcomes to be assessed and evaluated are:

- measuring lengths,
- drawing, and
- constructing a model.

When assessing or evaluating psychomotor outcomes, include the evaluation and assessment of cognitive ones as well. For example, learners cannot measure the length of a table unless they can read a ruler and distinguish between centimetres and millimetres.

## **How Do You Evaluate?**

Consider ways in which you as a multigrade teacher may need to collect information to decide on your learners' progress.

Did you think of any of the following ways for collecting information for learner assessment and evaluation?

- Giving tests
- Observing and using checklists
- Listening
- Participating in learner activities
- Reading the learners' written work.

One of the above, giving tests, is discussed below.

### **Giving Tests**

A test is a device or tool used to provide data for assessment and evaluation purposes. Tests are usually made up of a uniform set of tasks to be completed by all members of a class



or group. As a teacher, through questions and exercises, you should give learners the opportunity to show what tasks they can do and how well they can do them.

Below are a number of purposes that tests can serve in your classroom situation. Tests can:

- provide information on how well students have mastered content or skills,
- measure a learner's growth,
- diagnose difficulties which learners have in learning materials,
- encourage learners to develop good study habits,
- motivate learners, and
- provide the teacher with feedback as to how effective his or her teaching has been.

### **Types of Tests**

There are two main types of tests. Each is described below.

**Objective Tests.** These tests usually require the learner to answer with a single word, phrase or symbol. The learner obtains the same mark regardless of the person marking. Examples of objective tests are:

- true and false. Learners are asked to decide and indicate whether a statement is true or false.
- multiple-choice. Learners must choose the correct answer from given distracters (incorrect answers).
- matching. Learners must demonstrate a relationship between words.
- gap filling. Spaces are left blank between words in a sentence or paragraph. The learner must insert the missing word or words. Gap filling can be useful for testing knowledge of facts.

**Subjective or Essay-Type Tests.** In these types of tests, learners have almost total freedom with regard to the content used to respond to the question. These are also called extended response questions. In some cases, instead of writing a response, students provide a verbal response.

In structured response essay questions, the learners' responses are limited because the structure within which the answer is to be given is clearly stated. Both extended and structured response categories of essay-type questions are useful for

testing outcomes such as comprehension, application and analysis.

As a multigrade teacher, you must have available a wide range of methods from which you can select to assess your learners' different performances.



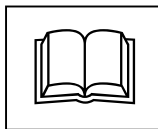
## Self-Assessment 2

State whether the following statements are true or false.

- \_\_\_ 1. Listening is one way of collecting information for learner evaluation.
- \_\_\_ 2. Pencil and paper tests are the best means of assessing affective outcomes.
- \_\_\_ 3. Multiple-choice items are only suitable for testing recall of information.
- \_\_\_ 4. Objective lists allow the teachers to sample large areas of content for testing.
- \_\_\_ 5. A student is more likely to get an answer correct by guessing in a multiple-choice item than in a true and false item.
- \_\_\_ 6. A student should receive the same score in an objective test regardless of who marks it.
- \_\_\_ 7. Essay tests are objective.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 56). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 8: Measurement and Evaluation*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Check your answers with those provided the end of this unit.



## Checklists

A checklist is used during the observation of the learners' behaviour. It is a list of learner activities and behaviours, which you can use to indicate whether those activities have been completed or whether specific behaviours have been exhibited. Checklists are useful to both the learner and the teacher. You can use the data collected from checklists to help you plan activities that would meet the needs of individual students or groups of students.

Checklists can be used to:

- keep track of what learners are doing.
- give learners a clear idea about what is expected of them.

You will find this observational tool important in your multigrade situation. It will help you keep track of several groups, often at the same time.

Below is an example of a checklist on reading. You could use it to keep track of each learner's progress in reading.

| <b>Reading Task Completion Checklist</b>  |            |           |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Grade 3 <span style="float: right;">Date: 99-11-03</span><br>Name of Student .....John Singh .....<br>Skill Area ...Visual and Auditory Discrimination  |            |           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishes between letters seen.</li> <li>• Distinguishes between letters and words.</li> <li>• Distinguishes between letters heard.</li> <li>• Distinguishes between words heard.</li> </ul> | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|   | √          |           |
|   |            | √         |
|   | √          |           |

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 8: Measurement and Evaluation*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Pencil and paper tests, checklists and rating scales provide you with a quantitative assessment of a learner's progress. That is to say, a score is often given to indicate how well the student has done.

### **Other Observational Tools**

In addition to checklists, there are other observational tools that you can use to assess learners. These tools are qualitative in nature, meaning they show when, how and under what circumstances individual learners learn best.

Some of these observational tools are briefly described below.

- One total records. These are records that give short accounts of the learners' performances and behaviour over a period of time.

### Example

Date: ..... Student's name .....

Grade: .....

Shana volunteered to read aloud in class today. She also borrowed a book from the library for the first time.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 84). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 8: Measurement and Evaluation*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

- Teachers' journals. In these journals, teachers record what was taught for a period of time.
- Learners' journals. These contain the learners' record of ideas and comments on classroom experiences.

### Example

#### **JOURNAL ENTRY (Student)**

**Date: September 20, 1998**

We begin to learn about fish today in Science. Our teacher said we will learn how they breathe and how they are important to us. I am very excited about this unit, because I live close to the water and I want to learn about them.

*Amanda Smith 10  
Grade 4*

#### **JOURNAL ENTRY (Teacher)**

**Date: September 20, 1998**

I began the unit of FISH today. I plan to teach the students that they live their entire life in water, they reproduce by eggs, they breathe by means of gills, they are covered in scales and they are valuable to us as food, bait, pets and for tourist activities.

When I pre-tested children on this unit by discussing it with them, I found that they did not have much actual knowledge about fish anatomy. However, they all had fishing tales to tell and they seemed quite excited about the unit.

*Mrs Susan Jones  
Teacher*

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 92). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 8: Measurement and Evaluation*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

- Learner portfolio. This consists of samples of learners' work. Each portfolio is collected for a specific reason.

The above tools are very useful for collecting information about learner progress. They help you as a teacher to understand what your learners are capable of doing and the conditions under which they perform at their best. If information is collected and collated on a regular basis, they can provide you with a good means of learner assessment and evaluation.

As stated earlier, the assessment and evaluation of learners provide useful and very important information to parents, learners, the school administration and teachers. This cannot be possible if the results of your assessment and evaluation are not recorded and reported to them in an appropriate and timely manner. Now, let us look at record keeping.

## **Record Keeping**

Have you ever considered why you keep records of your learners? Record keeping is important for several reasons. By keeping records, you are able to:

- plan your teaching more effectively,
- assign appropriate tasks to students,
- help in guidance and counselling, and
- assist parents in monitoring their children's progress.

Remember that the records you keep should be compiled in such a way that you can easily identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in learners' performances and thus make modifications to their programmes. These records should also be used for producing long-term records for the school.

## **Reporting**

Reporting is very important in the assessment and evaluation process. It is essential that you report to all necessary people, like guardians or parents, about the way the learner has demonstrated competence in a particular area.

Most schools have standardised ways of reporting to parents about their children's performance. It may be a booklet or report card in which grades are recorded. In addition, the teacher and head teacher usually make comments on other

aspects of behaviour such as the learner's conduct in school and on the playground.

You should find ways of reporting to parents that will not create additional strain on you. In order to reduce strain, keep up-to-date and accurate records of your learners' behaviours.



## Summary

In this unit, you have learned that assessment refers to the collection of information about the progress of learners. Evaluation is the judgement made about learners' performance in comparison to that of other learners. As a multigrade teacher, you need to evaluate and assess your learners regularly. You need to observe:

- how effective the programme has been,
- if the learners have understood what was being delivered in class, and
- if objectives have been achieved.

For the multigrade teacher who has to teach many grade levels all at the same time, it becomes important to keep track of the progress of all the learners in all the grades. You have to plan very carefully what to evaluate and how and when to assess and evaluate your learners. Learners should be able to also assess and evaluate themselves to determine how well they are mastering the content delivered to them. The assessment and evaluation of a learner provide information to parents and school administration. This will be possible only if record keeping and reporting are done.



## Reflection

Think of how, when and what to assess and evaluate in your multigrade class. Are there assessment and evaluation tools you learned about in this unit that you could use with your class?



## Unit Test

1. Why do teachers conduct assessments and evaluations?
2. Tapiwa complains that his teacher conducts interesting lessons but gives too many assignments after every topic that he teaches. Explain to Tapiwa how his teacher's action could help him.
3. Why should you record student activities and performances?
4. What is the major difference between objective and subjective tests?
5. Make a short checklist that you could use while observing Grade 7 students reading a story.



## Suggested Answers

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### Introductory Activity 1

Benson Frank may be checking to see

- the weight of each packet,
- the cost of each packet, and
- whether the packet contains brown or white rice.

Benson is actually making an evaluation. He is obtaining information and comparing the information he is receiving. Then he will make a choice based on this comparison. In a multigrade class, you also collect information about students, then compare the information. You may take action as a result of this comparison.

### Introductory Activity 2

Mr Owen has made a judgement concerning Otilia's performance. He may have judged her performance by comparing her score with the marks obtained by other learners in the class. He may also have made his judgement based on what he expects of Otilia.

Mr Owen has done an evaluation of Otilia's performance based on scores and how well the class has performed. A 70% may appear to be a good mark, but if most students received a mark of 70%, then a rating of satisfactory is in order.

### Self-Assessment 1

|  | Assessment<br>Evaluation            |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. During the first session, Roy threw the ball 40 metres.                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 2. Prosper's performance has improved from 50 to 60 metres.                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The progress made by Prosper is not satisfactory.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Both Roy and Prosper are good at throwing the ball.                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. At the end of the period of training, Roy and Prosper threw the ball for equal distances. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Note that assessment is a component of evaluation. You can only evaluate something after it has been assessed.

## Self-Assessment 2

Answers to the true and false test are as follows:

- |      |      |
|------|------|
| 1. T | 5. F |
| 2. F | 6. T |
| 3. F | 7. F |
| 4. T |      |

## Unit Test

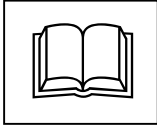
1. Assessments and evaluations are conducted by teachers so that they can:
  - determine the progress the students have made and their strengths and weaknesses,
  - judge whether their teaching methods are successful,
  - identify how they can better assist the learners, and
  - report to administrators and parents about the students' achievements.
2. Frequent assessments can let Tapiwa:
  - know where his strengths and weaknesses are,
  - signal to him what the teacher expects him to know and do,
  - encourage good study habits, and
  - keep him interested or involved in the subject matter.
3. Recording helps you to:
  - plan your teaching more effectively,
  - assign appropriate tasks to learners,
  - help in guiding and counselling learners, and
  - assist parents in monitoring their children's progress.
4. Regardless of who marks an objective test, the students should receive the same mark. This may not be the case for subjective tests.
5. Your checklist could include a variety of items such as those listed below. The learner:
  - spoke clearly,
  - could pronounce all the words,
  - varied his or her voice,
  - used different voices for different characters,
  - spoke without being nervous, and
  - kept other learners interested in the story.



On your checklist, always record the name and grade of your student, the date the activity occurred and the title of the activity.

# UNIT 7: Factors That Affect Learning in a Multigrade Classroom

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## Introduction

In the previous unit, you were introduced to assessment and evaluation in a multigrade class. In this unit, you will be introduced to a system of ideas explaining learning in a multigrade class. Since learning is at the heart of teaching, you need to understand what learning is, how it takes place and how to create an environment that promotes it.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define and describe the concept of learning.
2. Explain how learning occurs.
3. Suggest how to create an effective multigrade learning environment.
4. Identify and discuss factors that influence learning in a multigrade classroom.

## Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- what learning is
- how children learn
- factors that influence learning
- learning and its application to multigrade teaching.

## What Is Learning?

Learning can be defined as a relatively permanent change in behaviours or knowledge that occurs as a result of one's experiences. In other words, learning is a thought process in which humans store, recall and use information. Through this process, learners develop attitudes, values, skills and knowledge necessary for them to function in their communities.

Mrs Melody is always complaining that the learners in her class are not learning. She sometimes makes comments like, "I wish that I could open these learners' heads and pour in knowledge." Miss Isabel is very excited about her class. She often says, "My learners are so good. They learn quickly." Did you notice that both teachers seem interested in their students' learning? Usually teachers are excited when their children learn what the teachers set out to teach and tend to

worry when the students fail to learn. It is important to you as a multigrade teacher that your children learn.



## Introductory Activity

Why do you teach, for example, mathematics, English or social studies? Do you want your learners to learn only concepts or information in a particular subject area, or are you preparing them to take up responsible roles in their communities?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## What Should Your Learners Learn?

You may agree that teachers want their learners to learn to be honest, responsible citizens who have a certain amount of knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes. Decision making, problem solving and critical thinking are some life skills that your learners should learn in order to contribute to society. Now let's look at how people learn and the ways in which you can foster effective learning.

## How People Learn

Some psychologists believe that external forces influence learning, that is, people learn as a result of their interaction with the environment. For example, if a child is given a token or praise for good writing, it is most likely that the child will always try to write neatly. Behaviours that are rewarded are most likely to continue; those that receive no rewards are more likely to weaken. It is therefore important that you not reward undesirable behaviours. You need to find ways to develop positive and acceptable behaviours without using a whip.

Just think of those things you do with your class to encourage the kinds of behaviours you want to foster in the classroom. Below are a few things that you can provide learners in order to foster appropriate behaviours.

- **Prizes.** These could be fruit, pencils or exercise books. They do not have to be very expensive. Prizes provide excitement and tell learners that you are proud of their behaviour and you want them to keep it up.
- **Praise.** Praising is done when learners have completed assigned work correctly. Giving praise helps to promote and teach desirable behaviours.
- **Tokens.** This refers to giving a point to every good behaviour a learner displays. You could reward the learner after he or she obtains, for example, five points. You could give the learner an item or permission to attend an event that learner loves.

- **Food and drink.** You can provide chocolates or drinks if learners demonstrate the desirable behaviours. You should ensure that the food and drink given to learners are those approved by parents.

You now know how to reinforce specific behaviours and you may want to know the ways in which you as a teacher can teach these behaviours. What strategies can be used to foster desirable behaviours? Two strategies that can be used to teach learners new skills and behaviours are discussed below.

## **Strategies to Teach Learners New Skills and Behaviours**

This section discusses the following topics:

- shaping
- modeling.

### **Shaping**

In shaping, you are challenging children to develop the positive behaviours that you want to foster. You have to devise a plan that will challenge learners to want to learn the behaviour but not frustrate them. Be very careful to reward the behaviours that you want to develop in learners. When you as a teacher are shaping behaviours, take note of the three guidelines below:

- Allow time for learning to occur. Do not expect progress too quickly.
- Reinforce behaviours only after students are exhibiting them consistently. If you start reinforcing too quickly, learners may be unwilling to take on greater challenges.
- Reinforce only the behaviours you want to cultivate. Many times teachers pay more attention to bad behaviour than to good behaviour, and thus unconsciously reinforce behaviours that they are trying to discourage.

### **Modelling**

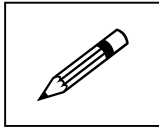
Modelling is imitating the behaviour of persons whom we admire. Children learn by imitating the behaviours of others. If you think back to the people whom you imitated, can you remember why you imitated these people's behaviour?

The three factors below influence modelling.

- Learners model people whom they admire, they like, or they feel are very important or similar to them. That is the reason why learners usually model their teachers.
- If a learner notices that a particular behaviour leads to punishment, the learner is less likely to demonstrate the

behaviour but is more likely to model a particular behaviour that is being rewarded.

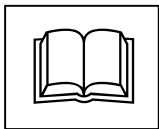
- Remember, when you reward a behaviour, it is likely that the behaviour will be repeated by both the model and the observers.



## Self-Assessment

1. As a teacher, list what you can do in your classroom to foster appropriate behaviours.
2. Observe the learners who are considered models in your class, that is, the learners whom other learners imitate. What are the characteristics of these learners?

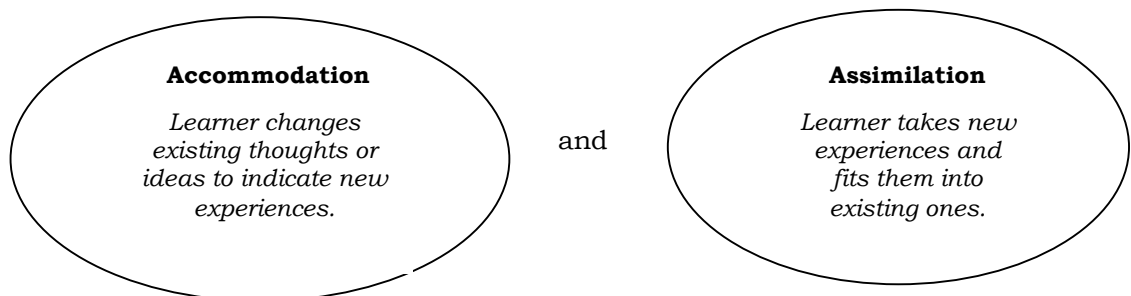
Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Another Perspective on Learning

Some psychologists believe that the learners construct their own learning. The learners should be placed in situations that encourage them to think, make inferences and solve problems. These psychologists believe that knowledge is built by the learner and not supplied by the teacher. Therefore, your classroom should provide learners with meaningful learning activities.

According to Piaget (1992), humans use two processes in constructing knowledge to help them make sense of their experiences. The two processes are stated below.



Consider the following example. For many young children, everything that grows on a tree is a flower. Later, children learn that the tree also has leaves, stems and fruits.

In the first instance, the children are **assimilating**. When the children learn that the tree also has leaves and stems, the children are using the process of **accommodation**.

It is, therefore, very important to expose learners to a wide range of experiences and to have a wide repertoire of ideas which will help them to adapt to new experiences more easily.

Piaget (1992) claims that there are four stages that children must go through in order to develop their thinking. Notice the characteristics of each stage in the box below:

**Table 1: Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development**

| <b>Stage</b>         | <b>Age Range</b>  | <b>Characteristics</b>  |
|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| SENSORIMOTOR         | 0-2 years         | Use of senses and motor activities to help develop schemes or ways of thinking; establishes concept of object permanence.   |
| PRE-OPERATIONAL      | 3-7 years         | Child now able to create a mental image of objects; Begins to understand classifications and places objects into groups. Fantasy and pretend play are now evident.              |
| CONCRETE OPERATIONAL | 8-11 years        | Can reason logically when dealing with concrete and familiar situations. Mental operations include seriation, transitivity and class inclusion; can compare conservation tasks. |
| FORMAL OPERATIONAL   | 12 years to adult | Able to deal with abstract ideas and apply logical reasoning to hypothetical situations.  |

As a multigrade teacher, it is very important to understand that:

- learners construct knowledge differently depending on age and experiences.
- you must have a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies to address the various learning needs of different students.

### **Learning and Its Application to Multigrade Situations**

From what you have already studied, you may have identified some of the ideas and strategies of learning. Perhaps you have already tried these ideas and know the joy that occurs as children learn. What kind of classroom comes to your mind? Do these ideas and strategies work successfully in your multigrade class?

In order for you to meet learning needs of your students, you must be observant and have some knowledge of what children have learned in their previous classes. You should also:

- know about the values, attitudes and skills in the communities in which you teach,
- have knowledge of your learners' home backgrounds,
- be very resourceful and plan lessons in advance, and
- take into consideration the learners' ages and prior experiences.

The multigrade classroom should be a place with much activity, information sharing and gathering. In this environment, you will shape behaviours that you want your learners to demonstrate.



### Practice Activity

Select five teachers and five parents. Ask them what they think children should learn. Categorize their responses under the headings 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'attitudes'. Then answer the following questions about their responses.

1. Compare the views of parents and teachers.
2. Do they think learners should learn the same things?
3. Do they differ in their thinking about what children should learn?
4. What do you think will happen if parents have views that are different from those held by teachers?

Possible answers for this activity are found at the end of this unit.



### Factors That Influence Learning

As you went through this unit, you may have realised that there are other factors that can hinder learning.

Even if you are a fine teacher with excellent ideas and strategies, you will find that your plans do not always work. Your ideas may not always be implemented in the way you would like them to be. Below are some other factors that either enhance or limit effective learning. Remember to aim at developing positive skills, attitudes and values in your learners, as they are the country's resources.

#### **Biological Factors**

Three factors that could affect learners' abilities are heredity, birth defects and maturation.

- **Heredity.** Heredity refers to genetic traits learners inherit from their biological parents. It is very important

that you understand that even with the best strategies, some learners will not perform as well as others.

- **Birth Defects.** Birth defects can affect the learners' brains. If these learners are forced to perform above their capacities, they may get frustrated.
- **Maturation.** There are certain behaviours that cannot be performed until the learner is developed in certain areas. As a multigrade teacher, you have to know whether a learner is ready for the concept that you are preparing to teach. Provide a stimulating environment to make the learner ready to receive the concept.

### **Home and Community Environment**

As a multigrade teacher, you have to be willing to work with the home and community to develop the society's values and skills.

- **Language.** You need to find out what each learner's first language is, use it and help the learner to learn the official language.
- **Gender.** Try to understand that all children, both boys and girls, are important resources. Don't neglect any of them. Your teaching strategies should cater to both boys and girls.
- **Available Resources.** As mentioned in Module 1, many multigrade schools are in remote areas where finances are limited. These areas lack educational resources. What can you do as a multigrade teacher to enhance learning?
  1. You may want to subscribe to educational magazines and journals.
  2. Find time to read newspapers to keep informed and up-to-date.
  3. Develop a link between the school and the community. Members of the community can assist in providing resources. They may sponsor fundraising events.

### **Socio-Economic Status**

The socio-economic status of the home also influences children's learning. Many multigrade schools are in remote areas where most of the students are from low-income homes. Therefore, it is important for you to provide the appropriate learning environment at school.

Do remember that one's job does not always reflect one's intelligence, so you should not equate poverty with low intellectual abilities.

Although there are factors that may negatively affect your efforts to encourage learning in the multigrade classroom, you



should not allow these factors to prevent you from helping children to construct their own learning.



## Summary

Learning can be defined as acquiring knowledge through study and observation. Learning is influenced by the environment, and you can ensure that learning occurs when you apply certain strategies such as shaping (challenging children to develop the positive behaviours that you want to foster) and modelling (imitating behaviour of persons whom one admires).

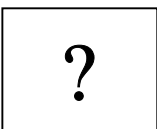
Jean Piaget, a noted psychologist, believes that a learner uses two processes, namely accommodation and assimilation, when constructing knowledge. As a multigrade teacher, you have to understand that constructing knowledge depends on learner age and experiences, so vary your teaching and learning strategies.

In a multigrade classroom, the teacher is faced with a wide range of abilities and class levels. In order to meet learners' needs, you should be observant and knowledgeable. You should create an environment that will provide children with opportunities to develop to their fullest potentials.



## Reflection

Now that you have completed reading the unit, explain the factors that influence learning in your multigrade class.



## Unit Test

1. State and discuss the main factors that influence learning with particular reference to multigrade teaching at your school. Note only the factors that you can reasonably control.
2. Describe teaching and learning strategies you would apply to reinforce learners' knowledge in your class. What factors could undermine your efforts?
3. Please read the case study and do the activity that follows it.

### Case Study

Mr Tanaka is the class teacher for Grades 4 to 8. He has been teaching these grades for the past 8 years. Mr Tanaka has tried numerous methods of teaching students to speak and write fluently in English.

Over the past 8 years Mr Tanaka has been teaching students the basic steps in writing and the rules of grammar. He has made a lot of visual aids and games to reinforce the concepts taught. However, he found that students are still performing poorly in English and they all seem to dislike the subject.

After reading some recent journals on new approaches to the teaching of English, Mr Tanaka eagerly tried out some of the ideas. He started out with debates for all his students at all the grade levels. However, he soon found out that the older children were gaining more from the debates and the students in Grades 4 and 5 did not seem very interested in the debates.

He decided to discuss his situation with his principal, who decided to visit one of the debates. The principal realised that the topics that Mr Tanaka used were of interest to the students in the higher levels but they were too abstract for the students in the lower level.

The principal also realized that Mr Tanaka did not capitalise on the strengths of the lower grades. For instance, the students in Grades 4 and 5 were very good at dramatising their ideas, but they were not very articulate. They also did a good job at presenting their information in picture form. The older students were good at gathering data and articulating their ideas.

Mr Tanaka graded all the classes on their ability to express their ideas.

If you were the principal, what suggestions could you give to Mr Tanaka?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Suggested Answers

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### Introductory Activity

Teachers want their students to learn to be honest, responsible citizens who have knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes. Some teachers only focus on the programmes outlined by the ministry and forget that there is more to teaching than the memorisation of facts.

### Self-Assessment

1. To foster appropriate behaviour, you can award:
  - prizes,
  - praise,
  - tokens, and
  - food and drink.
2. Model learners may be:
  - popular,
  - well liked by most learners,
  - outgoing,
  - sociable,
  - attractive, and
  - the ones who receive praise from the teacher.

### Practice Activity

You may find that parents and teachers sometimes have different views on what children should learn. This may cause conflicts to arise. It is important that you as a teacher discuss with parents what values they want their children to learn. Parents are likely to cooperate if their values are similar to yours. When the values of parents are different, you may need to explain to parents why you think learners should learn certain values.

### Unit Test

1. Factors that influence learning include the following:
  - Behaviours that are rewarded are likely to continue.
  - Prizes can also be used to reinforce behaviours.
  - Praising children for what they do well is another type of reward.
  - Providing learners with tokens when they display appropriate behaviour is also a reinforcement strategy.

- Giving children food and drink may also strengthen behaviours.
  - You could use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and seek out new resources.
  - Treat boys and girls equally.
  - You could learn a student's first language and make him or her feel comfortable.
2. Teaching and learning strategies that could be applied to reinforce learners' knowledge include:
- Shaping. Shaping may not work if you:
    - reinforce too quickly,
    - expect progress too quickly, or
    - reinforce behaviours that you are trying to discourage.
  - Modelling
    - Learners model people they like.
    - Learners model people they admire.
  - Rewarding behaviours
3. You could give Mr Tanaka the following suggestions:
- Select different topics for each grade level.
  - Consider providing a different activity for each grade, but the activity could be based on the same subject. For example, the younger students could visit a local river and write descriptions of the different plants and animals that live in and around it. The older students could debate, in English, the best ways to ensure that the water supply is safe for drinking and bathing.

## Module Test

1. You have learned a variety of teaching strategies in this module. Choose one strategy and describe it.
2. Prepare a short presentation for your next meeting with parents explaining to them why you want to change from a weekly to a daily timetable.
3. Prepare a two-day schedule for your multigrade class and list its purposes.
4. Use your curriculum guide to answer this question. Select a Grade 5 topic and develop it using the spiral approach.
5. Using one paragraph for each area, describe the following areas of a multigrade classroom:
  - language arts centre
  - time-out area
  - the class shop.
6. Learner evaluation can help teachers to improve instruction. Discuss how, when and what to evaluate.
7. Define classroom management in your own words.
8. What kind of a leader would you like to be? Why?
9. Observe the learners who are considered models in your multigrade class. These learners are those whom other learners imitate. What are the characteristics of these model learners?
10. What strategies can be used to foster desirable behaviours?

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