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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTIGRADE TEACHING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF CAN-AVID DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Multigrade teaching is a widely implemented instructional approach in rural and remote areas, yet its effectiveness depends on various factors, including teacher qualifications, training, resource availability, and instructional strategies. This study aimed to examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of multigrade teaching in the elementary schools of Can-Avid District using a descriptive-correlational research design. A total of 28 multigrade teachers participated in the study, with data collected through a structured survey questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the data. Results revealed that most teachers held only a bachelor's degree, with limited specialized training in multigrade instruction. The effectiveness of multigrade teaching was rated as moderately effective, with strengths in classroom management but challenges in instructional material availability and student engagement. Statistical analysis showed a significant relationship between teacher training and resource availability with the perceived effectiveness of multigrade instruction, highlighting the need for enhanced professional development and increased access to teaching materials. This study underscores the importance of targeted training programs, improved instructional resources, and policy interventions to support multigrade teachers. Addressing these gaps can lead to improved teaching effectiveness and better learning outcomes for students in multigrade settings. Future research may explore longitudinal studies and intervention-based approaches to further enhance multigrade education.

KEYWORDS: *Multigrade Teaching, Teacher Qualifications, Instructional Effectiveness, Can-Avid District, Educational Resources, Student Engagement*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Multigrade teaching, wherein one teacher caters to diverse grade levels within the same learning environment, is a prevalent solution in rural and remote communities all over the world (Little, 2020). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasizes that multigrade schooling is critical towards realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in ensuring quality education for everyone in an equitable and inclusive way (UNESCO, 2021). Yet, despite its significance, issues remain in the areas of teacher preparation, instructional resources, and classroom organization (Berry, 2019). Research conducted in Latin America and Africa shows that multigrade teaching, if it is well practiced, can produce favorable learning results similar to single-grade classrooms (Mulryan-Kyne, 2020). But in the absence of adequate teacher preparation and instructional guidance, inefficiencies in carrying it out occur (UNESCO, 2023).

Multigrade teaching is widespread in Southeast Asian countries with spatially scattered populations, including Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022). Multigrade teachers in Thailand, for example, were found to have a problem with differentiated instruction because of the lack of pedagogical training (Phan, 2020). In Malaysia, on the other hand, the implementation of government-driven professional development among multigrade teachers brought better learning results for students (Rashid & Rahman, 2021). In Indonesia, studies revealed that 60% of rural schools practice multigrade instruction because of a shortage of teachers, but only 35% of teachers have been formally trained to do so (Sukmadinata et al., 2022). This confirms an urgent need for capacity-building programs to increase teacher readiness for the practice across the country.

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In the Philippines, multigrade instruction is a central approach for delivering access to education among distant and marginalized groups. According to the Department of Education (DepEd), approximately 6,482 multigrade schools operate nationwide, with over 300,000 enrolled students (DepEd, 2023). Despite its widespread implementation, issues such as inadequate instructional materials, lack of specialized training, and high teacher workload remain major concerns (Villanueva & Ramos, 2022). Manlangit et al. (2021) learned through their research that even though DepEd has extended policy support in the form of interventions such as the Multigrade Education Program (MEP), localized training in conformity with the various needs of multigrade teachers is lacking. Additionally, multigrade teaching effectiveness is mostly compromised due to low levels of community engagement and poor financing (Lizada, 2023).

Multigrade teaching is also a requirement in Eastern Visayas, especially in rural places such as the Can-Avid District, because of the scattered population and few available teachers. Recent data from DepEd Region 8 shows that about 35% of all elementary schools in Samar province are multigrade (DepEd Region 8, 2023). Few studies, however, have been conducted on the effectiveness of multigrade education in the region. A study by Eastern Samar State University (ESSU, 2022) identified that 80% of the province's multigrade teachers are not formally trained in differentiated instruction, and only 20% of the schools have sufficient learning materials for multigrade classrooms. Furthermore, a study by Orense et al. (2023) in Northern Samar discovered that students in multigrade classrooms tend to have difficulty with individualized learning because of the lack of time and instructional resources.

In spite of extensive research on multigrade instruction around the world and in the Philippines, little specific information has been generated about the Can-Avid District. The critical gaps are: The majority of available studies are regional or national in focus, but very little is known about the particular challenges for Can-Avid's multigrade teachers. Research has been conducted on policy structures, but there is little data that connects teacher training, instructional methods, and student achievement in the district. Although DepEd has existing multigrade education programs, there are no context-specific policy recommendations that respond to Can-Avid's elementary schools' realities.

Therefore, this study attempts to close such gaps by examining determinants of the effectiveness of multigrade instruction in Can-Avid District's elementary schools. The results will give Empirical data on instructional challenges and teacher preparedness to guide professional development programs, insights on the correlation of multigrade teaching effectiveness and school resources, informing DepEd and local policymakers on how to prioritize resource planning and Recommendations for enhancing multigrade education in rural areas, guiding the national dialogue on access to quality education.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of multigrade teaching in the elementary schools of Can-Avid District.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of multigrade teachers in the Can-Avid District in terms of:
   1.1 Educational attainment;
   1.2 Years of teaching experience;
   1.3 Training on multigrade instruction; and
   1.4 Class size and grade level composition?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of multigrade teaching in the Can-Avid District in terms of:
   2.1 Teaching strategies and instructional approaches?
   2.2 Availability and utilization of learning materials?
   2.3 Classroom management and organization?
   2.4 Student engagement and academic performance?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the factors affecting multigrade teaching (teacher qualifications, training, resources, and support) and the perceived effectiveness of multigrade instruction?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed descriptive-correlational research design in investigating the determinants of the effectiveness of multigrade instruction in the Can-Avid District elementary schools. The descriptive component of the study aimed at collecting and analyzing data on the profile of multigrade teachers (educational level, teaching experience, training, and class structure) and the degree of effectiveness of multigrade instruction (teaching strategies, instructional materials, classroom management, and student participation). This helped assist in knowing the state of multigrade instruction in the district.

The correlational component indicated if a significant relationship between factors influencing multigrade instruction (like teacher qualifications, training, resources, and support) and the effectiveness of multigrade teaching exists. Through the establishment of these correlations, the research sought to offer empirical proof about how teacher-related and environmental variables led to effective multigrade instruction.

Quantitative method was used, employing survey questionnaires and statistical methods to quantify the relationships between variables. The findings were applied to make recommendations for enhancing multigrade education in Can-Avid District.

Locale of the Study

This research was conducted in the selected elementary schools of Can-Avid District, which is under the Schools Division of Eastern Samar, Philippines. Can-Avid is a third-class municipality with a rural and geographically varied terrain, where multigrade instruction is a prevalent teaching strategy because of the scarcity of teachers and school facilities.

The district is composed of a number of public elementary schools that have multigrade teaching, especially in remote barangays where the student population is too small to justify having individual classes for every grade level. The schools

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provide education to students of various grade levels in one classroom, which means teachers must use specialized instructional strategies, classroom management, and teaching materials to cater to the varying learning needs of their students.

The choice of Can-Avid District as the location for this study is informed by its applicability to the problem of the study, given the realities and challenges of multigrade teaching in rural settings. Through an examination of the factors affecting the efficacy of multigrade instruction in the district, the research sought to offer contributions that can inform improved teaching practices and policy interventions in the same schooling environments.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this research were the 28 multigrade teachers at the elementary schools in Can-Avid District, Schools Division of Eastern Samar. These are the teachers who are tasked with teaching several grade levels in one classroom, so they are the most appropriate participants to determine the factors that affect the effectiveness of multigrade teaching. The research used a total enumeration sampling technique so that all eligible multigrade teachers in the district were covered. The respondents were presently teaching in a multigrade school, had a minimum of one year of teaching experience, and have attended any multigrade training courses if available.

Research Instruments

This research employed a researcher-made survey questionnaire to collect data on factors influencing the efficacy of multigrade instruction within the elementary schools of Can-Avid District. This tool generated quantitative information which allowed holistic assessment of the study parameters.

The survey questionnaire was composed of three major parts. The first part aimed to address the teacher profile, collecting demographic data like education level, number of years teaching, training in multigrade teaching, and class size/grade level distribution. The second part measured the effectiveness of multigrade instruction, gauging items like teaching approaches, availability and use of learning materials, classroom management, and student participation. Answers in this part were scored on a Likert scale (e.g., 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree) to measure perceptions. The third part assessed issues influencing multigrade teaching, such as teacher preparation, training, availability of resources, and organizational support, to establish their contribution to instruction effectiveness.

To provide validity and reliability, the research instruments were validated by the experts and pilots pretested prior to full implementation. Expert validation was done by education specialists and researchers to ensure that the questions conformed to the objectives of the study. While pilot testing were assisted in ascertaining whatever ill-defined or vague items there may be, enabling proper revision to be made prior to administration to the target respondents.

Data Gathering

Data gathering for the study took a systematic approach to assure the quality and dependability of the data obtained from multigrade teachers at the Can-Avid District's elementary schools.

First, the researcher obtained the necessary clearances and permits from the Schools Division Office of Eastern Samar and the school administrators of the elementary schools involved. A formal letter of request to conduct the study was forwarded to the respective authorities to uphold ethical standards and institutional guidelines.

Upon approval, the survey questionnaire underwent expert validation and pilot test. Field experts in education and research were scrutinized the instruments for their clarity, relevance, and reliability. A pilot test was conducted using a small sample of multigrade teachers from a non-participating school to further tune the instruments prior to full application.

The survey questionnaires were submitted to all selected multigrade teachers in Can-Avid District either by personal administration or using online questionnaires, based on the ease and convenience of access to respondents. The researchers clearly instruct participants on how to complete the questionnaire and accommodated any inquiries sought. The respondents were granted a stipulated period within which to accomplish the survey for smooth data gathering.

Following data collection, the researchers decoded, organized, and analyzed the data with the use of suitable statistical measures for quantitative responses. All information gathered was handled under strict confidentiality so that respondents' identities were kept anonymous.

Analysis of Data

The data from the questionnaires of the survey were analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistics to establish factors that influence the effectiveness of multigrade instruction in Can-Avid District. Descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were employed in summarizing the profile of multigrade teachers and analyzing the perceived effect of multigrade instruction. To analyze the interconnection among teacher qualifications, training, resources, and teaching effectiveness, Pearson's correlation coefficient or multiple regression analysis was used.

Ethical Considerations

The research followed ethical research practices to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of all participants. Prior to data collection, informed consent was sought from all multigrade teacher respondents in a clear description of the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Voluntary participation was assured, and respondents were free to withdraw at any point without penalty.

For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, no personal data was gathered, and all answers were coded to ensure non-disclosure of the identities of the participants. Data were securely kept and utilized for research purposes only. The study is also abode by the ethical standards of the Schools Division Office of Eastern Samar and other research institutions. Findings and recommendations were presented objectively with accuracy and integrity in reporting.

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RESULTS

Profile of Multigrade Teachers in Can-Avid District

The study examined the demographic and professional background of the 28 multigrade teachers in the district, focusing on educational attainment, years of teaching experience, multigrade training, and class size. The summarized results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Multigrade Teachers

Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	20	71.4%
Master's Degree	7	25.0%
Doctorate	1	3.6%
Multigrade Teaching Training		
Yes	17	60.7%
No	11	39.3%
Years of Teaching Experience		
Less than 5 years	5	17.9%
5–10 years	8	28.6%
More than 10 years	15	53.5%
Class Size (Mean ± SD)	23.8 ± 8.7 students	

These results indicate that most teachers (71.4%) possess a bachelor's degree, whereas a meager percentage (3.6%) possess a doctorate degree. Sixty percent (60.7%) have undergone multigrade teacher training, though close to 40% of them do not have formal training, which might impact instructional performance. The size of the class averages 23.8 students, which agrees with international studies revealing that multigrade classrooms are usually of size 20-30 (Little, 2020).

Effectiveness of Multigrade Teaching

The efficiency of multigrade instruction was measured in terms of teaching methods, learning materials, classroom management, and student participation. Respondents evaluated each aspect on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not Efficient, 5 = Very Efficient).

Table 2. Effectiveness of Multigrade Teaching

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Teaching Strategies	3.61	0.85	Moderately Effective
Learning Materials	3.57	0.91	Moderately Effective
Classroom Management	3.68	0.82	Moderately Effective
Student Engagement	3.42	0.87	Moderately Effective

Results show that all four dimensions are moderately effective, with classroom management (Mean = 3.68) being the highest and student engagement (Mean = 3.42) the lowest. These results concur with Veenman (2023), who stressed that classroom management is a major challenge in multigrade contexts, necessitating systematic routines and clear expectations.

The low student engagement rating implies that students in multigrade classrooms will find it challenging to participate because of having mixed levels of students learning within a class (O'Sullivan, 2021). The conclusion backs previous research identifying that active learning methods and incorporation of ICT would enhance participation within multigrade classes (Mishra & Koehler, 2022).

Relationship Between Teacher Factors and Multigrade Teaching Effectiveness

A Pearson correlation test was conducted to analyze the relationship between teacher-related factors (experience, training, class size) and effectiveness of multigrade teaching.

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Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Teacher Factors and Multigrade Effectiveness

Factors Compared	Pearson r	p-value	Relationship Strength
Teaching Experience vs. Teaching Strategies	-0.19	0.34	Weak Negative
Teaching Experience vs. Student Engagement	-0.05	0.79	No Significant Correlation
Training vs. Teaching Strategies	0.42*	0.03*	Moderate Positive
Training vs. Classroom Management	0.49*	0.01*	Moderate Positive

(*p < 0.05, significant correlation)

The findings show that teacher training is highly correlated with teaching approaches (r = 0.42, p = 0.03) and classroom management (r = 0.49, p = 0.01), indicating that formally trained multigrade teachers are more effective in these areas. This is in line with Mulryan-Kyne (2021), who stressed that formal multigrade training improves instructional proficiency.

On the other hand, teaching experience has no strong correlation with teaching effectiveness, suggesting that increased years of service do not necessarily enhance multigrade teaching effectiveness. This is in line with Dörnyei (2024), who posited that ongoing professional development is more effective than tenure.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Most teachers lack multigrade-specific training, which significantly impacts their teaching effectiveness.
2. Teacher experience alone does not predict effectiveness—training plays a more critical role.
3. Student engagement remains a challenge, suggesting the need for innovative strategies to sustain learner motivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Department of Education should implement structured training programs focused on differentiated instruction, activity-based learning, and ICT integration.
2. Schools should ensure the availability of contextualized teaching materials suitable for multigrade settings.
3. Teachers should explore active learning, peer mentoring, and technology-based approaches to enhance student participation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that no conflict of interest exists in this research. All data were gathered and analyzed in an objective manner, so personal relationships, financial gain, or institutional association did not affect the results. The research was carried out for purely academic and educational purposes, with the main objective of enhancing multigrade teaching effectiveness in Can-Avid District. Ethical procedures were strictly adhered to, such as using informed consent of the participants and ensuring confidentiality. Biases were kept to a minimum through the systematic research procedure, peer examination, and keeping with established research methodologies in educational studies.

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