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Research Article

Mahirap Pero Kinakaya: A Sequential Exploratory Inquiry on the Experiences of Multigrade Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges and coping strategies of multigrade teachers in the Suyo District. The goal was to suggest policy actions that could improve teaching and learning in rural schools. The research used a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. It started with qualitative interviews to identify common themes and then conducted a quantitative survey to confirm and expand upon the findings.

Results showed eight major challenges: (1) time management, (2) curriculum demands, (3) instructional difficulties, (4) lack of instructional materials, (5) classroom management issues, (6) learner diversity, (7) limited parental support, and (8) insufficient professional development. The quantitative analysis confirmed that the three most pressing concerns were learner diversity, curriculum complexity, and insufficient professional development, as these showed the highest levels of seriousness among respondents.

Teachers tackled these issues using coping strategies in eight areas: time management, instructional flexibility, differentiated instruction, resourcefulness, classroom management skills, adaptive teaching, peer school support, and participation in professional development.

The study concluded that multigrade instruction is a viable way to ensure equal education when teachers receive enough support from institutions and the community. It recommends creating a multigrade-specific curriculum framework, strengthening peer mentoring and Learning Action Cells (LACs), improving professional learning programs, enhancing access to teaching resources, and increasing community and parental involvement.

Keywords: *Multigrade instruction, Rural education, Challenges, Coping strategies, Professional development, Suyo District*

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through formal, non-formal, or informal learning. Formal education occurs in schools, colleges, and universities, non-formal education includes workshops and training schemes, while informal education involves learning through experience and self-directed study. Through education, individuals develop critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and social awareness, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to society. It is a lifelong process that fosters personal growth and societal progress.

Education equips individuals to communicate effectively, pursue aspirations, and improve their well-being. Those with higher levels of education are often more employable and earn higher salaries (Bouchrika, 2025). However, in geographically isolated or rural areas, access to quality education can be limited due to small student populations, scarce resources, and logistical constraints.

To address these challenges, multigrade teaching has been widely implemented in countries such as India, the Philippines, sections of Sub-Saharan Africa, and rural regions in developed nations like Australia and Canada (Farrokhnia, 2025). Multigrade classrooms combine students of different ages, abilities, and grade levels under the instruction of a single teacher. According to Taole et al. (2024), one teacher may manage several grade levels simultaneously in a single classroom, requiring flexible instructional strategies.

Globally, multigrade classrooms are common in rural contexts. In Northern Norway, small schools adopt multigrade teaching due to low student numbers, necessitating tailored strategies across subjects (Bjøru, 2023). Rural Turkey faces similar realities, where limited student populations demand adaptable teaching approaches (Kartal & Demir, 2023). In India and Zambia, challenges such as insufficient training, resource scarcity, and poor infrastructure hinder effective multigrade instruction (Bajpai & Pandey, 2023; Kivunja & Sims, 2024). In Romania and Turkey, teachers struggle with lesson planning, classroom management, and dual administrative-teaching roles, often with minimal institutional support (Acatrinei & Popovici, 2021; Kalender & Erdem, 2021).

In the Philippines, multigrade teachers face considerable obstacles, including inadequate facilities, limited instructional materials, poor internet access, heavy workloads, and hazardous travel to remote schools (Potane & Recla, 2024; Daga, 2021; Naparan & Castañeda, 2021). These challenges are further compounded by insufficient professional development opportunities, language barriers, and limited support from stakeholders (Reyes & Ching, 2024). In the Suyo District, teachers navigate dangerous mountain paths, scarce teaching materials, and lesson plans not designed for multigrade instruction. For the researcher, who is also a multigrade teacher, the lack of adequate materials, structured lesson plans, and proper training represented the most pressing difficulties.

While previous studies have typically employed quantitative surveys or qualitative approaches such as narrative inquiry and phenomenology, few have integrated both methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of multigrade teaching challenges. To address this gap, the present study adopts a Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods Design, wherein qualitative exploration of teachers lived experiences informs the development of quantitative instruments, allowing for statistical validation and richer contextual insights.

This approach is essential for identifying the most pressing challenges faced by multigrade teachers, particularly curriculum load, learner diversity, and insufficient professional training, and for exploring how teachers cope with these issues. By combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for policy reforms, professional development programs, and instructional strategies tailored to the unique needs of multigrade classrooms.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on four interconnected theories—Constructivist Theory of Learning, Social Learning Theory, Socio-Cultural Theory, and Transformational Learning Theory, which collectively explain how multigrade teachers acquire knowledge, face

challenges, develop coping strategies, and grow professionally. The Constructivist Theory emphasizes that teachers construct knowledge and skills through classroom experiences, reflection, and problem-solving, which aligns with studies showing that multigrade teachers adapt teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs (Potane & Recla, 2024; Daga, 2021).

Social Learning Theory highlights learning through observation and modeling, reflecting how teachers adopt effective strategies by collaborating with peers and mentors, as evidenced in both Philippine and international contexts (Bjøru, 2023; Kartal & Demir, 2023). This theory explains how multigrade teachers gain practical skills and coping mechanisms from observing others in similar teaching environments.

Socio-Cultural Theory situates teaching challenges and coping mechanisms within broader social and cultural environments, considering factors such as community expectations, school resources, and institutional support. This perspective corresponds to documented difficulties in rural multigrade settings, including language barriers, limited materials, and insufficient stakeholder support (Naparan & Castañeda, 2021; Reyes & Ching, 2024). It emphasizes that teachers' professional practices are shaped by the social and cultural context of their schools.

Transformational Learning Theory underscores that critical reflection on these challenges leads to meaningful changes in teachers' beliefs, instructional methods, and professional identity. The theory demonstrates how adaptive strategies foster continuous professional growth, as teachers refine their approaches based on lived experiences and the specific needs of multigrade learners.

Together, these four theories provide a coherent framework for examining the main variables of this study—challenges, severity of challenges, coping strategies, and effectiveness of those strategies—linking them to the ultimate outcome of enhanced professional competence and instructional practice, while grounding the investigation in empirical evidence established by prior research.

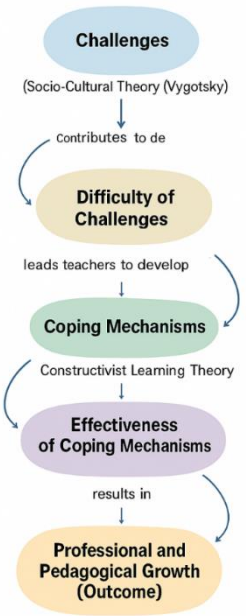

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Study

This figure presents the study's conceptual framework, highlighting how the main variables are connected. When multigrade teachers face challenges, they experience different levels of difficulty, which shape the coping strategies they use. How well these

strategies work affects their professional and teaching development. Four key theories support this process: Constructivist, Social Learning, Socio-Cultural, and Transformational Learning. Together, these theories explain how teachers make sense of their experiences, learn from others, adjust to their environments, and improve their teaching through reflection.

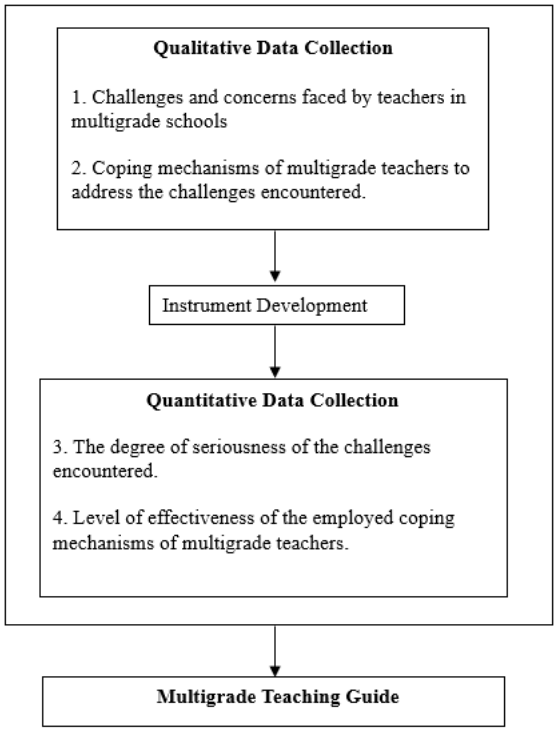

Figure 2. Research Paradigm

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the status of multigrade classrooms in Suyo District. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges and concerns faced by teachers in multigrade schools?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers to address the challenges encountered?
3. What is the degree of difficulty of the challenges encountered?
4. What is the level of effectiveness of the employed coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers?
5. What output can be developed based on the results and findings?

Significance of Study

This research sought to investigate the challenges and concerns of teachers in multigrade schools, analyze the coping strategies they used to deal with these problems, evaluate the effectiveness of these coping strategies, and determine the severity of the challenges faced. By exploring these areas, the study contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning in multigrade classrooms, ultimately leading to the development and enhancement of multigrade education. The results offered useful information that guided policymaking and informed the formulation of strategies to enhance the quality of education in multigrade schools.

Multigrade Teachers. Multigrade teachers benefited from this research with practical insights for planning effective strategies to meet the heterogeneity of learners in their classrooms. The research was also employed in designing materials for in-service courses, preparing teachers with the right skills to master the challenges of multigrade instruction.

School Administrators. School leaders gained a better understanding of the actual challenges of multigrade teachers in the real world. This assisted them in determining the

needs and gaps in support for multigrade teachers and students, which they were then able to address more effectively at the school level.

Researcher. The researcher gained by taking a nurturing, non-intimidating strategy to learn the nature of multigrade instruction. The findings of this study served as a basis to improve teaching and learning outcomes. This research also added the current stock of knowledge, corroborating previous research and discovering new findings that can enhance multigrade instruction.

Future Researchers. Future researchers can use the results of this study as a springboard for further research, examining the same variables and expanding the knowledge base on multigrade education.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study was limited only to the current state of multigrade schools in the Suyo District, particularly the problems and issues encountered by teachers and their effects on educators and learners. It described the coping strategies used by teachers, measured their efficacy, and determined the level of seriousness of these issues. Moreover, the research uncovered potential outputs that can be derived from the findings to assist multigrade teachers.

Due to the geographical and economic limitations of the region, multigrade classrooms have been a necessity. This study examined how these classrooms operated, their level of effectiveness, and areas for improvement. The study covers 12 operating multigrade schools with 20 multigrade teachers. Data was collected through interviews and surveys. Each interview lasted about 5 to 10 minutes.

While this research provided a thorough understanding of multigrade education in the Suyo District, it had certain limitations. The Location of the study was confined to multigrade schools in the Suyo District and does not encompass schools in other regions or countries. It focused solely on elementary education (Grades 1-6) and did not include high schools or higher education institutions. Only teachers and school administrators directly involved in multigrade education were included. Other school activities, special education programs, and extracurricular activities were not part of the study.

The research took place during the 2024-2025 academic year. The findings are based on data collected during this period. The study did not include factors like school infrastructure, outside community support, or the long-term effects of multigrade teaching beyond this timeframe.

The study employed a Sequential Exploratory Research Design, starting with qualitative data collection to explore key issues, followed by quantitative data to identify patterns and validate findings. Surveys and Questionnaires – Teachers filled out surveys to share their experiences and viewpoints. Interviews – Teachers were engaged in interviews to provide deeper insights into their experiences with multigrade teaching. By integrating quantitative data with real-life experiences, this study delivered a comprehensive understanding of multigrade education in Suyo District. The results guided the development of better teaching strategies, enhanced support for educators, and policy recommendations to strengthen multigrade schooling in rural areas.

Definition of Term

The words below are operationally defined to better understand the study.

Multigrade Schools. These are educational institutions in the Suyo District that serve students from various grade levels within a single classroom, led by one teacher. Such schools are often located in remote and rural areas, like the Suyo District, where the number of students is too low to warrant separate classrooms for each grade. (DepEd, 2021)

Teachers' Challenges. This term refers to the specific difficulties multigrade teachers encounter while carrying out their instructional, managerial, and professional duties. These challenges include lesson planning, classroom management, learning assessment, and limited resources. The variable was measured using survey items rated on a five-point Likert scale, reflecting the difficulty level of each challenge.

Coping Mechanisms. Describes the strategies and practices that multigrade teachers use to handle and overcome the challenges of teaching multiple grade levels. These

mechanisms include instructional planning, time management, peer collaboration, mentoring, coaching, and technical support. Their effectiveness was assessed using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from very ineffective to very effective.

Effectiveness of Coping Mechanisms. This term refers to how well the coping strategies used by multigrade teachers decreased the challenges in instruction and management, improved teaching performance, and enhanced student outcomes. It was evaluated through average ratings based on teacher responses regarding the perceived effectiveness of each coping mechanism.

Degree of Difficulty. This term refers to the level of challenge or hardship multigrade teachers experience in completing their instructional and managerial tasks. It was measured using the average scores from survey responses about the perceived difficulty of each challenge.

Suyo District. The geographic location where the research is being carried out, renowned for its distinct educational challenges, such as the requirement for multigrade instruction owing to the distribution of students among different grade levels in rural schools.

Policy Brief. A brief document based on research presents key findings and recommendations to help policymakers, educational leaders, and other stakeholders make decisions. It turns the study results into practical actions or changes that tackle issues in multigrade education.

Multigrade Teaching Guide. A structured resource helps teachers plan, implement, and assess lessons for different grade levels in one classroom. It provides strategies, sample activities, and classroom management techniques aimed at improving teaching effectiveness and student engagement in multigrade settings

Review of Related Literature

The researcher referred to various literature and studies to better understand the issues related to the study. The sources include books, online articles, electronic resources, scholarly journals, and other materials that helped the researcher develop and carry out this research project.

Multigrade Teaching. Multigrade classes consist of two or more grade levels taught by one teacher in a single classroom. These classes are common in remote or sparsely populated areas (Yilmaz et al., 2024). Cakir and Firat (2022) identified several benefits of multigrade teaching. These included closer teacher-student relationships, increased student responsibility, opportunities for peer tutoring, and tailored instruction that met different cognitive levels.

However, multigrade teachers often face significant challenges. Ecleo and Ecleo (2022) noted that most multigrade teachers lacked formal training in multigrade instruction, and opportunities for professional development are limited. Similarly, Recla and Potane (2023) pointed out issues such as classroom management, time constraints, insufficient training, and limited instructional materials.

In a specific context, Badol (2025) studied how multigrade reading teachers in Suyo District, Philippines, taught linguistic segments. The findings indicated that although educators use interactive and phonics-based strategies, they faced challenges like resource shortages, inadequate training, and the difficulty of addressing various learning levels in one classroom. This study highlighted the unique demands of multigrade teachers in Suyo District and supported both national and international findings about the broader complexities of multigrade instruction.

Additionally, Gould (2023) observed that adjusting lessons for multiple grade levels can lead to learning gaps. Barbetta et al. (2023) supported this observation, finding that while younger learners may initially gain from the flexibility of multigrade settings, academic performance may decline over time without targeted intervention and curriculum alignment.

Recent international reports stress that the success of multigrade education depends on teacher preparation, professional growth, and institutional support (UNESCO, 2023; UNESCO Teacher Task Force, 2023). Local evidence supports this. In the Philippines, DepEd (2021) points out the essential role of teacher training and ongoing support, offering a policy framework that guides the current research.

Degree of Seriousness of Multigrade Challenges. The seriousness of multigrade challenges varies based on geographic, socioeconomic, and infrastructural factors. Ucag et al. (2024) documented logistical and emotional difficulties such as tough terrain, limited technology access, and the social isolation of teachers in remote areas. Similarly, Novianti et al. (2022) emphasized that long commutes and low pay contributed to teacher absenteeism, which negatively affected educational continuity.

Kivunja and Sims (2024) pointed out ongoing inequalities in student outcomes in underserved multigrade settings. This reinforces the need to evaluate how classroom conditions and teacher practices affect learning.

Coping Mechanisms of Multigrade Teachers. Despite challenges, multigrade teachers use flexible strategies to keep instruction going. Bagay (2025) noted that differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, project-based learning, and technology use are important coping methods. Badol (2025) found similar strategies in Suyo District, showing that teachers change their methods to close learning gaps in reading. These studies support the current research by providing evidence of specific strategies to examine for effectiveness.

Rondero and Casupanan (2024) recognized qualities like resourcefulness, resilience, and teamwork as essential. Naparan and Castañeda (2021) pointed out time management, reflection, prayer, and lesson planning as coping methods. International findings also emphasize emotional resilience and professional support networks as critical (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2023; Haidusek-Niazy, 2023; Doan et al., 2023). These insights guide the current study in identifying factors that help multigrade teachers in Suyo District continue teaching despite limited resources.

Effectiveness of Coping Mechanisms in Multigrade Schools. Coping mechanisms can improve significantly with structured professional development programs. Medequillo (2024) emphasized that collaborative learning, resource-sharing, and ongoing growth were vital for creating an effective teaching environment. Similarly, Lacre and Valle (2024) found that teachers receiving specialized training in multigrade instruction showed better classroom management and increased student engagement.

Reflective practice and structured feedback have also been shown to improve teacher confidence, adaptability, and instructional effectiveness. Velasquez, Ramirez, Capajaña, and Córdova (2023) found that engaging in self-evaluation and peer mentoring during reflective sessions built greater resilience and professional growth. Similarly, Malicay (2023) noted that reflective teaching and ongoing feedback strengthened teachers' ability to adjust instructional strategies in tough learning environments. These findings support Badol (2025), who pointed out that while multigrade teachers in Suyo District are creative and dedicated, their coping skills would be more effective if backed by ongoing professional development and systematic mentoring programs.

These findings support the current study's examination of how well existing coping mechanisms work. They also point out possible areas for improvement through training and mentoring.

Proposed Interventions. To address the challenges of multigrade teaching, several interventions are recommended. Qayoom et al. (2024) advocated for integrating multigrade instruction in both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. Marin et al. (2024) proposed developing standardized, multigrade-friendly curriculum materials to reduce teacher workloads and streamline instructional delivery.

Kivunja and Sims (2024) called for policy reforms to ensure fair resource distribution, ongoing funding, and teacher support systems. Local studies, including those by Badol (2025), stressed the need for interventions tailored to rural schools like those in Suyo District, where infrastructure and professional development challenges were significant. These recommendations guide the current study's goal of finding practical strategies to support multigrade teachers in Suyo District.

Policy and Guidelines in Multigrade Education. The Department of Education

(DepEd) in the Philippines has long recognized the value of multigrade education, especially in remote and sparsely populated areas. DepEd Order No. 036, s. 2021 created support funds for multigrade schools to improve facilities, instructional materials, and teacher development (DepEd, 2021). The Multigrade Education Program, as described in DepEd's 2020 Programs and Projects Profile, aims to enhance teaching methods and student performance in schools where single-grade classes cannot operate.

Earlier, DepEd Order No. 96, s. 1997, which focused on the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE), established multigrade classes in remote barangays and provided guidelines for adapting the curriculum, deploying teachers, and managing classrooms. This order laid the groundwork for setting up multigrade schools across the nation, allowing learners in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) to receive quality basic education.

Next, DepEd Order No. 63, s. 2010, provided guidelines for carrying out the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education. It strengthened policy support by focusing on teacher training, instructional supervision, and monitoring. It also introduced funds for developing instructional materials and learning resources tailored to local contexts.

In partnership with UNICEF, DepEd has launched initiatives like The Learning Passport (UNICEF, 2024). This digital platform helps disaster-affected and remote schools by offering online learning resources and teacher training. DepEd Calabarzon (2024) also started regional multigrade demonstration schools to showcase effective practices and encourage teacher innovation.

Overall, these policies and programs show the government's ongoing commitment to improving access, quality, and fairness in education through multigrade teaching. However, challenges persist in consistently carrying out these policies, especially in remote districts like Suyo, where teachers still struggle to access professional development and learning resources (Naparan & Castañeda, 2021; Badol, 2025).

These policies outline how the current study works. They show the government's existing efforts and highlight ongoing gaps in professional development and instructional resources, particularly in remote areas like Suyo.

Methodology

This chapter presented a discussion of each research design, sources of data, population, and locale of the study, research instrument, and the analysis and interpretation of data to answer the research problems accurately and comprehensively.

Research Design

This study employed a Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods Research Design, which integrates qualitative and quantitative methods in a stepwise approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. In this design, the study begins with qualitative research to explore a phenomenon in depth, followed by a quantitative phase to test, measure, and generalize the qualitative findings on a larger scale (Kandiero & Makuwatsine, 2022; Saunders & Darabi, 2024). This design is particularly appropriate when existing knowledge about the phenomenon is limited and when the researcher seeks both contextual understanding and statistical validation.

The rationale for choosing this design is to examine the experiences of multigrade teachers in Suyo District, focusing on their teaching challenges, coping strategies, and the effectiveness of these strategies. The design allows the study to first capture detailed, context-specific experiences through qualitative methods, and then quantify the prevalence and significance of these experiences through a structured survey. This approach ensures that findings are both meaningful in context and generalizable to the population studied.

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase I – Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis addressed SOP Questions 1 and 2, which explored the challenges faced by multigrade teachers and the coping mechanisms they employ. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected teachers to obtain in-

depth narrative data, capturing their perspectives and experiences. Thematic analysis was then applied to identify common patterns and key themes, which informed the development of the quantitative survey instrument.

Phase II – Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis addressed SOP Questions 3 and 4, which focused on the degree of difficulty of identified challenges and the effectiveness of coping strategies. A survey questionnaire, based on Phase I findings, was administered to a larger sample of multigrade teachers. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's Alpha, were used to assess the frequency, severity, and reliability of responses. This phase quantified teacher experiences, helping identify which challenges were most critical and which strategies were most effective.

Phase III – Integration and Interpretation addressed SOP Question 5, concerning the creation of a practical output. In this phase, qualitative and quantitative findings were combined using triangulation to enhance the credibility and validity of results. The integrated data provided a comprehensive understanding of multigrade education in Suyo District and led to evidence-based recommendations, including strategies to improve teaching methods, strengthen teacher support systems, and inform educational policy. The research also resulted in the development of a Multigrade Teaching Guide; a practical tool derived from the study's findings to support teachers in managing challenges effectively.

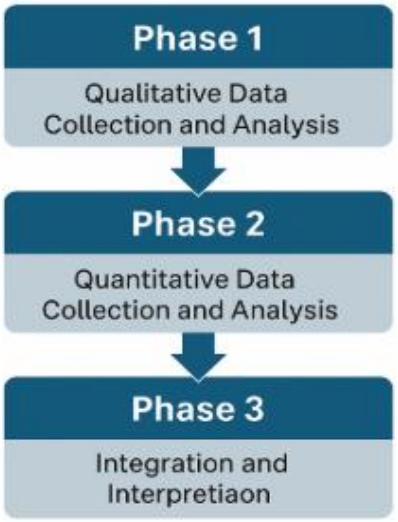

Figure 3. Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods Design of the Study

Population and Locale of the Study

The study involved 20 multigrade teachers from 12 active multigrade schools. These schools are Patoc-ao Elementary School, Ida Elementary School, Kinpatubbog Elementary School, Balangsay Elementary School, Kiblongan Elementary School, Longboy Elementary School, Lubnac Elementary School, Bito Elementary School, Bangcag Elementary School, Butac Integrated School, Dadtuco Elementary School, and Batiangan Elementary School.

This district offered a unique chance to examine the realities of multigrade instruction, showcasing both the difficulties and successes associated with this educational approach. The results of this research provided valuable insights into the functioning of multigrade education in resource-limited environments and helped shape policies aimed at improving teaching and learning experiences.

A purposive sampling method was employed to choose participants based on two main criteria. First, participants must be actively engaged in multigrade education, which includes teachers managing multigrade classrooms. Their direct experiences and viewpoints yielded crucial qualitative data. Second, all participants consented to take part in the

study, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld and that the responses reflected authentic insights.

Data Gathering

The research was conducted in two phases: Phase I (Qualitative Data Collection) and Phase II (Quantitative Data Collection). Both phases followed systematic procedures to ensure data accuracy, ethical compliance, and validity.

Before data collection, a formal research permit was secured from the Department of Education and the school officials of Suyo District in adherence to institutional and ethical requirements. All participants signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF), which outlined the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures, voluntary participation, and contact information for inquiries.

Phase I: Qualitative Data Collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with multigrade teachers in a comfortable and quiet environment to encourage open discussion. Field notes were taken throughout the sessions, which followed a guided interview format while allowing for probing questions. Participants were later invited to review and verify their responses (member checking) to ensure accuracy. The transcribed data were coded and thematically analyzed to identify recurring challenges, coping mechanisms, and learning opportunities in multigrade classrooms.

Phase II: Quantitative Data Collection. The survey instrument was developed based on the themes and results of the qualitative phase to accurately reflect the challenges faced by multigrade teachers. It was validated by three education experts to ensure alignment with the study's objectives and measurement accuracy. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed for all 43 items, and a pilot test was conducted with ten multigrade teachers to assess reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine internal consistency and confirm that the questionnaire produced stable and reliable results.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution) to describe patterns related to instructional challenges, coping mechanisms, and their perceived effectiveness. Results were then integrated with the qualitative findings to form a comprehensive understanding of multigrade teaching experiences.

Research Instrument

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research tools in examining the challenges multigrade teachers encountered, how they coped, the efficacy of their coping mechanisms, and the magnitude of the challenges they faced.

An interview protocol was utilized to collect rich data from multigrade teachers and administrators regarding instructional challenges and classroom dynamics. Field experts examined the interview questions to confirm their validity and applicability to the objectives of the study.

A questionnaire survey was given to district multigrade teachers to evaluate instructional issues, classroom management challenges, and their effects on student learning. Expert review by three specialists in multigrade teaching established content validity. A pilot test checked reliability using Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency.

Content Validity of the Instrument. Experts rated each item on a 5-point relevance scale (1 = Not Relevant, 2=Slightly Relevant, 3=Moderately Relevant, 4=Highly Relevant, 5 = Very Highly Relevant). Individual items had mean ratings between 4.67 and 5.00, with individual-CVI values ranging from 0.93 to 1.00. The overall mean for all 43 items was 4.94, leading to a scale-CVI of 0.99, which surpasses the acceptable minimum of 0.80 (Polit & Beck, 2006). These results show that the instrument has strong content validity and is very relevant to the study's goals.

The table below summarizes the measures used to assess item relevance and validity based on expert ratings. It includes the rating scale, key statistics, and content validity indices, highlighting the overall effectiveness and alignment of the items with the study's goals.

Table 1. Summary of Instrument Validation and Content Validity Index (CVI) Results

Measure	Value	Interpretation
Rating Scale	1= Not Relevant: The item is not relevant to the study's goals. 2=Slightly Relevant: The item has limited relevance to the study's goals. 3=Moderately Relevant: The item is somewhat relevant but could be improved. 4=Highly Relevant: The item is highly relevant, with minor room for improvement. 5=Very Highly Relevant: The item is very relevant and fully aligns with the study's goals.	Scale used by experts to rate relevance of each item
Number of Items Rated	43	Total items evaluated by experts
Mean Item Ratings (Range)	4.67 – 5.00	All items rated highly on relevance
Individual Content Validity Index (I-CVI)	0.93 – 1.00	Indicates excellent item-level validity
Overall Mean Rating	4.94	Very high overall item relevance
Scale Content Validity Index (S-CVI)	0.99	Strong overall content validity (threshold: ≥ 0.80)
Interpretation	–	Instruments have strong content validity and relevance to the study

To illustrate how the three experts evaluated various aspects of teaching and learning strategies, the table below was created.

Table 2. Item-Level Content Validity Ratings of the Multigrade Teachers Questionnaire

Item No.	Item Description	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Mean Rating	I-CVI	Interpretation
1	Difficulty in Time Management	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
2	Challenge in Curriculum	5	5	4	4.67	0.93	Excellent
3	Challenge in Instruction	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
4	Lack of Instructional Materials	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
5	Constraints in Classroom Management	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
6	Constraints in Learner Diversity	5	5	4	4.67	0.93	Excellent
7	Limited Parental Support	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent

Item No.	Item Description	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Mean Rating	I-CVI	Interpretation
8	Insufficient Professional Development	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
9	Employing rotation strategies	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
10	Preparing/printing materials in advance	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
11	Giving seatwork and self-directed learning	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
12	Using same topics with differentiated activities	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
13	Prioritizing essential competencies	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
14	Adjusting lessons to learners' pace	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
15	Integrating lessons across subjects	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
16	Collaborative planning with colleagues	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
17	Aligning with competencies	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
18	Implementing differentiated instruction	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
19	Peer tutoring and peer teaching	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
20	Group activities and collaborative learning	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
21	Using multigrade-friendly materials	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
22	Integrating real-life applications	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
23	Creating/adapting resources	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
24	Printing activity sheets	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
25	Sharing resources	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
26	Utilizing technology	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
27	Adjusting activities across grade levels	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
28	Setting classroom routines	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
29	Encouraging peer collaboration	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
30	Engaging learners in self-directed tasks	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
31	Maintaining a positive mindset	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent

Item No.	Item Description	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Mean Rating	I-CVI	Interpretation
32	Using differentiated activities	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
33	Pairing learners by ability	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
34	Giving individualized support	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
35	Encouraging collaboration among learners	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
36	Conducting remedial sessions	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
37	Encouraging learner independence	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
38	Collaborating with colleagues	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
39	Attending training/workshops	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
40	Sharing ideas/experiences	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
41	Asking advice from colleagues	5	4	5	4.67	0.93	Excellent
42	Joining peer learning/collaborative planning	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent
43	Getting support or encouragement	5	5	5	5.00	1.00	Excellent

Reliability of the Instrument. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha (α). A pilot test was first administered to ten (10) multigrade teachers, which yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.93. During the actual survey with twenty (20) respondents, the coefficient slightly increased to 0.9486.

The formula for Cronbach's Alpha is expressed as:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_t^2}\right)$$

Where:

- α = Cronbach's alpha (reliability coefficient)
- k = number of items in the instrument
- $\Sigma\sigma_i^2$ = sum of the variances of each item
- σ_t^2 = variance of the total score

Using this formula, the computed values were as follows:

Table 3. Reliability Test Results of the Research Instrument

Testing Phase	No. of Respondents (n)	No. of Items (k)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Pilot Test	10	43	0.9300	Excellent Reliability
Actual Survey	20	43	0.9486	Excellent Reliability

According to George and Mallery (2003), Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90 and above is considered excellent. Furthermore, Tavakol and Dennick (2011) affirm that values above 0.90 indicate strong inter-item correlations without redundancy. Hence, both computed alpha coefficients demonstrate that the instrument possessed excellent internal consistency

and reliability, validating its appropriateness for the study's objectives.

Data Analysis and Treatment of Data

This research adopted a systematic two-phase methodology to examine and interpret qualitative and quantitative data to gain an overall understanding of multigrade teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and the effectiveness of their adopted strategies in Suyo District.

The qualitative data collected in this study were analyzed using a two-step thematic approach referred to as Cool Analysis and Warm Analysis, which represents the researcher's adaptation of conventional Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to fit the study's objectives. During the Cool Analysis phase, interview transcripts were carefully prepared and examined to identify meaningful units of data. These units were then organized into broader categories, such as educational challenges, coping strategies, and classroom practices. In the Warm Analysis phase, a deeper interpretive process was conducted, exploring relationships among themes and extracting key insights from the data. This approach allowed for richer interpretation of participants' experiences while maintaining systematic rigor. To ensure credibility and validity, member checking was employed, allowing participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. The final synthesized themes were presented in a narrative form that directly addressed the research questions, providing both descriptive and interpretive insights into the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers.

Quantitative data were treated by frequency counts to determine the frequency at which challenges or benefits appear and the calculation of means to identify the average level of severity or effectiveness. 5-point Likert scale was utilized to assess the severity of challenges and the effectiveness of coping strategies:

Table 4. Descriptive Rating Scale for Coping Mechanisms of Multigrade Teachers

Scale	Scale Limit	Descriptive Equivalent
5	4.20 – 5.00	*Strongly Agree:* Demonstrates a high level of agreement, consistently exceeding expectations
4	3.40 – 4.19	*Agree:* Shows a solid level of agreement, generally meeting and occasionally exceeding expectations
3	2.60 – 3.39	*Neutral:* Represents a moderate stance, meeting basic standards but allowing room for improvement
2	1.80 – 2.59	*Disagree:* Falls short of agreement, indicating areas needing improvement
1	1.00 – 1.79	*Strongly Disagree:* Demonstrates a low level of agreement, consistently failing to meet expectations

Table 5. Descriptive Rating Scale for the Level of Difficulty of Challenges Faced by Multigrade Teachers

Scale	Scale Limit	Descriptive Equivalent
5	4.20 – 5.00	*Very Difficult:* Indicates an extremely high level of difficulty, requiring exceptional effort and support to overcome.
4	3.40 – 4.19	Difficult: Reflects a significant level of difficulty that may impede performance if not managed effectively.
3	2.60 – 3.39	*Moderately Difficult:* Represents a moderate challenge that can be managed with some adjustments and support.
2	1.80 – 2.59	*Slightly Difficult:* Shows minor difficulty that has limited impact and can be easily addressed.
1	1.00 – 1.79	*Not Difficult:* Indicates minimal or no difficulty, posing little challenge to performance.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher applied the principles of the Virtue Ethics Model. In this study, participants were treated with full care and respect so that no harm was caused to them at any stage of the study. All participants provided full, informed consent before participating. Clearlys in the chosen multigrade elementary schools within the Suyo District were clearly and transparently informed about the purpose of the study and their role in it, enabling them to make a fully informed and voluntary decision to participate.

While gathering data, participant confidentiality was maintained so that participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without any disadvantage. Their privacy was safeguarded, and unique participants' perceptions with empathic and respectful communications create a safe and supportive environment for open communication to flow.

Objectives in handling and processing of data were maintained, preventing all kinds of bias as well as misrepresentation. Outcomes were reported clearly and without exaggeration based on actual primary data. Funding sources, relationships, and any possible conflicts of interest were declared to ensure transparency and accountability. Throughout the entire research, integrity and honesty influenced every kind of communication or interaction held to ensure trust and respect among the researchers and participants involved.

Results and Discussion

Multigrade teaching is a prevalent instructional approach in the Philippines, particularly in small and remote communities such as Suyo District. In these settings, a single teacher handles two or more grade levels within one classroom. This arrangement is vital in areas where student enrollment is insufficient to establish separate classes for each grade level. The Department of Education (DepEd) has issued several policies to guide the organization and management of multigrade classes, including DepEd Order No. 96, s. 1997, which provides operational guidelines for multigrade teaching, and DepEd Order No. 63, s. 2010, which strengthens the Multigrade Education Program in Philippine schools (Department of Education, 1997; Department of Education, 2010).

Despite its wide implementation, limited research has explored the specific challenges encountered by multigrade teachers, creating a gap in the existing body of literature. Studies focusing on rural contexts such as Suyo District are especially scarce, underscoring the need for deeper examination of teachers lived experiences, challenges, and coping strategies.

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, emphasizing the challenges faced by multigrade teachers in implementing this teaching approach in selected schools within Suyo District. It identifies the nature and sources of these challenges, explores their effects on the teaching–learning process, and discusses the coping mechanisms adopted by teachers to address them. Furthermore, the findings serve as a basis for proposing strategies to strengthen multigrade teaching practices in the district.

The research instrument used in this study was previously validated and confirmed reliable, as presented in Chapter II. With a sound and trustworthy instrument, the study proceeded to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data gathered through surveys and interviews. The succeeding sections discuss the results aligned with the specific research questions, beginning with the difficulties encountered by multigrade teachers in the Suyo District.

To gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of multigrade teachers, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Their responses were analyzed thematically using the Cool and Warm Analysis Method. The resulting themes, codes, and key statements are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses

SOP Question	Themes	Codes / Categories	Responses	Interpretation / Insights (Warm Analysis)
1. What are the challenges and concerns you face in teaching a multigrade classroom?	Instructional Complexity	Multiple lesson prep, Curriculum variation (K-12 vs. MATATAG), Differentiated instruction	"Learners have different levels of learning and understanding." Prepare multiple lessons for different grade levels and subjects."	Teachers juggle diverse lesson objectives and competencies for two curricula, increasing planning complexity and confusion.
	Resource Scarcity	Lack of books aligned with new curriculum, Inadequate classrooms and materials	"Rooms are inadequate, books are not aligned with the curriculum." Lacking learning materials that can cater to Grade 3 & 4 learners."	Limited access to appropriate materials undermines teaching effectiveness and hinders learner engagement.
	Time Management Issues	Time constraints, balancing instructional delivery, Pacing for multiple levels	"Time allotment and time management.", I need more time in teaching multigrade classes."	Teachers feel pressured by insufficient time to address the needs of all learners effectively, leading to fatigue and incomplete lessons.
	Learner Diversity	Mixed abilities and behaviors, Varied comprehension levels	"Different level of learners." Slow learners, not supportive parents."	Teachers must adjust methods frequently, causing stress and limiting consistent instructional flow.
	Parental and Community Engagement	Low parent support, Communication gaps	"Parents are less engaged due to work or educational limitations."	Lack of parent involvement creates additional burden on teachers, who must fill academic and motivational gaps.
2. Can you describe a specific situation where you found it difficult to manage multiple grade levels in one classroom?	Instructional Overload	Simultaneo-us teaching, Differentiated activity planning	"It's hard to shift from one subject to another and from one grade level to another."	Teachers feel overwhelmed switching between subjects and grade levels without sufficient transition time.
	Learner Support Imbalance	Independent vs. guided learners, Supervision demands	"Some pupils cannot do it on their own… they need guidance, but I have to teach another group."	Teachers struggle to give balanced support; some learners get less attention, affecting learning outcomes.
	Curriculum Conflict	MATATAG vs. K-12 sequence, Instructional planning gaps	"Delivery of lesson in MATATAG Grade 4 and Revised K to 12 Grade 3."	Curriculum mismatch causes delivery difficulties and cognitive overload for teachers.

SOP Question	Themes	Codes / Categories	Responses	Interpretation / Insights (Warm Analysis)
3. What factors make teaching multigrade classes most challenging?	Systemic Barriers	Quick curriculum changes, administrati-ve load	"Quick changes of curriculum… constructing test questions is exhausting."	The instability of education policies and heavy administrative work compound instructional challenges.
	Resource Limitations	Lack of books- Insufficient space- Lack of digital tools	"No exact materials or resources to use." Insufficient classroom space."	Teachers are handicapped by a lack of teaching tools and facilities.
	Time Constraints	Unequal time allocation- Pacing concerns	"Lack of time in teaching multigrade, especially in lower grades."	Multigrade teachers are unable to allocate sufficient time for deep instruction.
4. What strategies or approaches have you found most effective in dealing with multigrade teaching challenges?	Differentiated Instruction	Varying tasks by level- Flexible pacing	"Same topic but different activities depending on the learner."	Matching instruction to learner needs helps maintain engagement and understanding.
	Peer and Collaborative Teaching	Peer tutoring- Group learning	"I pair students of different ability levels for collaboration."	Older or stronger learners can reinforce the learning of others, enhancing group learning dynamics.
	Technology Integration	Digital materials- Self-paced tools	"Use of technology for guided learning."	Tech tools help facilitate independent work and address resource shortages.
	Resilience and Positivity	Adaptability- Growth mindset	"Being flexible and maintaining a positive mindset helps me stay motivated."	Teachers' attitudes are key to thriving in multigrade environments.
5. How does support from your colleagues or the school head help you manage these challenges?	Peer Collaboration	Shared planning- Lesson exchange	"We help each other in paperwork and lesson planning."	Collegial support lightens load and fosters professional growth.
	Leadership Support	Resource provision- Time flexibility	"School head provides tech materials and is not strict on time."	Supportive leadership builds a culture of care and responsiveness.
	Professional Development	INSET- LAC sessions- District training	"LAC sessions allow us to share and learn from each other."	Trainings and peer groups enhance competence and confidence.
	Emotional Support	Camaraderie- Empathy	"Sharing experiences during recess helps lessen the burden."	Teachers value the psychosocial relief from colleagues in stressful environments.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Multigrade Classrooms. A detailed review of the transcripts found several challenges faced by Multigrade teachers. It pointed out eight key issues in multigrade instruction: (1) difficulty in time management, (2) challenge in curriculum, (3) challenge in instructional, (4) lack of instructional materials, (5) constraints in classroom management, (6) constraints in learner diversity, (7) limited parental support, and (8) insufficient professional development. These major challenges are outlined and analyzed according to how often they appear in the transcripts.

(1) Difficulty in Time Management. Teachers often reported challenges in balancing instructional time across various grade levels and subjects. They mentioned that switching between multiple lessons while addressing the needs of learners frequently made them feel rushed and unable to provide equal attention. Preparing for lessons often extended beyond official work hours, leading to stress and fatigue.

[2] "Time management."

[4] "I need more time in teaching multigrade classes."

[6] "It's difficult to change from one subject to another and at the same time from one grade level to another."

[8] "Time and curriculum are my biggest challenges… It's hard to give equal time and attention to both groups."

These findings confirm that time management is one of the most significant challenges faced by multigrade teachers. Similar results have been reported in previous studies: Literal and Sabud (2025) emphasized that tight schedules in multigrade classrooms limit the depth of instruction. SEAMEO INNOTECH (2013) highlighted that Philippine multigrade teachers often work late into the evening, which can lead to fatigue and burnout. Magpatoc (2021) further noted that the heavy planning load places significant pressure on teachers' efficiency and well-being.

To address these challenges, professional development programs should train teachers in scheduling, prioritizing, and grouping lessons to improve instructional efficiency. Jimenez (2025) emphasized that structured methods for managing time can reduce stress and enhance classroom flow.

Schools can also implement practical supports, such as ready-made lesson examples, coordinated activity sheets, and integrated assessment tools. Reyes and Ching (2024) found that access to these resources reduces repetitive preparation in multigrade classrooms. Additionally, school policies should aim to minimize clerical tasks and ensure the availability of peer tutors or teacher assistants, especially in remote areas. Evidence from international contexts suggests that institutional support—such as shared workloads and collaborative teaching responsibilities—enhances instructional delivery and reduces teacher turnover (Ares-Ferreirós, Álvarez Martínez-Iglesias, & Bernárdez-Gómez, 2023).

At the national level, the Department of Education could incorporate structured time management guidance in curriculum frameworks, including sample timetables, lesson clustering techniques, and planning templates. UNESCO and Teacher Task Force (2023) recommended integrating workload support measures into policy, which can be adapted for the Philippine context. By embedding these supports into the educational system, DepEd can improve teaching quality, reduce turnover, and ensure equitable attention for students across all grade levels.

(2) Challenge in Curriculum. Teachers identified the challenges of implementing different curricula at the same time, especially the Revised K to 12 and MATATAG curriculum. They pointed out that mismatched materials, the absence of aligned textbooks, and frequent curriculum changes made their jobs more complicated. Teachers' responses show these difficulties clearly:

[1] "One class follows the K-12 curriculum while the other follows Matatag."

[2] "It's hard to deliver lessons for Matatag Grade 4 and Revised K to 12 Grade 3."

[3] "Since I handle two grade levels with a wide learning gap, it's tough for me to integrate the subjects."

[4] "There aren't enough classrooms; books don't match the current curriculum."

[5] "Students have different learning levels, adjusting the curriculum for various

levels at once (MELC-based and Matatag) is difficult."

[6] "There is a lack of books for the new curriculum."

[7] "The curriculum changes quickly."

The findings reveal the complexity of teaching in multigrade classrooms, where teachers must implement both the Revised K to 12 curriculum and the newly introduced MATATAG curriculum at the same time. Teachers reported issues like mismatched textbooks, lack of instructional materials, and the fast pace of reforms. These challenges echo the study by Angeles and Rabago (2025), which found that teachers in Northern Philippines faced major obstacles in implementing MATATAG curriculum due to limited resources and insufficient guidance. Similarly, rural multigrade teachers often must improvise when official curriculum materials do not align with what is needed in the classroom.

In addition to resource gaps, curriculum design presents structural challenges. Naparan and Castañeda (2023) documented systemic issues in curriculum integration that fragment skills and disrupt the instructional sequence in rural multigrade schools. Dio (2023) pointed out problems with vertical coherence in the Philippine spiral curriculum, where overlaps and misalignments undermine learning continuity. The presence of two curricular frameworks, K to 12 and MATATAG curriculum — makes these issues worse, forcing teachers to make constant adjustments without enough guidance. Rayas et al. (2024) noted that in these situations, teachers often rely on improvisation, which can lead to uneven learning results.

Teacher Level. Professional development should focus on curriculum mapping and integration strategies. Bunga, Olano, and Morga (2025) emphasized that ongoing training in differentiated instruction and curriculum alignment helps teachers reduce redundancy, streamline content, and keep instructional flow steady.

School Level. Schools or districts should set up resource-sharing initiatives. SEAMEO INNOTECH (2024) found that shared curriculum banks—containing lesson plans, activity sheets, and assessment tools—help minimize inconsistencies and encourage collaboration among teachers. Additionally, Ares-Ferreirós et al. (2023) pointed out that flexible, collaboratively created resources are particularly useful in multigrade settings.

Policy Level. DepEd should create a specific multigrade curriculum framework that outlines sequenced competencies across grade clusters, reducing the dependence on single-grade guides. Potane and Recla (2024) recommended creating systemic frameworks to ensure proper curriculum alignment and equal access to instructional materials.

To effectively tackle curriculum challenges in the long run, it's essential to give teachers the right tools and redesign systemic structures. Clear curriculum alignment, ongoing training, and resource sharing can help prevent multigrade students from facing disadvantages due to systemic gaps in the curriculum, ensuring fair and consistent learning opportunities.

(3) Challenge in Instructional. Teachers described the challenge of customizing lessons for multiple grade levels at once. The need to teach varying content levels—such as basic fractions for one grade and advanced operations for another—required constant adjustment, which often stretched their instructional delivery.

[2] "Multigrade teaching presents challenges in differentiating instruction, managing diverse resources, and assessment, while balancing curriculum demands."

[3] "The challenges I face in teaching multigrade classes fall into two categories: instructional challenges in meeting diverse learners and excessive workload."

[6] "The two grades have different lessons."

[7] "In a unit on fractions, I struggled to teach basic fraction concepts to Grade 3 learners while also introducing more complex operations to Grade 4 learners."

Magpatoc (2021) confirmed that multigrade teachers face difficulties in planning differentiated lessons due to their increased workload. Bagay (2024) found that strategies like peer tutoring, project-based learning, and collaborative group work can partially help address these instructional challenges.

Teachers should receive solid training in differentiated instruction and multi-level assessment strategies. This includes designing lessons that meet the needs of students with different abilities, prior knowledge, and learning speeds (Burns, 2020). Professional development can involve hands-on workshops focused on planning lessons for multiple grades, creating and using formative assessment tools, and adapting content for various grade levels without sacrificing learning goals. Training should also teach effective material use, showing teachers how to reuse existing resources, incorporate digital and low-cost materials, and simplify preparation tasks. Furthermore, teachers can benefit from courses on time management, instructional support, and classroom organization in multigrade environments. These components can help reduce teacher stress and improve instructional quality.

Teachers should use peer tutoring, project-based learning, and mixed-ability groups. These methods let students participate actively in cooperative learning while addressing different instructional levels (Bagay, 2024). Peer tutoring helps advanced learners strengthen their understanding by teaching peers, while slower learners receive personalized support. Project-based learning promotes real-world problem solving, which can be tailored for multiple grades within the same activity. Mixed-ability groups allow teachers to differentiate instruction easily, creating chances for collaborative learning and lessening the direct teaching workload. Teachers should also use interactive and visual materials to support various learning styles, ensuring engagement and understanding for all students.

Administrators should promote a culture of collaborative planning, co-teaching, and resource sharing among teachers (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2024). Scheduling joint lesson planning sessions, developing assessment tools together, and creating teaching aids as a team can ensure instructional consistency across multiple grades. Schools may also set up mentoring programs where experienced multigrade teachers guide newcomers on instructional strategies, classroom management, and differentiation methods. Such collaboration reduces teacher isolation while encouraging innovation and the sharing of effective practices in teaching.

At the systemic level, the Department of Education (DepEd) should incorporate multigrade-specific teaching modules into teacher training programs, both before and after they start teaching. This equips educators with the skills they need to manage teaching multiple grades effectively (López Berlanga, Jiménez, & Sánchez Romero, 2023). Policies should support ongoing professional development, provide access to instructional coaching and mentoring, and make sure training includes proven strategies for differentiation, formative assessment, and student engagement. Over time, these policy measures can maintain instructional quality, build teacher confidence, and improve learning outcomes in all grades in multigrade classrooms.

Ongoing support at all levels—teacher, classroom, school, and policy—ensures fair learning opportunities, prevents any grade from being neglected, and helps teachers provide high-quality instruction effectively. These strategies together ease teacher workload, enhance student engagement, and encourage positive academic results in multigrade settings.

(4) Lack of Instructional Materials. Teachers often expressed concern about the insufficient and inappropriate instructional materials,

especially for new curricula. They mentioned relying on personal resources, improvised visuals, and internet downloads. This reliance increased their preparation time and financial burden.

[1] "There are no materials for multigrade in this Matatag curriculum."

[2] "I lack exact materials or resources to use as a reference for teaching a multigrade class."

[3] "Both time and curriculum make teaching challenging. Printing materials like activity sheets, creating PPTs, and simplifying lessons take a lot of time."

[4] "Time constraints, lack of materials, pupil attitudes, and reports all add to the challenge."

[5] "We lack learning materials that can meet the needs of both Grade 3 and Grade 4 learners."

[6] "Some slow learners can't keep up with the lessons. We need instructional materials designed for multigrade settings."

Rondero and Casupanan (2024) confirmed this finding, noting that the shortage of textbooks and learning materials in multigrade classrooms forces teachers to improvise. Potane and Recla (2024) added that inadequate resource distribution in rural areas worsens instructional gaps. SEAMEO INNOTECH (2013) observed that many multigrade teachers in the Philippines create their own makeshift teaching aids, which adds to their workload and reduces instruction time.

Teachers should be trained in effective material use. They need to learn strategies for adjusting and customizing existing resources for multigrade classrooms. This includes differentiating materials for various grade levels, creating affordable visual aids, and repurposing digital content to address the different needs of learners (Magpatoc, 2021). Professional development programs could offer workshops on designing interdisciplinary activity sheets, converting single-grade resources into formats suitable for multigrade teaching, and integrating low-cost, locally available materials into lessons. Additionally, teachers can learn to use open educational resources (OERs) and free online platforms. This approach reduces the need for personal funds while maintaining instructional quality.

Schools should set up centralized resource banks, both physical and digital, containing pre-designed lesson plans, activity sheets, multimedia content, and interactive materials tailored for multigrade teaching (Bunga, Olano, & Morga, 2025). These resource banks can include ready-to-use templates that match current curricula, allowing teachers to spend less time preparing and more time on instruction. Digital repositories can make sharing and updating materials easy, while physical resource corners can offer hands-on materials like manipulatives, posters, and teaching aids. Ensuring easy access to these resources helps maintain consistency in instruction and improves learner engagement, especially in schools where teachers previously had to improvise materials.

Administrators should actively coordinate resource-sharing efforts among teachers within a school and with nearby schools to optimize use and minimize duplication of effort. Collaborative structures, such as inter-school networks or teacher learning communities, allow educators to share lesson plans, teaching strategies, and materials. This promotes innovation and reduces individual workloads (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2024). Administrators can also set up scheduling systems for shared physical resources like projectors, books, or manipulatives to ensure fair access. By fostering a collaborative culture, schools can improve instructional quality and support professional growth while encouraging teachers to co-create resources for multigrade teaching.

At the broader level, the Department of Education (DepEd) should focus on fairly distributing instructional materials, especially for rural and multigrade schools. This could involve creating regional and national resource hubs where approved teaching materials—including textbooks, activity sheets, and digital content—are stored and easily accessed by teachers.

Policies should guarantee that materials align with both K to 12 and MATATAG curricula. This helps decrease improvisation by teachers and ensures consistency in learning. DepEd could also introduce funding programs, grants, or subsidies aimed at buying resources for multigrade classrooms, making sure underserved schools receive sufficient support (UNESCO, 2023). Additionally, systems should be put in place to monitor material availability, usage, and effectiveness, with regular updates to reflect curriculum changes. These measures will boost instructional efficiency, lessen teacher workload, and improve student learning outcomes, ensuring all learners have equal access to quality educational resources.

(5) Classroom Management Constraints. Teachers found it difficult to maintain discipline and order in classrooms with multiple grade levels. They struggled with managing noise, ensuring participation, and balancing independent work with teacher-led activities.

[1] "Learners have different behaviors."

[2] "When Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners need my attention and supervision during class."

[3] "When I give an activity to one group, they need guidance, but I must discuss material with another group."

[4] "As a teacher handling two classes, I need to be flexible, competent, and resourceful. Classroom management is very challenging."

[5] "Managing rooms and learning activities, along with administrative work, increases the workload."

Kalender and Erdem (2021) identified classroom management as one of the biggest stressors for multigrade teachers, with discipline issues arising from varying maturity levels among students. Literal and Sabud (2025) noted that having effective routines and structured transitions is crucial for maintaining order. Bagay (2024) suggested that collaborative and peer-led activities can reduce disruptions and promote cooperative learning.

Teachers should receive ongoing training in managing multigrade classrooms. This training should focus on positive discipline strategies, engaging different students, multitasking skills, and resolving conflicts. Programs can include workshops, role-playing, and simulations that reflect the reality of teaching multiple grades at once. Teachers should learn to oversee several groups, use behavior support methods, and apply time-blocking techniques to improve lesson flow (Burns, 2020). Mentorships from experienced multigrade teachers can also offer practical advice, like how to manage concurrent activities, set clear behavior expectations, and adjust tactics for students of varying maturity levels. Professional development should highlight classroom management tools such as visual cues, timers, and structured routines to help reduce teacher stress and maintain teaching quality.

In the classroom, teachers should set up structured routines, use rotational activities, form cooperative learning groups, and create peer monitoring systems to keep order and involvement. Activities should aim to encourage student independence, allowing learners to work on their own while teachers give focused instruction to other groups. Using visual aids, cue cards, step-by-step instructions, and clearly defined transition rules can help reduce confusion and behavioral problems (Bagay, 2024; Literal & Sabud, 2025). Teachers can also mix ability levels in groups and have peer-led tasks, which allows advanced students to help others while reinforcing their own understanding. This approach lessens teacher workload and builds a cooperative classroom culture.

Administrators should set up peer observation and coaching programs so teachers can share strategies and learn effective classroom management practices (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2024). Schools should create clear policies for student behavior, transitions, and juggling multiple tasks, ensuring consistency across multigrade classrooms. Collaborative meetings or professional learning communities can offer spaces for teachers to discuss challenges, share resources, and develop new classroom management strategies. Schools can also provide

shared instructional resources like templates for activities and schedules to cut down preparation time and assist new teachers in multigrade settings.

At the policy level, the Department of Education (DepEd) should include multigrade-specific classroom management modules in teacher education programs for both new and current teachers (UNESCO, 2023). Policies should require ongoing professional development, ensure access to management resources, and create structured support networks to prepare teachers for multigrade classrooms. Funding could be directed toward classroom aids, digital management tools, and professional development incentives, especially in rural or underserved areas. National guidelines should promote standard classroom management practices, including recommended routines, behavior expectations, and transition strategies that schools can adapt to their local needs.

Implementing these strategies can lower teacher stress, improve teaching efficiency, and maximize learning time. Well-managed classrooms create inclusive, cooperative environments where all students, regardless of grade level, can engage meaningfully. Over time, a consistent approach to multigrade classroom management can also boost teacher retention, improve student outcomes, and foster a culture of ongoing professional growth in schools throughout the Philippines.

(6) Learner Diversity. Teachers recognized the challenge of addressing a wide range of learner abilities in a single classroom. Some students advanced quickly while others struggled, needing significant help.

[1] "In a multigrade classroom, there is diversity among learners."

[2] "We have learners at different levels."

[3] "There is a poor understanding of learners, including their differences and diversities."

[4] "When a learner has delays in learning, it takes a lot of time."

[5] "Some slow learners can't catch up."

[6] "Some pupils missed many classes and didn't complete their homework."

[7] "Learners affected by the pandemic have difficulty coping."

This issue aligns with findings from Naparan and Castañeda (2023), who stated that diversity among learners complicates instructional planning and assessment in multigrade classrooms. Lacre and Valle (2024) emphasized that the gap between fast and slow learners can widen without tailored strategies. Bagay (2024) noted that collaborative learning can help address some of the challenges caused by learner diversity by pairing advanced students with those needing more support.

Teachers should master differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and adaptive lesson design. This will help them address varying learning paces, prior knowledge, and cognitive abilities (Burns, 2020). Professional development should include hands-on training in scaffolding techniques, flexible pacing, and individualized support. Teachers need strategies to identify learning gaps, track progress, and adapt instructional materials effectively. They should also learn to use diagnostic assessments to shape lesson planning and provide tiered interventions for students at different levels. Ongoing mentorship and peer coaching can assist teachers in applying these strategies in real multigrade classrooms, ensuring that their theoretical knowledge translates into practice.

Teachers should use ability-based grouping, peer tutoring, station-based learning, and scaffolded activities to close learning gaps between advanced and struggling students (Bagay, 2024). Activities should promote learner autonomy and collaborative problem-solving. Using adaptive visual aids, manipulatives, and digital learning tools can improve engagement and understanding among diverse learners. Teachers can also implement formative feedback cycles to monitor comprehension and adjust instruction in real time, making sure that no student is overlooked.

Schools should set up resource-sharing initiatives, such as differentiated worksheets, leveled activity banks, and collaborative lesson plans. This will lessen the burden on individual

teachers and ensure equal access to instructional materials (Bunga, Olano, & Morga, 2025). Professional learning communities (PLCs) can provide spaces for teachers to co-create materials, share strategies, and discuss challenges in managing learner diversity. Schools can also organize joint planning sessions to coordinate interventions for students needing extra support, ensuring consistency in multigrade classrooms.

DepEd should make inclusive education frameworks a standard practice. This means integrating strategies for learner diversity into national curriculum guides, teacher training programs, and assessment processes (UNESCO, 2023). Policies should require the availability of multigrade-specific teaching resources, ongoing professional development, and monitoring systems to make sure that diverse learning needs are consistently met. Government initiatives could offer funding for digital tools, differentiated learning materials, and specialized support staff to improve classroom inclusivity.

Effectively addressing learner diversity in multigrade classrooms ensures fair access to quality education, reduces learning loss, and encourages a student-centered learning environment. Systematic support empowers teachers to provide targeted instruction, fosters collaborative learning among students, and promotes lasting educational outcomes, even in resource-limited rural areas.

(7) Limited Parental Support. Teachers observed that limited parental involvement was hindering students' progress. They mentioned that many parents in rural areas are busy with work, leaving little time to oversee homework or support their children's learning.

> *[1] "Parents are less engaged due to work or education issues."*

> *[2] "Slow learners face challenges with unsupportive parents and a lack of resources and teaching materials."*

> *[3] "Resources and parental support for children are lacking."*

These findings echo the work of Rayas et al. (2024), who found that low parental involvement leads to poor student performance in multigrade settings. Naparan and Castañeda (2023) indicated that economic pressures in rural communities reduce parental engagement in education. SEAMEO INNOTECH (2013) also highlighted that multigrade schools often struggle to involve parents as educational partners.

Teachers should create regular and clear ways to communicate with parents, like weekly progress reports, SMS or WhatsApp updates, or virtual meetings. This helps keep parents informed about their child's learning. They must offer simple, easy-to-use learning guides and instructional materials for parents to support learning at home. Additionally, teachers can show parents practical strategies, such as checking homework, setting up study routines, and giving encouragement to improve the home learning environment (Bunga, Olano, & Morga, 2025). It is important to empower parents to be active partners in learning, even if they have limited formal education or time.

In classrooms, teachers should encourage peer learning, cooperative tasks, and independent activities to lessen the need for parental support while promoting student independence. Methods like buddy systems, small-group discussions, and guided assignments help students support each other and build self-regulation and responsibility. Teachers can also use checklists or progress trackers to help students keep track of their own learning, filling gaps where parental involvement is low.

Schools should hold parent orientations, workshops, and community programs to emphasize the value of parental involvement in learning outcomes. These sessions can show parents practical ways to support homework, reinforce classroom lessons, and create a good learning environment at home (Reyes & Ching, 2024). Schools can also create community learning hubs or networks for volunteers, where parents and community members help students with assignments and practice skills outside of regular classroom hours.

DepEd should enhance Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) programs and family-school partnership initiatives for better support of parental engagement (UNESCO, 2023). Policies should offer resources designed for rural and

underserved communities, such as local learning hubs, digital platforms, and community mentoring programs to help parents participate. In addition, national guidance should include monitoring systems and incentives for schools to actively involve parents, making sure parental support is a key part of student success.

Improved parental involvement leads to greater student motivation, better academic performance, and stronger reinforcement of classroom learning. Consistent collaboration among teachers, schools, and parents also supports lasting educational success, especially in rural and multigrade school settings, ensuring that students get steady support both at school and home.

(8) Professional Development Needs. Teachers noted that there are few professional development opportunities specially designed for multigrade education. Most training focuses on mono-grade classrooms, leaving teachers unprepared for the complexities of multigrade settings.

> *[1] "Time and classroom management issues highlight the gap between learners and the lack of support for professional development."*

> *[2] "Learners have different levels, and there isn't enough training support for multigrade classrooms."*

> *[3] "There isn't enough time to address different needs, a lack of teaching materials, and too few training opportunities."*

Research shows that multigrade teachers often do not have access to professional development programs designed to meet the specific challenges of teaching multiple grade levels at once. Bunga, Olano, and Morga (2025) stressed that training in differentiated instruction, integrated curriculum planning, and adaptive assessment strategies is vital for effective multigrade teaching. Similarly, SEAMEO INNOTECH (2013) reported that professional development in the Philippines often ignores the realities of multigrade classrooms, leaving teachers unprepared. Potane and Recla (2024) pointed out the need for targeted training in curriculum integration, classroom management, and differentiated instruction to boost teacher confidence and improve instructional quality.

Teachers need ongoing access to specialized multigrade training to tackle various classroom challenges. Training should focus on integrated curriculum planning and differentiated instruction. This training helps teachers create lessons that meet the learning goals of multiple grade levels and support students with different abilities and backgrounds (Bunga, Olano, & Morga, 2025). Professional development should also include formative assessment techniques and classroom management strategies to improve teaching effectiveness and keep students engaged in diverse groups (Burns, 2020). Moreover, teachers should get practical advice on adapting instructional materials, managing time, clustering lessons, and using low-cost or digital learning resources. This guide helps streamline preparation time while maintaining teaching quality (Magpatoc, 2021; Bagay, 2024). Mentoring and coaching from experienced multigrade teachers can offer real-world problem-solving insights, helping educators apply strategies effectively and tailor best practices to their specific classroom situations (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2013; Potane & Recla, 2024).

Schools should create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers can participate in peer mentoring, work together on problem-solving, and co-develop instructional resources (Potane & Recla, 2024). PLCs promote a culture of continuous improvement, encourage sharing effective practices, and give teachers a chance to address challenges related to multigrade instruction collaboratively. These settings also allow teachers to reflect on student learning outcomes, improve differentiation methods, and test new teaching strategies.

Administrators should focus on specialized in-service training for multigrade teaching, support teacher involvement in regional or national workshops, and offer incentives like recognition, career advancement, or resource support for professional development (UNESCO, 2023). Schools should establish peer coaching and mentoring programs, pairing

experienced teachers with novices to reinforce training results, model effective strategies, and provide ongoing feedback. Leadership should also dedicate time for collaborative lesson planning and reflection, ensuring that professional development leads to real improvements in the classroom and better student learning outcomes (Potane & Recla, 2024).

The Department of Education (DepEd) should require multigrade-focused professional development in both preservice and in-service teacher education programs to ensure that educators in rural and underserved areas have fair access to specialized training (UNESCO, 2023). Policies should create structured support systems, including funding for workshops, digital learning tools, instructional resources, and ongoing mentoring. National guidelines should monitor and evaluate professional development results to ensure that the training enhances teaching skills, lowers teacher burnout, and improves learning outcomes in multigrade classrooms.

Ongoing and focused professional development boosts teacher skills, improves instructional quality, and reduces stress related to workload in multigrade classrooms. Over time, these strategies enhance student learning outcomes, promote fairness across grade levels, and ensure that teachers feel confident and equipped to handle the unique challenges of multigrade and resource-limited environments.

Coping Mechanisms of Multigrade Teachers. This section outlines the coping methods multigrade teachers use to tackle the challenges of teaching multiple grade levels in a single classroom. Despite facing various obstacles, these teachers have shown adaptability, creativity, and resilience in maintaining effective instruction. Their coping strategies fall into the following categories: (1) Time Management, (2) Instructional Flexibility, (3) Differentiated Instruction, (4) Resourcefulness, (5) Classroom Management Skills, (6) Adaptive Teaching, (7) Peer School Support, and (8) Professional Development Support. Each category includes insights from the teachers.

(1) Time Management. Teachers highlighted the importance of planning and scheduling to manage multiple grade levels effectively. Setting aside time for lesson preparation and organizing activities helped reduce stress. A study by Lacre and Valle (2024) found that effective time management practices in multigrade classrooms were linked to better academic performance.

> *[4] "Print materials before class. Give group activity at 3:30 to 5 and prepare for tomorrow."*

> *[7] "Seatwork and with the teacher."*

These practices match the findings of Lacre and Valle (2024), who discovered that good time management in multigrade classrooms is linked to better student academic performance. Similarly, Urma and Callo (2025) highlighted that rural multigrade teachers, who manage several grade levels at once, depend on structured schedules and task prioritization to uphold quality instruction. Reyes and Ching (2025) also observed that organized schedules help teachers engage in collaborative activities, workshops, and peer mentoring, which improves their teaching skills and promotes professional growth.

Ongoing access to specialized multigrade training is crucial to tackling the many challenges these teachers encounter. Training should focus on integrated curriculum planning so teachers can create lessons meeting learning goals for multiple grade levels at once and differentiated instruction to support students with different abilities. This supports the views of Reyes and Ching (2024), who pointed out that multigrade teachers face diverse learner needs and classroom management issues, which require professional development tailored to these situations. Professional development should also cover formative assessment, classroom management strategies, and material adaptation. Hands-on training in time management, lesson clustering, and using digital resources can cut preparation time while keeping instruction quality high. Mentorship and coaching from seasoned multigrade educators can further help teachers effectively implement these strategies.

Schools should create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers can engage in peer mentoring, co-develop instructional materials, and work together to solve challenges linked to multigrade teaching. These collaborative settings allow teachers to share best practices, improve differentiation methods, and reflect on student outcomes, as noted by Potane and Recla (2024).

Administrators should focus on multigrade-centered in-service training, actively encourage teacher participation in regional or national workshops, and offer rewards for professional growth, like recognition, resource support, or career advancement. Establishing peer coaching and mentoring systems can also close the gap between novice and experienced teachers. According to Reyes and Ching (2024), school-based initiatives that offer targeted support can significantly boost teachers' confidence and effectiveness in instruction.

The Department of Education (DepEd) should require training modules specific to multigrade education in both preservice and in-service teacher training programs. Policies should also guarantee equal access to training in rural and underserved areas, with structured support systems, resource allocation, and regular outcome monitoring. This recommendation aligns with UNESCO (2023), which stresses the importance of systematic teacher support for inclusive education.

In the long run, these strategies can improve teacher skills, reduce stress and burnout, and enhance instruction quality. Consequently, students in multigrade classrooms, especially in rural and resource-limited areas, will gain equitable and effective learning opportunities, helping to address educational gaps.

(2) Instructional Flexibility. Instructional flexibility emerged as a key strategy for meeting the diverse learning needs in multigrade classrooms. Teachers reported adjusting lesson pacing, combining activities, and changing teaching strategies to fit different student abilities. One participant noted:

> *[9] "Flexible teaching — adjust lesson if learners need more time to understand."*

> *[12] "Using peer teaching and self-directed learning activities, being flexible and maintaining a positive mindset..."*

Teachers in multigrade classrooms reported that instructional flexibility, such as adjusting pacing, combining lessons across grade levels, and using peer teaching, was a key strategy for meeting diverse learner needs. One teacher explained, "Flexible teaching allows me to adjust lessons if learners need more time to understand." Another emphasized the use of peer teaching and self-directed learning activities backed by a positive mindset.

Research supports these findings. Pal-ang, Moling, and Eguia (2025) noted that instructional flexibility improves inclusivity, helping learners with different abilities access the curriculum effectively. Similarly, Salazar (2025) found that flexible teaching methods help teachers respond to challenges like absenteeism and resource shortages, making sure lessons continue smoothly. In the Philippines, Reyes and Ching (2024) highlighted that multigrade teachers who use adaptive strategies are more likely to keep learners engaged and maintain a clear instructional path, even under workload pressures.

Professional development should focus on differentiated and flexible teaching methods. This will give teachers strategies to adjust lessons based on learner needs and context. Workshops could include techniques for clustering lessons, using rotational activities, and asking multi-level questions, helping teachers implement flexibility effectively (Reyes & Ching, 2024).

Instructional flexibility can be improved by structured peer tutoring, station-based learning, and self-directed tasks. Pal-ang, Moling, and Eguia (2025) found that these approaches reduce teacher workload while boosting student participation and independence. Creating lesson routines that allow for adjustments, like flexible pacing or modular tasks, helps keep all learners engaged, regardless of ability differences.

At the school level, administrators should support collaborative lesson planning and encourage professional learning communities

(PLCs). In these groups, teachers can share flexible teaching strategies and resources. Potane and Recla (2024) stressed that peer mentoring and collaborative spaces let teachers reflect on their coping methods and refine them based on shared experiences.

DepEd should include instructional flexibility modules in both preservice and in-service training programs, as suggested by UNESCO (2023). This would make flexibility a recognized coping strategy for multigrade teaching, ensuring teachers are prepared to address diverse learning needs systematically, rather than improvising without support.

In the long run, strengthening instructional flexibility as a coping mechanism boosts teacher resilience, lowers classroom stress, and fosters inclusivity by meeting varied learner needs. By establishing this coping strategy through training and support, multigrade classrooms can transition from being reactive to proactive, creating sustainable and fair learning environments.

(3) Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated Instruction (DI) was the most mentioned coping method. Teachers emphasized adjusting lessons, activities, and pacing to fit the needs of each learner. Participants shared:

> *[6] "The most effective strategies in dealing multigrade teaching are collaborative learning with differentiated instruction."*

> *[10] "I use differentiated instruction with tiered assignments and varied pacing…"*

> *[15] "I am using the same topic but in different activities…"*

Bunga (2025) shows that differentiated instruction (DI) enhances engagement and ensures inclusivity in multigrade classrooms in the Philippines. Salazar (2025) adds that DI promotes learner autonomy and motivation by aligning instruction with individual strengths and weaknesses.

Differentiated instruction (DI) is key to meeting the diverse abilities in multigrade classrooms. Bunga (2025) shows that teachers in Philippine multigrade settings effectively use tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and individual learning goals to address each student's needs. DI supports inclusivity and makes sure learners at various developmental levels can access valuable learning experiences.

Practicing DI boosts student engagement and independence. Tailoring instruction to students' strengths encourages ownership of their learning, leading to increased motivation and persistence (Salazar, 2025). Additionally, DI requires thoughtful planning and creativity, equipping teachers with a broader range of teaching strategies.

Finally, differentiated instruction has a positive effect on academic outcomes. Implementing DI in multigrade contexts improves understanding, participation, and skill-building while balancing group and individual learning experiences, especially in resource-limited rural schools (Bunga, 2025).

(4) Resourcefulness. The findings show that resourcefulness is an important coping mechanism for multigrade teachers in the Suyo District. When there are not enough specific instructional materials for multigrade classes, teachers often adapt, improvise, and repurpose the resources they must meet the needs of their diverse students. This behavior is not just a way to get by; it is also a strength in teaching.

> [2] "Using differentiated instructional materials."
>
> [8] "Use of multigrade-friendly materials and peer teaching and collaboration… adapt activities…"

These responses highlight a strong sense of creativity and innovation, which are crucial for effective teaching in environments with limited resources.

Kivunja and Sims (2015) support this idea, stating that teachers in multigrade classrooms need to show flexibility and innovation in using the resources available to them. Their study points out that a teacher's resourcefulness directly affects the quality of instruction and the continuity of learning, especially when there are gaps in materials and infrastructure.

Matlho (2025) also stresses that resourceful teachers are more capable of keeping

students engaged and delivering instruction even when materials are scarce. Their skills in modifying content, creating new learning activities, and adjusting instruction for different levels help them fill voids that formal resources often cannot.

Furthermore, resourcefulness encourages community involvement. Salazar (2025) observes that resourceful teachers frequently work with parents, older students, and local volunteers to create learning environments together. This not only improves resource sharing but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility for educational success within the community.

Additionally, developing and using personalized instructional strategies improves teachers' ability to respond to changing needs. Matlho (2025) argues that resourceful teachers constantly innovate, refine their teaching methods, and enhance student outcomes despite facing systemic challenges. This reflects a type of professional resilience that is crucial for maintaining effective education in remote and multigrade settings.

In summary, the results emphasize that resourcefulness is not just a reaction to a lack of materials; it is an active, strategic response that improves both the quality of instruction and the agency of teachers. Supporting this trait through policy, training, and resource development can lead to significantly better outcomes in multigrade education.

(5) Classroom Management Skills. Teachers maintained order through structured routines, collaborative tasks, and division of responsibilities. Research by Kalender and Erdem (2021) identified classroom management as a significant challenge in multigrade settings, emphasizing the need for effective strategies to maintain discipline and support learning.

> *[1] "Based on experiences, strong classroom management should be applied; different strategies need to be used…"*

> *[11] "Synergy, integration, classroom management, collaborative learning… flexibility of the teacher."*

Classroom management skills are crucial for the success of multigrade teaching, where teachers are responsible for several grade levels at once. Educators who create structured routines, set clear behavior expectations, and design collaborative tasks keep students engaged and reduce disruptions (Goyo & Guevara, 2024). This underscores the need to focus on classroom management strategies in teacher training programs, especially in multigrade settings.

Good classroom management also encourages student independence by mixing individual and group learning activities (Salazar, 2025). Teachers with strong management skills usually feel more confident and effective, leading to a positive and productive learning environment. In addition, well-organized multigrade classrooms enable teachers to spend more time on tailored instruction and assessments, which are key to meeting various student needs and boosting academic results (Goyo & Guevara, 2024).

Thus, schools and education authorities should offer ongoing professional development centered on classroom management that addresses the unique challenges of multigrade teaching (Kalender & Erdem, 2021). Teacher education programs should also include training focused on multigrade-specific classroom management techniques, highlighting routines, collaborative learning, and behavior expectations. Furthermore, school leaders should encourage peer mentoring and group planning meetings to share effective strategies. Policymakers must provide resources to support ongoing professional development and supervision aimed at improving classroom management skills.

By tackling classroom management upfront, multigrade education can create a learning environment that boosts teacher satisfaction and student performance, even with the challenges of teaching multiple grades simultaneously.

(6) Adaptive Teaching. Adaptive teaching is an important approach for multigrade classrooms. It helps teachers meet curriculum demands for various grade levels by combining subjects, adjusting tasks, and encouraging peer

support between older and younger students. effectively.

[13] "Integrating lessons."

[8] "Adapt activities from one grade level up or down… pair older students with younger ones…"

Adaptive teaching is an important strategy in multigrade classrooms. It helps teachers address the needs of different grade levels by blending subjects, adjusting tasks, and encouraging older and younger students to support each other. In Suyo District, Badol (2025) found that multigrade reading teachers use phonics instruction, interactive learning, multisensory methods, and contextualized techniques to tailor their teaching to students' abilities, even with limited materials. Jimenez (2025), in Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, discovered that teachers modify lessons, use peer tutoring and collaboration, and adjust delivery to meet local and student needs. A study by Naparan and Alinsug (2021) on classroom strategies of multigrade teachers in Tukuran, Zamboanga del Sur found that differentiated instruction, teacher flexibility, and collaborative learning are widely used strategies. These approaches effectively engage students and help manage limited resources in multigrade settings.

These findings suggest that teacher training programs, both for new and current teachers, should include training on differentiated tasks, scaffolding, subject integration, and peer-assisted learning, using real classroom examples. Curriculum developers need to create flexible instructional materials that can be adapted for different grade levels and skill levels. Education authorities should assist teachers by offering ongoing training, peer learning groups, and time for lesson planning. With these supports, adaptive teaching can improve student engagement, learning outcomes, and teacher satisfaction in rural multigrade settings.

(7) Peer School Support. Teachers relied heavily on emotional and technical support from colleagues and school leaders. Sharing strategies, co-developing materials, and receiving encouragement from administrators helped reduce the sense of isolation in multigrade contexts.

[5] "Sharing teaching strategies and ideas with each other."

[14] "By having LAC sessions, we manage to peer teach."

[18] "Sharing materials… Our school head's encouragement… makes a big difference…"

Reyes and Ching (2024) found that multigrade teachers gain a lot from collaborative learning communities and professional action plans that offer ongoing peer learning and support. Bagay (2024) similarly noted that teachers involved in peer networks and resource sharing do a better job of maintaining teaching quality and managing the workload challenges that come with multigrade classrooms. In Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, Jimenez (2025) recorded stories where teachers appreciated peer learning groups and collaborative problem-solving, which helped them improve and change their teaching approaches.

Based on these findings, educational leaders should officially recognize and support Peer School Support structures. Schools might set up mentoring programs between schools, hold regular peer observation sessions, and create professional learning communities where teachers can share resources and strategies. Teacher development policies should allocate time and resources for peer collaboration. Institutionalizing peer support boosts teacher well-being and enhances student learning outcomes and instructional resilience in multigrade settings.

(8) Professional Development Support. Teachers sought training and workshops, often through LACs, district seminars, or self-directed learning, to improve their skills in multigrade teaching. However, such opportunities were infrequent and inadequate.

[9] "Organization of LAC sessions; sending/encouraging participation in National, Division, or District Training…"

[16] "Colleague collaboration… while administrative support offers additional resources and professional development…"

Professional development is essential for strengthening teaching skills in multigrade settings. Teachers need specialized strategies to manage diverse learners, tailor instruction, and ensure continuity in teaching. Reyes and Ching (2024) emphasized that multigrade teachers require specific workshops and action plans designed for their unique classroom structures. Their study proposed a professional development framework to fill gaps in teaching skills and planning in rural schools.

Bagay (2024), through a study of multigrade teachers in the Philippines, found that organized training boosts teacher confidence and performance. Participants noted that support from peers, training workshops, and backing from administration are important for managing instructional challenges and workload.

Similarly, Casane (2025) reported that multigrade teachers who receive mentoring, ongoing learning opportunities, and training specific to their roles show better teaching skills and classroom management. These elements are vital for achieving fair learning outcomes in multigrade environments.

Jimenez (2025) pointed out that reflective practice, collaboration with peers, and regular in-service training help multigrade teachers adjust and innovate. Teachers interviewed in Ilocos Sur confirmed that action research and peer learning groups not only improve teaching skills but also encourage shared responsibility and growth in their professional journeys.

These findings suggest that professional development in multigrade contexts should go beyond basic training. It must be ongoing, responsive to the context, and collaborative to meet the specific needs of multigrade teachers. Effective programs should focus on differentiated instruction that meets the demands of mixed-grade classrooms. Additionally, establishing peer mentoring and Learning Action Cells (LACs) can provide ongoing support and reduce teacher isolation while promoting collaborative problem-solving. Regular training cycles that emphasize integration strategies, adaptive teaching methods, and student engagement techniques are crucial. By adopting these targeted approaches, schools can greatly improve teacher skills and learner outcomes in multigrade settings.

To reinforce and validate the qualitative findings, a quantitative survey was administered using Likert-scale items. The instrument measured the extent to which multigrade teachers in Suyo District experienced specific challenges and how effective they perceived various coping strategies to be. The following tables present the frequency distributions, mean scores, and standard deviations for each item, providing a clearer view of emerging patterns among participants. These quantitative results complement qualitative themes, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the realities of multigrade teaching.

Table 7. Challenges Faced by Multigrade Teachers (N=20)

Challenge	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation
Difficulty in Time Management	3.6	1.05	Difficult
Challenge in Curriculum	3.8	1.01	Difficult
Challenge in Instruction	3.7	1.02	Difficult
Lack of Instructional Materials	3.5	1.52	Difficult
Constraints in Classroom Management	3.6	1.01	Difficult
Constraints in Learner Diversity	3.9	0.92	Difficult
Limited Parental Support	3.4	1.51	Moderate
Insufficient Professional Development	3.8	1.01	Difficult

Note. Scale: 1 = Not Difficult, 2 = Slightly Difficult ,3 = Moderate, 4 = Difficult, 5 = Very Difficult

Based on the 1–5 Difficulty scale, the most significant challenges faced by multigrade teachers were constraints in learner diversity (M = 3.9), curriculum complexity (M = 3.8), and insufficient professional development (M = 3.8). According to the scale, these values fall within the 3.40–4.19 range, corresponding to a descriptive rating of Difficult. These findings indicate that teachers face notable challenges in addressing diverse learner needs, managing overlapping curricula, and improving instructional competence due to limited access to professional development opportunities.

Other challenges, including difficulty in time management (M = 3.6), instructional challenges (M = 3.7), constraints in classroom management (M = 3.6), and lack of instructional materials (M = 3.5), were also categorized as Difficult. Meanwhile, limited parental support (M = 3.4) was interpreted as Moderate. Variability across schools may depend on local resource availability and community engagement.

These results align with previous studies in Philippine multigrade contexts, which similarly reported challenges related to resources, parental involvement, and teacher preparation (Bunglay & Cutab, 2025; Literal & Sabud, 2025; Naparan & Castañeda, 2023). The findings underscore the need for targeted support measures—such as professional development programs, structured lesson planning, and the provision of instructional materials—to enhance the effectiveness of multigrade teaching and ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

The findings underscore the need for systemic interventions. The Department of Education and local administrators should strengthen professional development programs tailored to multigrade instruction, produce curriculum-aligned learning materials, and promote collaborative support networks among teachers. Addressing these areas can enhance instructional quality and student outcomes in rural schools.

Table 8. Coping Mechanisms Used by Multigrade Teachers (N=20)

Strategy	Mean	Std Dev
Time Management	4.3	SD ≈ 1.05
Instructional Flexibility	4.4	SD ≈ 0.85
Differentiated Instruction	4.6	SD ≈0.78
Resourcefulness	4.2	SD ≈1.02
Classroom Management Skills	4.3	SD ≈1.06
Adaptive Teaching	4.5	SD ≈0.82
Peer School Support	4.7	SD ≈0.50
Professional Development Support	4.5	SD ≈0.88

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

On the 1–5 agreement scale, teachers strongly agreed that peer school support (M = 4.7), differentiated instruction (M = 4.6), and adaptive teaching (M = 4.5) were their most effective coping mechanisms. These results highlight the importance of collegial collaboration, flexible teaching approaches, and innovative instructional practices in managing multigrade classrooms. The low standard deviations indicate strong consensus among respondents.

Other strategies, such as time management (M = 4.3) and classroom management skills (M = 4.3), were also consistently applied. These findings align with prior studies suggesting that collaborative and reflective practices foster teacher resilience and instructional adaptability (Jimenez, 2025; Bagay, 2024). Similarly, SEAMEO INNOTECH (2013, 2024) emphasized that peer mentoring and professional learning communities enhance multigrade teaching effectiveness.

Given these results, schools are encouraged to institutionalize peer mentoring systems, collaborative lesson planning, and continuous professional development programs. Such initiatives can strengthen both individual flexibility and collective competence, enabling

teachers to better address the demands of multigrade instruction.

The quantitative results confirmed and expanded upon the qualitative insights from Phase I, consistent with the Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods design. Teachers' concerns about learner diversity (M = 3.9) and curriculum complexity (M = 3.8) reflected their interview accounts of difficulties in addressing varied learner abilities and managing multiple curricula simultaneously. Likewise, insufficient professional development (M = 3.8) emerged as a common barrier across both data strands.

At the same time, coping strategies such as differentiated instruction (M = 4.6), adaptive teaching (M = 4.5), and peer school support (M = 4.7) were validated as effective responses to these challenges. These strategies reveal the adaptability and collaborative spirit of multigrade teachers, underscoring their ability to innovate despite systemic limitations. Similar conclusions were reported by Bunga (2025) and Salazar (2025), who found that differentiated and adaptive practices foster inclusiveness and engagement in multigrade settings.

By integrating both data sets, the study revealed that while multigrade teachers in Suyo District face serious challenges, particularly in managing learner diversity, curriculum demands, and limited training—they demonstrate remarkable resilience through collaboration, flexibility, and adaptive teaching. These findings provide a strong empirical foundation for developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations to support and sustain multigrade education in rural contexts.

In conclusion, the results emphasize both the persistent challenges and the adaptive strengths of multigrade teachers in Suyo District. The alignment between qualitative and quantitative findings confirms that although teachers face demanding workloads and resource limitations, they employ effective coping mechanisms such as peer collaboration, differentiated instruction, and adaptive strategies. This balance between constraint and creativity highlights the resilience of multigrade teachers and calls for systemic support to enhance their capacity, reduce stress, and ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Conclusion

This study provides clear evidence of the persistent challenges and adaptive coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers in Suyo District. The findings reveal that educators continue to face heavy workloads, curriculum misalignment, limited instructional resources, and the difficulty of addressing diverse learner needs simultaneously. Quantitatively, learner diversity was identified as the most difficult challenge (M = 3.9), followed closely by curriculum complexity (M = 3.8) and insufficient professional development (M = 3.8), highlighting the critical areas that demand attention.

Despite these constraints, the results also underscore the remarkable resilience and adaptability of multigrade teachers, with peer school support emerging as the most effective coping strategy (M = 4.7), complemented by differentiated instruction (M = 4.6) and adaptive teaching (M = 4.5). These strategies allow teachers to navigate classroom complexities and sustain effective teaching and learning.

The qualitative findings further illustrate how teachers employ flexible time management, collaborative lesson planning, and innovative instructional practices to overcome structural limitations. Nevertheless, the persistent lack of specialized professional development opportunities continues to hinder the consistent and effective application of these strategies.

Ultimately, this study affirms that multigrade education should not be regarded as a temporary remedy but as a sustainable approach to promoting equitable and quality education in rural areas. Realizing this vision requires strengthened policy support, institutional commitment, and active community participation to transform multigrade schools into resilient, high-performing learning environments.

Recommendations

The District should establish a comprehensive program to support multigrade teachers. This program should include regular training, access to learning materials, assistance with curriculum planning, and stronger partnerships with the community to ensure teachers

are well-equipped to handle the challenges of multigrade instruction.

Peer-sharing workshops and mentoring from experienced teachers are recommended to guide new educators. Professional development initiatives should emphasize differentiated instruction, inclusive education, and adaptive teaching strategies, providing teachers with practical tools to manage diverse classrooms effectively.

Additionally, an administrative support system that provides ongoing mentoring, coaching, and reliable teaching resources will enhance teacher development and instructional effectiveness.

Finally, based on the findings of this study, the creation of a Multigrade Teaching Guide is proposed as a tangible output. This guide will serve as a practical reference for teachers, integrating strategies for time management, classroom organization, differentiated instruction, and adaptive teaching, ensuring that the lessons from this research are applied directly to improve multigrade teaching practices.

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