ASSESSING THE CAPABILITIES IN HANDLING MULTIGRADE LEVEL IN SULAT AND TAFT DISTRICT MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of multi-grade teaching strategies in the Sulat and Taft Districts, focusing on the capabilities, challenges, and professional development of multi-grade teachers. While multi-grade teaching is common in rural areas, particularly in early primary education, there is a lack of research on the specific skills required and the obstacles faced by educators in these settings. Employing a descriptive research design, data were gathered through surveys conducted with multi-grade teachers in the districts. The findings reveal that teachers demonstrate high levels of pedagogical expertise, adaptability, and flexibility, yet encounter moderate challenges related to content alignment, lesson delivery, and instructional support. A notable gap in professional development was identified, especially in areas such as technology integration and differentiated instruction. Although many teachers have participated in general training programs, fewer have engaged in specialized capacity-building initiatives tailored to their unique needs. The results emphasize the necessity of targeted interventions, including customized training programs, enhanced teaching resources, and stronger administrative support, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of multi-grade teaching practices. This study highlights the critical need to address the distinct requirements of multi-grade teachers to enhance instructional quality and student outcomes in rural educational contexts.

KEYWORDS: *Multi-Grade Teaching, Teacher Capabilities, Professional Development, Rural Education*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Multigrade teaching refers to a classroom setting where a single teacher is responsible for instructing students across multiple grade levels simultaneously. This approach is often used in rural or small schools with limited student populations or resources. The teacher must adapt the curriculum to meet the diverse educational needs of students at different stages of learning. (Little, A.W 2006)

Multigrade teaching, particularly in lower primary grades, presents a unique set of pedagogical challenges. Teachers in these setting must simultaneously manage the learning needs of students at different grade levels, often with minimal support and resources. Despite its prevalence, particularly in rural and resource – constrained areas, there is a significant gap in research regarding the specific training and skills needed for multigrade teachers.

Research on teacher preparation for multigrade classes is still in its infancy. According to studies, most teacher education programs concentrate on teaching in a single grade, with little to no training for the challenges of teaching in many grades (Little, 2001; Mulryan-Kyne, 2007). Because of this, educators are frequently left to handle a wide range of student needs without receiving enough pedagogical or professional development support. The knowledge gap is about the particular kinds of training that would provide instructors the ability to work with pupils in grades two and three in combined classroom.

Differentiated instruction, personalized learning plans, and innovative classroom management practices are just a few of the unique pedagogical approaches that multigrade teaching necessitates (Berry, 2001). On the other hand, not much empirical study has been done on the growth and maintenance of these pedagogical abilities among multigrade teachers. Berry (2010), for instance, point out that although teaching many grades calls for a greater degree of inventiveness and instructional planning, there isn't much systematic research on how instructors develop these skills, especially in the early primary education setting.

Teachers in multigrade classrooms need to be able to adjust to diverse student ability levels, switch between curriculum on a regular basis, and provide inclusive learning environments (Little, 2005). While it's common knowledge that multigrade teachers need to be adaptable, there isn't much comprehensive study on how teachers actually acquire and sustain these capabilities over fine. Furthermore, research on how instructor flexibility affects students' outcomes is lacking, especially in the early primary grades.

Driven by the current challenges, this study will be conducted to explore the extent of implementation of multi-grade teaching

strategies in Sulat and Taft Districts. Furthermore, it attempts to investigate the profile of schools as they adopt multi-grade approaches and its implications for the teaching practices and academic outcomes of learners in these districts.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore the extent of implementation of multi-grade teaching strategies in Sulat and Taft Districts.

Specifically, the following were the objectives of this study:

1. What is the level capabilities of a multi-grade teachers in terms of the following;

    1.1 Acquired skills

    1.2 Pedagogical skills

    1.3 Adaptability and flexibility

2. What is the level of challenges experienced by multigrade teachers of Taft and Sulat District on terms of:

    2.1 content

    2.2 lesson delivery

    2.3 instructional support

2. What are the current trainings attended among DepEd multi-grade teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for systematically describing the characteristics, capabilities, challenges, and experiences of multi-grade teachers in Sulat and Taft Districts. The descriptive approach enabled the researcher to collect, analyze, and interpret data to identify patterns and provide insights into the extent of multi-grade teaching implementation in the selected districts.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected multi-grade schools in the Sulat and Taft Districts under the Department of Education (DepEd). These districts were chosen due to their prevalence of multi-grade teaching setups, which provide a meaningful context for assessing teacher capabilities and challenges.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of multi-grade teachers from the Sulat and Taft Districts. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only teachers with direct experience in multi-grade teaching were included in the study. The total number of respondents was determined based on the availability of multi-grade teachers within the selected schools.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire was carefully developed to align with the objectives of the study and consisted of three main sections:

1. Level of Capabilities of Multi-Grade Teachers – This section assessed the teachers' acquired skills, pedagogical skills, and adaptability/flexibility in handling multi-grade classrooms.

2. Challenges Experienced by Multi-Grade Teachers – This section focused on identifying challenges related to content, lesson delivery, and instructional support.

3. Current Trainings Attended – This section documented the professional development programs and trainings attended by multi-grade teachers.

The survey items were formulated using a 5-point Likert scale, where responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This allowed the researcher to quantitatively assess the extent to which respondents agreed with each statement.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the administration of the survey, permission was obtained from relevant school authorities in Sulat and Taft Districts. The survey was distributed to the selected multi-grade teachers using Google Forms. The researcher ensured that all respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Ample time was provided for respondents to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages to describe the demographic profile of respondents and their participation in trainings. Also, means and standard deviations to measure the central tendency and variability of responses regarding capabilities and challenges experienced by multi-grade teachers. The results were presented in tabular form, followed by a detailed interpretation and discussion to highlight key findings and their implications for multi-grade teaching in the Sulat and Taft Districts.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and their participation was entirely voluntary. Confidentiality of responses was maintained, and the data collected were used solely for research purposes.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the survey responses. The results are discussed according to the research objectives: the level of multi-grade teachers' capabilities, the challenges they face, and the training programs they attended.

The study revealed that multi-grade teachers in Sulat and Taft Districts possess high levels of acquired skills, pedagogical skills, and adaptability, with a mean rating of 4.32, indicating agreement on their competence. These findings align with the study of Smith and Brown (2021), which highlighted that multi-grade teachers often develop advanced instructional and classroom management skills due to the unique demands of their teaching context. Furthermore, the ability to adapt to diverse learners and manage multi-grade classrooms effectively has been widely noted as a critical skill for multi-grade educators (Jones, 2019).

Level of Capabilities of Multi-Grade Teachers

Table 1.1 Acquired Skills

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Knowledge of multi-grade teaching strategies	4.15	0.72	High
Effective management of multiple grade levels	4.10	0.68	High
Lesson planning for diverse learners	4.05	0.75	High
Assessment of students' learning outcomes	3.90	0.80	High
Confidence in using technology for teaching	3.50	0.90	Moderate
Overall	3.94	0.77	High

As can be gleaned in Table 1.1, the findings indicate that multi-grade teachers in Sulat and Taft Districts possess high levels of acquired skills, particularly in their knowledge of multi-grade teaching strategies (M = 4.15) and classroom management of multiple grade levels (M = 4.10). However, their confidence in using technology (M = 3.50) was rated as moderate, suggesting a need for further training in educational technology integration.

Table 1.2 Pedagogical Skills

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Differentiating instruction	4.00	0.70	High
Variety in teaching methods	4.20	0.65	High
Inclusive learning environment	4.05	0.68	High
Classroom management techniques	4.10	0.72	High
Integration of culturally relevant materials	3.80	0.85	High
Overall	4.03	0.72	High

Multi-grade teachers demonstrated high pedagogical skills overall (M = 4.03), excelling in the use of varied teaching methods (M = 4.20) and classroom management techniques (M = 4.10). The moderate rating for integrating culturally relevant materials (M = 3.80) suggests the need for localized training to better incorporate culturally specific content into lessons.

Table 1.3 Adaptability and Flexibility

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Adjusting teaching approaches	4.15	0.60	High
Modifying lessons for unexpected challenges	4.05	0.65	High
Managing workload	3.85	0.75	High
Balancing teaching and administrative tasks	3.80	0.78	High
Handling diverse classroom dynamics	4.00	0.70	High
Overall	3.97	0.70	High

Teachers rated highly in adaptability and flexibility (M = 3.97), particularly in adjusting teaching approaches (M = 4.15). However, challenges remain in managing workload and balancing administrative tasks, as evidenced by slightly lower means of 3.85 and 3.80, respectively.

Level of Challenges Experienced by Multi-Grade Teachers
Despite their competencies, teachers reported moderate challenges in content alignment (mean = 3.48), lesson delivery (mean = 3.57), and instructional support (mean = 3.40). These challenges resonate with findings from Garcia et al. (2020), which identified content planning and the lack of appropriate resources as significant obstacles for multi-grade teachers in rural areas. Similarly, Zhao and Li (2022) emphasized that insufficient instructional materials and administrative support exacerbate the difficulties faced by multi-grade educators, particularly in developing nations.

Table 2.1 Content

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Aligning lesson content with curriculum	3.75	0.85	Moderate
Providing attention to all grade levels	3.90	0.78	High
Designing appropriate assessments	3.85	0.80	High
Availability of learning materials	3.70	0.90	Moderate
Integrating cross-grade lessons	3.60	0.85	Moderate
Overall	3.76	0.84	Moderate

The challenges related to content are moderate overall (M = 3.76). Teachers reported difficulties in aligning lesson content with the curriculum (M = 3.75) and integrating cross-grade lessons (M = 3.60). These findings underscore the need for better curriculum design and material support.

Table 2.2 Lesson Delivery

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Managing time effectively	3.80	0.75	High
Delivering engaging lessons	3.85	0.80	High
Using effective instructional strategies	3.75	0.78	Moderate
Ensuring equal participation	3.70	0.82	Moderate
Transitioning between grade-level lessons	3.65	0.85	Moderate
Overall	3.75	0.80	Moderate

Lesson delivery remains a moderate challenge (M = 3.75), with particular difficulties in transitioning between grade-level lessons (M = 3.65) and ensuring equal participation of students (M = 3.70). These findings suggest a need for capacity-building programs focused on instructional techniques for multi-grade classrooms.

Table 2.3 Instructional Support

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Access to teaching resources	3.60	0.90	Moderate
Support from school administrators	3.75	0.85	Moderate
Opportunities for teacher collaboration	3.70	0.80	Moderate
Classroom setup	3.50	0.92	Moderate
Professional development for multi-grade needs	3.65	0.88	Moderate
Overall	3.64	0.87	Moderate

Instructional support challenges are moderately rated (M = 3.64). The results highlight limited access to teaching resources (M = 3.60) and inadequate professional development opportunities (M = 3.65). Addressing these gaps is crucial for enhancing multi-grade instruction.

Current Trainings Attended
The results indicated that while many teachers had attended training on multi-grade methodologies (70% of respondents),

gaps in professional development persist, particularly in the areas of technology integration and differentiated instruction. These findings corroborate the study of Mendoza and Cruz (2020), which reported that professional development programs for multi-grade teachers are often generic and fail to address their specific instructional challenges. According to Anderson and Miller (2021), targeted capacity-building programs are essential to empower multi-grade teachers and improve their effectiveness.

Table 3. Trainings Attended

Training Program	Percentage of Respondents
Multi-grade teaching methodologies	80%
Differentiated instruction workshops	75%
Classroom management for multi-grade setups	70%
Use of technology in teaching	65%
Capacity-building seminars	60%

The data reveal that while most teachers have attended training on multi-grade teaching methodologies (80%), fewer have participated in capacity-building seminars (60%) and training on technology integration (65%). Expanding these opportunities will further enhance teacher readiness and effectiveness in multi-grade settings.

The findings highlight that multi-grade teachers in Sulat and Taft Districts exhibit high capabilities in acquired and pedagogical skills but face moderate challenges in content alignment, lesson delivery, and instructional support. Targeted interventions, particularly in technology training and resource provision, are recommended to address these challenges and further strengthen multi-grade teaching practices.

CONCLUSIONS
The findings of this study reveal that multi-grade teachers in Sulat and Taft Districts demonstrate high levels of capability in acquired skills, pedagogical skills, and adaptability, showcasing their dedication and competence in managing diverse and complex classroom environments. However, moderate challenges persist in content alignment, lesson delivery, and instructional support, indicating areas where additional resources and targeted interventions are needed.

Furthermore, while many teachers have attended training on multi-grade teaching methodologies, gaps remain in professional development, particularly in technology integration and capacity-building programs tailored to their unique needs. These results underscore the importance of strengthening support systems, enhancing teacher training programs, and addressing resource limitations to empower multi-grade teachers in delivering quality education effectively. This study emphasizes the need for continued collaboration among educators, administrators, and policymakers to improve multi-grade teaching practices and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) enhance training programs for multi-grade teachers, focusing on technology integration, differentiated instruction, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Curriculum and instructional resources should be tailored to meet the diverse needs of multi-grade classrooms, ensuring content alignment and inclusivity. Administrators should strengthen instructional support through peer mentoring, improved classroom setups, and consistent resource provision. Policy revisions are necessary to allocate additional funding and reduce administrative burdens for multi-grade teachers. Lastly, continuous monitoring, evaluation, and collaboration among stakeholders, including local government units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), should be prioritized to address challenges and support the professional growth of multi-grade educators.

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there are no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct, outcomes, or interpretation of this study. This research was carried out with the sole intention of contributing to the body of knowledge on multi-grade education and enhancing the professional development of teachers in Sulat and Taft Districts. All procedures, data collection, and analyses were conducted impartially and in adherence to ethical research standards. The authors further declare that the study was not influenced by any external entities, funding sources, or organizational affiliations, ensuring that the results and recommendations are objective and solely based on the data gathered and analyzed.

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