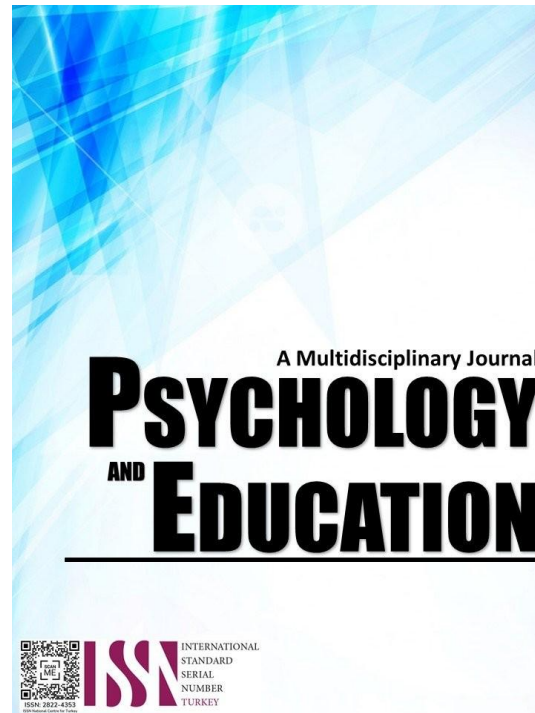


VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM: LIVED REALITIES OF MULTIGRADE TEACHERS IN TUBAJON DISTRICT, DINAGAT ISLANDS



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Voices From the Classroom: Lived Realities of Multigrade Teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands. Anchored on the ART (Adaptation, Resilience, and Thriving) Framework of Resilience, the study employed Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to uncover the essence of these teachers' experiences. Analysis of interview data revealed nine theme clusters, which were further grouped into three major themes: the complex demands of multigrade teaching, growth and fulfillment in multigrade teaching, and strategies for effective multigrade teaching. Findings revealed that multigrade teachers face multifaceted challenges requiring flexibility and resourcefulness, yet they also experience personal growth and resilience. They utilize organized strategies to address diverse classroom needs but highlight the necessity for additional support and training. The study recommends targeted training, continuous professional development, emotional support programs, and development of resource banks and peer mentoring to enhance multigrade teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: *voices, classroom, multigrade teachers, phenomenological study*

Introduction

Education functions as a fundamental pillar of social development, with educators significantly influencing the learning experiences of students. According to DepEd Order No. 63, s. 2010, multigrade education aimed to increase access to quality elementary education in areas burdened by teacher shortages and limited school facilities.

This program provided financial subsidies and targeted support to improve learning environments and enhance teacher capacity, thereby ensuring that children in far-flung areas receive equitable educational opportunities. This strategy ensures that all school-age children, especially those in remote villages, can access education and meet their elementary education requirements (EEF, 2023).

Multigrade classrooms, where one teacher instructs students from different grade levels simultaneously, are common in rural regions such as Tubajon District in Dinagat Islands due to resource limitations and the dispersed nature of the student population (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2019). This instructional approach presented unique challenges while simultaneously offering avenues for creativity and innovation in teaching (EEF, 2023).

Recent studies underscored the importance of investigating how educators adapt their pedagogical methods to address the diverse learning needs in multigrade classrooms, as effective teaching practices are crucial for enhancing student engagement and academic success (PhilAIR, 2020).

Despite the growing recognition of the significance of multigrade teaching, there remains a considerable deficiency in research concerning the lived realities of educators in rural multigrade environments such as Tubajon District, particularly in relation to their management of classroom dynamics and professional stress.

This study aimed to examine the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands. This research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences within this unique educational context by examining their challenges, coping mechanisms, and perspectives.

The findings enhanced existing literature by highlighting the viewpoints of rural educators and informing policymakers about the specific support needed to enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. This study ultimately advocated for improved resources and training to empower educators and enhance educational quality in multigrade classrooms in similar rural settings.

Research Objectives

This phenomenological qualitative research aimed to explore the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands.

Literature Review

Multigrade Teaching

Multigrade Instruction refers to an instructional method where educators teach students from different grade levels within a single classroom. This educational model is prevalent in many rural areas, particularly in the Philippines, where geographical and logistical obstacles hinder educational access. The lived realities of educators in multigrade settings are intricate, presenting significant challenges and unique opportunities. Positive Aspects of Multigrade Teaching

Multigrade education is recognized globally and in the Philippines as an effective approach for providing accessible education in remote and underserved areas. The Department of Education's Multigrade Education Program (MEP) has improved educational accessibility for children in remote communities, enabling them to complete elementary education without migrating to urban areas (EEF, 2023).

This approach improved social skills, strengthens student-teacher relationships, and promotes collaborative learning among students of different ages (EEF, 2023). Studies demonstrate that multigrade classrooms promote accountability among older students and create a nurturing educational environment that reduces academic rivalry (EEF, 2023).

Challenges Faced by Multigrade Teachers

Despite its advantages, multigrade teaching presented significant difficulties. Educators often face difficulties in concurrently overseeing multiple grade levels, requiring advanced skills in lesson planning, classroom management, and differentiated instruction (IJMABER, 2024).

Resource scarcity was a common issue, as many multigrade classrooms lack sufficient instructional materials, appropriate infrastructure, and technological support (EJ-Edu, 2023). Educators experienced emotional and professional stress due to significant workloads and the complexities of addressing diverse learner needs within a single classroom (IIARI, 2024).

Furthermore, compliance with Department of Education regulations and curriculum standards intensifies the difficulty, often lacking adequate training or support (SSRN, 2020).

Coping Mechanisms of Multigrade Teachers

To overcome these challenges, multigrade teachers employed various coping mechanisms. Peer collaboration and community involvement were vital strategies that help teachers share resources and teaching practices (Re&Act & UNICEF, 2022). Many teachers developed differentiated learning materials and utilize project-based learning and peer tutoring to address the diverse needs of their students (IIARI, 2024).

Continuous professional development and mentoring programs have been shown to improve teacher confidence and classroom management skills (EEF, 2023). Additionally, some teachers rely on personal resources to supplement instructional materials, demonstrating resilience and commitment despite limited funding (SSRN, 2020).

Strategies and Pedagogical Approaches in Multigrade Classrooms

Effective multigrade teaching necessitated the application of appropriate pedagogical strategies tailored for varied learner groups. Integrated lesson planning, collaborative learning, and performance-based assessments are commonly endorsed methodologies (EEF, 2023). Teaching materials that were contextualized to mirror the cultural and environmental backgrounds of learners enhance engagement and comprehension (Re&Act & UNICEF, 2022). Educators were encouraged to adopt flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, and technology integration to improve learning outcomes (IIARI, 2024).

Capacity-building initiatives, including specialized training and mentoring, were vital for equipping teachers with skills in time management, curriculum adaptation, and classroom organization (IJMABER, 2024).

Teachers and Pupils' Emotional and Psychological Experiences

The emotional and psychological experiences of educators and students revealed that multigrade teaching was both rewarding and challenging, as educators often faced emotional exhaustion, burnout, and professional stress due to the complexities of managing multiple grade levels concurrently (Lisondra, 2023).

Research in the Philippines showed that multigrade educators navigate emotional challenges through resilience, resourcefulness, and peer support (Polynne & Casupanan, 2025). Students in multigrade settings experience psychological challenges, such as boredom and disengagement, particularly when teaching methods fail to address diverse learning needs; nonetheless, they employ coping strategies like reappraisal and evasion during lessons (Polynne & Casupanan, 2025).

The welfare of educators was closely linked to the effectiveness of classroom management, highlighting the need for emotional support systems (Montalbo et al., 2021).

Institutional and Community Support

Institutional assistance for multigrade teachers is irregular, as many rural schools lack adequate physical infrastructure, instructional materials, and technological resources (Lisondra, 2023). Despite these limitations, community engagement is crucial for enhancing resources and providing moral support to educators (Bagay, 2025).

Local government entities and educational leadership augment teacher empowerment through mentorship, resource sharing, and the facilitation of professional development opportunities (Bagay, 2025). Research demonstrated that the effective utilization of available resources, including peer collaboration and community partnerships, enhances teaching efficacy and alleviates teacher burnout (Polynne & Casupanan, 2025).

However, persistent deficiencies in infrastructure and resource availability continually obstruct multigrade instruction in remote educational institutions (Lisondra, 2023).

Synthesis. The reviewed literature demonstrated that multigrade teaching was crucial for providing education in remote areas, promoting student collaboration, and ensuring access to schooling without necessitating relocation.

Nevertheless, it presented significant challenges for educators, including managing multiple grade levels, limited resources, and emotional stress. Educators often addressed challenges through peer collaboration, innovative teaching methods, and community involvement, although institutional support is frequently inconsistent. The emotional well-being of educators and students was crucial, as unaddressed varied learning requirements may lead to disengagement and burnout.

Multigrade teaching was essential in rural environments; however, it required improved support systems and specialized training to adeptly navigate its complexities.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative framework employing the descriptive phenomenology approach of Colaizzi (1978), utilizing Grand Tour Questions. This approach was particularly suited for exploring the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands, because it aimed to uncover and describe the essence of their lived realities through their perspectives.

The use of Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenology allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' challenges, strategies, and insights in managing multigrade classrooms. Through the interview, it elicited rich narratives about their daily realities. By employing this design, the study aimed to contribute meaningful insights into multigrade education and inform policies or practices that support teachers in similar contexts.

Participants

The informants were public school teachers who handled multigrade classes in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands, with at least two years of teaching experience in a multigrade setting. This ensured that they had sufficient knowledge and insights into the phenomenon being studied.

Informants were chosen from four multigrade schools: two multigrade teachers from Babangnan Elementary School, two from Imelda Elementary School, three from Navarro Elementary School, and two from Roxas Elementary School.

Additionally, informants were required to provide consent for participation in the study and to be available for interviews. The criteria ensured that the study included diverse and substantial perspectives on the experiences of multigrade teachers.

Instrument

The interview guide was used as the primary tool for data collection. This study was specifically aimed at examining the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands. This guide was anchored to the Grand Tour Question, which elucidates the phenomenon.

The following portion of the interview included follow-up questions based on the informants' accounts of their lived realities managing multigrade classes.

To guarantee the instrument's validity and reliability, the interview guide was subjected to a validation process by a panel of experts in education and qualitative research. This step was crucial for refining the questions to improve clarity, relevance, and appropriateness, thereby ensuring they effectively fulfill the research objectives (Morrow et al., 2015).

Following expert validation, interviews were conducted with selected informants to collect qualitative data for analysis. The structured format of the interview guide facilitated focused discussions while allowing informants to elaborate on their experiences. This method enhanced the data's depth and ensured consistency across interviews, which was crucial for maintaining the findings' reliability (Scorsolini-Comin, 2020).

Procedure

The data collection for this study sought to explore the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands.

First, the researcher developed a Grand Tour Question as the main instrument to guide the interviews. This open-ended question was designed to encourage informants to share detailed narratives about their lived realities, challenges, and coping strategies in multigrade teaching.

Prior to the start of data collection, an official letter seeking approval to carry out the study was sent to the Public Schools District Supervisor as well as the School Heads of multigrade schools in the Tubajon District. Upon receiving approval, the researcher proceeded to distribute informed consent forms to the selected informants. These forms provided clear information about the study's

purpose, assured confidentiality, and emphasized the voluntary nature of participation. The researcher ensured that all informants gave their informed consent prior to data collection.

The informants were purposively selected based on their current role as teachers handling at least two (2) years in multigrade classes, ensuring that they could provide rich and relevant data. The researcher scheduled individual interviews at times and locations convenient for the informants, typically in quiet rooms within their schools to promote a comfortable and private environment.

Data were collected through interviews, allowing the researcher to probe further based on informants' responses while maintaining focus on the research questions. Each interview was audio-recorded with the informants' permission to ensure accuracy and completeness of data capture.

Following the interviews, the researcher personally transcribed the recordings verbatim to preserve the authenticity of the informants' responses. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a unique code (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I), which was used throughout the transcription and analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from interviews with the multigrade teachers in Tubajon District were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) method for phenomenological data analysis. After the Verbatim Transcription, the following steps of the Colaizzi process for phenomenological data analysis were followed:

Initially, each transcript was reviewed several times to develop a thorough understanding of the entire content. At this stage, the researcher concentrated on the lived realities described by the informants, setting aside any personal thoughts, emotions, or interpretations that might emerge.

Next, significant statements related to the phenomenon being studied were identified and recorded on a separate sheet, along with their corresponding page and line numbers. This part of the analysis involved extracting meaningful phrases that reflect the lived realities of teachers. These statements were documented separately and organized by their transcript references, including page and line numbers for easy identification.

From these significant statements, meaningful insights were derived. Each key insight was grouped into a specific category that captures its essence. The researcher then compared these new interpretations with the original statements to ensure that the descriptions remain consistent and true to the informants' lived realities.

The meanings identified from the data were first organized into categories, which were then grouped into clusters of related themes. After reaching an agreement on these meanings, the process of categorizing them into a coherent structure began. Each theme cluster was carefully labeled to reflect the shared meanings within the group. Subsequently, related clusters addressing specific aspects of the research focus were combined to form clear and distinct thematic constructs. To ensure the validity and accuracy of these themes, the findings were reviewed and confirmed with the assistance of a qualitative research expert.

The study's findings were woven together to create a comprehensive description of the phenomenon being investigated. After consolidating all the themes identified in the research, extracted a complete picture of the phenomenon.

Next, the researcher consulted with an expert who reviewed these findings to ensure they were rich and thorough, providing a detailed account of the results. During this phase, also refined the findings by eliminating any redundant, inaccurate, or exaggerated descriptions from the overall structure.

Finally, to validate the findings, sought feedback from the research informants. This involved sharing the results with them and discussing how they align with their own lived realities. The researcher facilitated the process to ensure that informants had the opportunity to approve the findings before they were formally presented.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical research standards to ensure a respectful and safe environment for all informants:

Conflict of Interest. The researcher maintained equity and transparency, ensuring that no personal or professional interests influenced the study's design, data collection, analysis, or reporting.

Study Goals. The purpose and objectives of the study were conveyed to all informants, allowing them to understand the significance of their contributions and to provide informed consent voluntarily.

Privacy and Confidentiality. To protect the identity and privacy of the informants, each was assigned a unique code (e.g., A, B, C), and all data were securely stored.

Potential Risks. The researcher would certainly not face any risks associated with the involvement in the study, whether they are social, psychological, physical, or financial.

Potential Benefit. Informants were informed that their involvement could provide valuable insights into the challenges and strengths of multigrade teaching, potentially guiding future educational support and policies in rural areas.

Sponsorship. The research was conducted independently, without any external financial support or sponsorship that could influence the research process or outcomes.

Credibility. To guarantee the reliability and validity of the findings, the researcher employed meticulous methods for data collection and analysis, including precise documentation, participant verification, and comprehensive record-keeping throughout the study.

Results and Discussion

This section presented the findings and discussions of the study. The results of the analysis offered insights about the lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands.

Themes on the Voices from the Classroom: Lived Realities of Multigrade Teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands

The following table presents the theme on the complex demands of multigrade teaching.

Table 4. Emergent Theme: The Complex Demands of Multigrade Teaching	
<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Themes</i>
The Complex Demands of Multigrade Teaching	Time Management and Workload Diversity and Flexibility Remote and Resource Challenges Classroom Management and Discipline

The first theme emerged was the Complex Demands of Multigrade Teaching. The lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District vividly illustrated the complex demands and adaptive strategies required to navigate their challenging teaching contexts.

Teachers consistently emphasized the struggle to balance instructional time across multiple grade levels within limited periods.

In lines 31-33, informant C shared:

“Ang pinaka-challenge nga part is kana jud kanang time ba sa pagtudlo di man nako makuha tanan nuh sa usa kay naa may time” (The biggest challenge is time for teaching; I can’t cover everything within the allotted period).

In addition, in lines 10-15, informant G described the exhaustive preparation needed:

“Kinahanglan pud nga mag prepare gyud ka’g daghan nga mga different learning activities para lamang macope up nimo ang imong lessons ana nga adlaw nya kuan grabe gyud kadaghan ang iprepare kay lahi lahi man sila nga klase para sa akoo tulo jud ka-klasi, tulo ka grado akong gi-handle-an so, tulo pud ka klase nga preparasyon ang akoang gamiton that day so, grabe jud kapoya”. (You really need to prepare many different learning activities just to cope with your lessons for the day. I handle three classes, three grade levels, so I also need three sets of preparations each day. It’s very exhausting).

These findings aligned with studies highlighting time constraints and workload as major stressors for multigrade teachers (Recla & Potane, 2024). Farrokhnia (2025) similarly noted that managing simultaneous curricula demands innovative time management and prioritization, echoing the informants’ experiences of constant adjustments and prioritizing essential competencies like reading for lower grades.

Diversity and flexibility further captured the multifaceted nature of multigrade teaching. As evident in lines 7-9, informant C described the daily challenge of transitioning between grade levels with students of varying ages, abilities, and behaviors:

“Then, kada-adlaw kinahanglan ka mag-manage og mga estudyante nga lahi-lahi ug grado then lahi-lahi pug abilidad so, kinahanglan jud nga flexible ka”. (Every day, you need to manage students of different grade levels and abilities, so you have to be flexible.)

Informant H recounted as shown in lines 6-8:

“Isip usa ka magtutudlo sa multigrade, ma’am, ma-test gyud ang imong pagka-resourceful, pagka-flexible when it comes to handling diverse pupils.” (As a multigrade teacher, your resourcefulness and flexibility are tested when handling diverse pupils).

These testimonies resonated with findings by Mpahla and Makena (2021), who emphasized that differentiated instruction, peer mentoring, and flexible classroom management are critical in multigrade settings.

Remote and resource challenges constituted a significant barrier for teachers in geographically isolated schools. Informants reported difficulties accessing schools, especially during adverse weather, and a scarcity of teaching materials. Informant I poignantly stated as reflected in lines 26-27:

“Ang kana lang gyud pag-adto sa eskwelahan mao ra jud na kay lisod siya labi nag kanang ting-uan kaayo” (The only real challenge is going to school, especially during the rainy season).

The lack of internet connectivity and instructional resources was also emphasized. These challenges mirror findings from studies in the Philippines and other rural contexts, where limited infrastructure and resources hinder teaching quality (Naparan, 2021).

Classroom management and discipline emerged as a critical area requiring skill and patience. Teachers acknowledged the stress of managing diverse behaviors and maintaining order, with informant A noting in lines 20-22:

“Bisan unsaon nato’g hatag og timer sa matag activity mu-over time consuming gyud gihapon labi na gyud sa pagdisiplina sa matag usa.” (No matter how much we use timers for each activity, it still ends up being time-consuming, especially in disciplining each student).

Effective classroom management was described as foundational as informant B stated in lines 56-58:

“Kay og wa ka nag-impose og rules ug regulations, mga daily routines sa imong klase, so, magkajagaw gajud ang klase.” (If you don’t impose rules and routines, the class becomes chaotic).

These insights were consistent with research emphasizing learner-centered approaches and strong management skills as essential for multigrade classrooms (Mpahla & Makena, 2021).

The following table presents the theme on the growth and fulfillment in multigrade teaching.

Table 5. *Emergent Theme: Growth and Fulfillment in Multigrade Teaching.*

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Themes</i>
Growth and Fulfillment in Multigrade Teaching	Personal and Professional Growth Teacher Motivation and Fulfillment Emotional Experience and Resilience

The second theme emerged was Growth and Fulfillment in Multigrade Teaching. It captured the transformative journey of teachers as they navigate the unique demands of multigrade classrooms. This growth was evident both personally and professionally, as teachers reflected on how their patience, adaptability, and commitment had been strengthened through experience. Informant A shared as revealed in lines 44-47:

“Sa personal growth, pag-obserbar sa akong pasensya ug pagkamalungtaron, kalig-on ug pagtan-aw sa akong kakayahan sa pag-adjust ug pagdisiplina na nakadevelop sa akong kaugalingon ug malungtarong commitment.” (For personal growth, observing my patience and perseverance, strength, and seeing my ability to adjust and discipline has developed myself and my lasting commitment).

Informant B emphasized in lines 71-74:

“Sa personal growth najo, so, mas nitaas ang ajong pasensya, number 1 gajud ng pasensya kay og wayay pasensya ang maestra na magka biskay dapat classroom rules ang ingon magkasaba naka entero rana nga period.” (For my personal growth, my patience has really increased; patience is number one because if a teacher has no patience, classroom rules will not be followed and you will end up scolding the class all period).

This aligned with recent findings that multigrade teaching fosters the development of core professional competencies, including flexibility, resourcefulness, and resilience (Recla & Potane, 2024).

Professional growth was equally pronounced. Teachers noted improvements in their teaching strategies, classroom management, and ability to collaborate with students and colleagues. As informant A described in lines 47-50:

“Sa professional growth, pag-improve sa akong teaching strategies, pag-observe sa learning outcomes ug academic performance sa akong mga estudyante ug ilang behavioral improvement.” (For professional growth, improving my teaching strategies, observing the learning outcomes and academic performance of my students, and their behavioral improvement).

Many teachers attributed this growth to their willingness to attend seminars and trainings as informant D cited in lines 46-49:

“Because of my experiences, I believed that I grew and developed my personality and professional aspect especially that I also attended some trainings and orientation that will help me become an effective and proficient teacher”. (Because of my experiences, I believe I have grown and developed both personally and professionally, especially through attending trainings and orientations that help me become an effective and proficient teacher).

This finding echoed in the literature, which highlighted the value of continuous professional development and targeted training in enhancing teacher efficacy in multigrade settings (Farrokhnia, 2025).

Despite the challenges, teachers found deep motivation and fulfillment in their work as reflected by informant B, as stated in lines 13-23:

“Magklase sa multigrade gajud arang ka unsa pa na...naay usahay nga arang kahago naa pud usahay nga makaingon ka nga unsaon naman ni nako nga tag-tulo, tag-lima, tag-upat man ka klase pero kung mahibaw-an nimo kung unsaon paghandle sa mga bata specially sa imong pagklase unsaon nimo pagpa-abot sa ila kung unsay mga angay ipangtudlo sa ila, after ana rewarding ra pud sija

nga makamao bisan multigrade nga mga bata sila daghan sila, lahi-lahi nga grade level basta makita nimo nga maka-learn sila sa imong mga leksyon ug sa imong mga gipangtudlo murag maka-ingon naka nga ayyy, dli ra dli diay lisod ang mahimo nga multigrade teacher.(Teaching multigrade classes is sometimes very exhausting, and there are times when I wonder how to handle three, five, or four different classes at once. But if you learn how to handle the students, in the end, it becomes rewarding because even if the students are from different grade levels, as long as you see them learning from your lessons, you realize that being a multigrade teacher is not that difficult after all).

In lines 6-7, informant C affirmed:

“Kaning pagtudlo sa multigrade class, ma’am is quite challenging sija pero rewarding.” (Teaching a multigrade class is quite challenging but rewarding).

The sense of fulfillment was heightened by the knowledge that, despite limited resources and numerous obstacles, they were able to provide quality education and foster independent learning among their students as shown in lines 65-68, informant C added:

“Malipay pud ko nga bisan sa kalisod sa multigrade nuh nakahatag gihapon ta og quality education sa kanang estudyante then, nakatabang ta sa ilang pagdevelop sa ilang...as an independent learner.” (I am happy that despite the difficulties of multigrade teaching, I am able to provide quality education and help students develop as independent learners).

Literature supported this, noted that intrinsic motivation and a sense of accomplishment were key factors sustaining teachers in demanding multigrade environments (Recla & Potane, 2024).

The emotional experience of multigrade teaching was described as a “roller coaster ride of emotions,” with teachers facing daily doubts about their effectiveness due to the diversity of learners, as informant D reflected in line 17. Yet, they consistently choose to maintain a positive outlook, as she said in lines 17-18:

“At the end of the day, I still choose to maintain a positive attitude.”

Teachers expressed pride in their impact, especially when former students return to share their successes, as stated in lines 71-73, informant G quoted:

“Sa akong personal, murag proud kaayo ko sa akong kaugalian at least sa bisan multigrade classes nakahuman gihapon sila sa ilang pag-eskwela.” (For my personal growth as a multigrade teacher, I am very proud when my students finish elementary and return to tell me they have graduated).

This resilience was rooted in a deep sense of purpose and care, as informant I shared, as reflected in lines 58-71:

“Ang akong kasinatian sa pagtudlo sa multigrade is kuan sya kanang kinahanglan gyud teach by the heart... naa to’y panahon nga kanang ang akong pani-udto, i-share bitaw nako sa kanang akoang learners nga walay balon, so mao ng dili lang kay kanang magtudlo lang kanang i-embrace gyud pud nimo ang imong mga learners kung unsa sila o kung unsay imong kaya ma-share sa ilaha dili lang sa learning pati sa ilang personal bitaw nga panginahanglanon.(My experience in multigrade teaching is that you really need to teach by the heart... There were times when I shared my lunch with learners who had none, so it’s not just about teaching but also embracing your learners and sharing what you can, not just in learning but also in their personal needs).

Such narratives reflected findings by Bongala et al. (2023), who observed that emotional resilience and a strong sense of vocation are critical for teacher retention and effectiveness in multigrade settings.

The following table present the theme on strategies for effective multigrade teaching.

Table 6. Emergent Theme: Strategies for Effective Multigrade Teaching	
Emergent Theme	Clustered Themes
Strategies for Effective Multigrade Teaching	Instructional Strategies Differentiated Instruction

Multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands, demonstrated remarkable flexibility and resourcefulness in managing the complexities of teaching students from multiple grade levels simultaneously. One teacher shared,

“I have to prepare different lesson plans for each grade, but sometimes I teach similar topics with varied activities to save time and meet each student’s needs.”

This highlighted the practice of integrating differentiated instruction and grouping students by skill or grade to maximize instructional efficiency.

Another informant noted,

“Peer tutoring helps a lot because older students assist the younger ones, and it creates a cooperative learning environment.” Such strategies are crucial in fostering collaboration and ensuring that all learners receive attention despite limited resources.

The teachers also emphasized the importance of structured classroom management and clear rules to maintain order, with one stating, "Setting class rules early on helps manage the different ages and keeps the class focused." This aligns with findings by researchers who stress that effective multigrade teaching requires not only instructional flexibility but also strong classroom organization (Farrokhnia, 2025).

Additionally, teachers employed contextualized and engaging materials, including worksheets and ICT tools, to sustain student interest and accommodate diverse learning styles as informant G stated in lines 52-56:

"So, kay high-tech naman ta karun ma'am so, I use mga ICT nga mga activities kay sa mga pamaagi on that nga sa mag-engage ta og mga ICT nga activity, ang bata murag ma-ingganyo, na ganahan sila nga mamati, ganahan silang mu-participate sa imong klase." (Since we are now high-tech, I use ICT activities. When we use ICT, the students are more interested, they want to listen and participate in class).

Reflective practice was integral to their work, as teachers continuously assess and modify their approaches. One teacher reflected, "I always observe which strategies work best and adjust my lessons accordingly to better support my students." This ongoing adaptation is supported by Maringe and Sing (2022), who argue that reflective practice and professional development are vital for multigrade teachers to meet their students' evolving needs.

Aguirre et al. (2022) emphasized that multigrade teachers must be flexible and skilled in differentiated instruction and collaborative learning to effectively address diverse student needs. Farrokhnia (2025) highlighted the role of peer learning and the necessity for specialized teacher training to overcome curriculum and resource challenges. Moreover, Bakar et al. (2023) found that integrating ICT and contextualized materials enhances engagement and learning outcomes in multigrade classrooms.

Despite challenges such as workload and limited resources, teachers' resilience and commitment enabled them to create supportive and dynamic learning environments, ensuring quality education in multigrade settings.

Conclusions

The lived realities of multigrade teachers in Tubajon District, Dinagat Islands, included the following:

Multigrade teachers encountered complex and multifaceted challenges that demanded a high level of flexibility and resourcefulness. Despite these difficulties, many teachers expressed a sense of fulfillment, personal growth, and resilience in fulfilling their roles. To address the diverse needs of their students, they employed a variety of organized and adaptive strategies. However, the study revealed that these educators continue to require additional support and training to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, several recommendations are proposed. First, it is essential to provide specialized training, adequate resources, and targeted assistance specifically designed for multigrade educators. Continuous professional development opportunities should be made available, along with emotional support initiatives to sustain their well-being and motivation. Additionally, establishing accessible resource repositories and implementing peer mentoring programs can foster collaboration and the sharing of effective pedagogical practices, ultimately improving the quality of instruction in multigrade settings.

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