

Teacher's Attitude and Challenges in Teaching Multi-Grade Classes

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Abstract: *This study examined the attitudes and challenges faced by multi-grade teachers in Laoang, Division of Northern Samar. Data was collected from 30 multi-grade teachers across five districts using a descriptive-correlational design to gain comprehensive insights. The findings revealed that while teachers generally maintain a positive attitude toward their roles, they encounter significant challenges that affect their effectiveness. Key challenges include extensive preparation needs, meticulous record-keeping, and a lack of technical knowledge in lesson planning and assessment. Additionally, physical and material resource constraints, such as inadequate internet connectivity and teaching materials, further complicate their roles. Time management issues and a lack of support from parents and local officials also contribute to these educators' difficulties. Despite these challenges, a strong positive correlation was found between teachers' attitudes and their ability to manage these challenges ($r = 0.743$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that fostering a positive attitude among teachers can enhance their resilience and effectiveness in multi-grade teaching. The study recommends targeted professional development, improved resource allocation, and enhanced support systems to create a more supportive and resource-rich environment. These interventions are essential for improving the quality of multi-grade education and ensuring better educational outcomes for both teachers and students.*

Keywords: Multi-Grade Teachers, Attitudes, Challenges, Teacher Resilience, Educational Support, Resource Allocation, Professional Development

1. Introduction

The Philippine Constitution seeks to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, ensuring it is accessible to everyone. One strategy the Department of Education employs to achieve this goal is multi-grade education, particularly in remote communities where enrollment numbers do not justify the organization of monograde classes. Institutionalized through DepEd Order 81, s. 2009, the Multi-grade Program in Philippine Education aims to provide quality education despite these constraints. The preamble of the Code of Ethical and Professional Standards for Professional Teachers supports this vision, emphasizing that teachers must exhibit good health, moral values, and technical and conceptual competence.

Supporting this vision, Baglari (2016) emphasized that a teacher must be competent not only in their subject matter and teaching methods but also show interest in the profession and

maintain a favorable attitude towards teaching. However, Denessen et al. (2015) highlighted a disparity where female teachers showed less positive attitudes towards teaching science and technology compared to their male counterparts. Joyce (2014) also found that teaching in a multi-grade context presents significant challenges, with many teachers harboring negative attitudes towards this teaching model.

UNESCO (2015) underscores the necessity of developing positive attitudes towards teachers and teaching among pupils. This can be achieved by assessing and rewarding aspects of pupils' development, such as their willingness to assist in classroom tasks and organize their work. Talua et al. (2016) found that while teachers had favorable attitudes toward using computers, their competency levels were at a basic standard according to the National ICT Competency Standard for Teachers (NICS-Teachers).

Montalbo (2021) identified challenges faced by teachers, including feelings of inadequacy, difficulties in classroom and time management, failure to address learners' diversity, and experiencing burnout. Despite these challenges, teachers' qualities of being resourceful, innovative, and resilient helped them persevere. Naparan and Alinsug (2021) noted that even in the face of these challenges, teachers strive to provide a productive and meaningful learning experience for their students. Castigador (2019) highlighted that some teachers even shared part of their salaries to produce learning materials for their students.

Bongala et al. (2020) identified further pedagogical challenges such as conflicts between the medium of instruction and grade grouping, lesson planning issues, unfocused instruction, insufficient learning materials, lack of training, and negative perceptions of multi-grade instruction effectiveness. UNESCO (2015) also pointed out that effective teaching management, including direct teaching with peer tutors and independent study, is crucial for creating instructional strategies that meet pupils' needs. The multi-grade model, through peer learning, encourages collaboration and a cooperative attitude among students, promoting healthy interpersonal behavior.

The present study aimed to delve deeper into these issues, particularly within the Division of Northern Samar, specifically in Laoang, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and challenges faced by multi-grade teachers. By identifying these challenges and proposing targeted interventions, this research aspires to improve the quality of multi-grade education, ensuring it is both effective and supportive for teachers and students alike. The insights gained are intended to inform educational strategies and policies that enhance support for multi-grade educators, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the attitudes and challenges faced by teachers teaching multi-grade classes in Laoang, Northern Samar, during the academic year 2023-2024. Specifically, it aimed to:

- i. Assess the attitudes of teachers towards teaching multi-grade classes.
- ii. Identify the challenges faced by teachers in managing multi-grade classes.
- iii. Examine the significant relationship between teachers' attitudes and their perceived challenges in teaching multi-grade classes.

By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform strategies and policies to enhance the effectiveness and support for teachers in multi-grade settings.

2. Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design to investigate the attitudes and challenges faced by multi-grade teachers in Laoang, Northern Samar during the academic year 2023-2024. All 30 multi-grade teachers from five districts were included using purposive sampling, ensuring comprehensive representation. A structured questionnaire was distributed to assess their attitudes and challenges, with sufficient time allotted for completion. Data analysis was performed using quantitative methods, including the weighted mean to determine average scores and Pearson correlation to explore the relationship between attitudes and challenges. To ensure the study's validity and reliability, pilot testing was conducted with a small group of teachers not part of the main study, refining questions for clarity. Triangulation was employed to cross-verify findings from multiple data sources, enhancing the study's credibility. Confidentiality was assured to encourage honest responses from the participants, providing a thorough and reliable dataset for analysis. These measures collectively ensured the research was methodologically sound and the findings were robust and reliable.

3. Results & Discussion

3.1 Teacher's Attitude Teaching Multi-grade Classes

The study's findings highlight a generally favorable attitude among teachers towards teaching multi-grade classes. With an overall mean rating of 4.14 (Favorable), teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to creating a conducive learning environment, which received the highest rating of 4.71 (Very Favorable). This suggests that teachers are dedicated to ensuring optimal educational settings for their pupils, emphasizing their investment in maintaining high standards for classroom environments (Jindal, 2018).

Teachers reported an increase in creativity in everyday lessons (4.32, Very Favorable) and actively participated in seminars on new teaching strategies and methodologies (4.30, Very Favorable). This continuous effort to enhance teaching practices and stay updated with educational trends shows their dedication to professional growth. Nobis and Caparoso (2024) cautioned that using technology to boost student learning requires parental guidance. It indicates that teachers are proactive in seeking out opportunities to refine their skills and adopt innovative approaches to improve student learning experiences (Nobis, 2021).

Additionally, mastery of lesson content came relatively easily for most teachers (4.25, Very Favorable), and they expressed satisfaction with their roles as mentors (4.23, Very Favorable). These findings highlight teachers' confidence in their subject matter expertise (Waltzer et al., 2023) and their fulfillment in guiding and supporting their students' academic journeys (Alicia-Planas, 2017).

In terms of using instructional technologies, teachers showed a favorable attitude, with ratings of 4.19 for both interest in using new technologies and enjoyment in integrating them into lessons. They were proud of their assignments as multi-grade teachers and found their work manageable (4.19, Favorable). However, some areas were identified for improvement. This suggests a willingness to embrace technological advancements and integrate them into teaching practices (Nobis, 2021), which can enhance the learning experience for students (Lupas et al., 2024).

Teachers rated their memory retention of class information (4.18, Favorable) and their ability to swiftly learn new topics (4.17, Favorable) slightly lower, indicating room for growth.

Responding to pupils' needs and interest in innovative teaching methods also received favorable ratings of 4.17 and 4.16, respectively. These areas suggest opportunities for continuous improvement, particularly in adapting to new content quickly and meeting diverse student needs through innovative approaches (Diaz et al., 2021; Ingram et al., 2019).

Additionally, teachers expressed a sense of enjoyment in their roles (4.14, Favorable) and took responsibility for employing appropriate teaching strategies to enhance pupil performance (4.11, Favorable). They found satisfaction in their daily teaching activities (4.11, Favorable) and recognized the benefits of using technology (4.10, Favorable). However, comfort in using different teaching structures and innovating routine tasks was rated slightly lower at 4.10 and 4.06 (Favorable), respectively. This reflects a general contentment with their profession and a recognition of the positive impact of technology on teaching (Küçük & Kucuk, 2023), albeit with some hesitation in adopting new instructional structures and routines, as Cabugwason et al. (2024) highlighted that restricted internet connection, confusing interfaces, and app charges presented difficulties.

The lowest ratings were observed in the use of computers and the internet in class (3.85, Favorable) and comfort in making lesson plans for different grades (3.71, Favorable). These findings suggest a need for further professional development in these areas. Addressing these gaps through targeted training and support can help teachers feel more confident and competent in utilizing digital tools and creating effective lesson plans for multi-grade contexts.

Overall, the findings reflect a positive attitude towards multi-grade teaching among teachers, with a clear commitment to professional growth and effective teaching practices. Nevertheless, targeted support and training in specific areas could enhance their competencies further, ultimately benefiting their students' learning experiences. By focusing on these areas, educators can build on their strengths while addressing their challenges, leading to improved educational outcomes in multi-grade settings.

Table 1: Teachers' Attitude in Teaching Multi-grade Classes

Performance Indicators Teachers' Attitude in Teaching Multi-grade Classes		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	I always look for a favorable learning environment suited to my pupils.	4.71	Very Favorable
2	My creativity increases in everyday lessons.	4.32	Very Favorable
3	I participate in seminars regarding new teaching strategies/methodologies.	4.30	Very Favorable
4	I master my lessons easily.	4.25	Very Favorable
5	I feel satisfied with my life as a mentor.	4.23	Very Favorable
6	I am interested in using instructional technologies in the lesson	4.19	Favorable
7	I enjoy using new technologies in my lessons.	4.19	Favorable
8	I am proud of my assignment as a multi-grade teacher.	4.19	Favorable
9	I always remember every detail of information discussed in my class.	4.18	Favorable
10	I consider my work assignment challenging but manageable as a multi-grade mentor.	4.18	Favorable
11	I learn swiftly new topics for my pupils	4.17	Favorable
12	I respond readily to my pupils' needs.	4.17	Favorable
13	I want to learn about innovations in teaching subjects.	4.16	Favorable
14	I have a sense of enjoyment as a multi-grade teacher.	4.14	Favorable
15	I am delighted to read books related to my lessons in multi-grade teaching	4.13	Favorable
16	I take responsibility for appropriate teaching strategies for pupils' high performance.	4.11	Favorable

17	I am pleased teaching my pupils every day	4.11	Favorable
18	I derive benefits from the use of technology in my lessons.	4.10	Favorable
19	I feel sure of myself using different structures of teaching.	4.10	Favorable
20	I tried to make innovations of routine tasks as my way of commitment to help my pupils.	4.06	Favorable
21	I enjoy the environment with my pupils	4.06	Favorable
22	I have self-fulfillment in teaching multi-grade classes.	4.01	Favorable
23	I use computers in preparing my lessons.	3.97	Favorable
24	I use computers and the Internet in my class.	3.85	Favorable
25	I am comfortable in making lesson plans in different grades.	3.71	Favorable
	Overall Mean	4.14	Favorable

3.2 Teachers' Challenges in Teaching Multi-grade Classes

Instructional Challenges

The study revealed several instructional challenges faced by multi-grade teachers, with an overall mean of 4.05 (Agree). The most significant challenge was the need for investment in training for teachers, supervisors, and administrative personnel to prepare them for the demands of multi-grade teaching and administration (weighted mean of 4.39, Strongly Agree). This highlights the essential role of professional development in equipping educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively manage multi-grade classrooms. Additionally, teachers reported having numerous responsibilities and workloads beyond classroom teaching (4.20, Strongly Agree), indicating that added administrative tasks can be overwhelming and detract from instructional time (Gitomer et al., 2014).

Other notable challenges included the necessity for meticulous and systematic record-keeping of pupil progress, curriculum development, and implementation (4.06, Agree). This underscores the importance of organizational skills and support systems to manage these responsibilities efficiently. The extensive preparation of curriculum learning materials (4.02, Agree) and the absence of ready-made lesson plans for multi-grade classes (3.99, Agree) were also significant, highlighting the need for accessible resources to alleviate the preparation burden on teachers. Time constraints for preparing lesson plans (3.96, Agree) and a lack of technical knowledge in creating leveled assessment tools (3.92, Agree) and lesson planning for multi-grade teaching (3.83, Agree) underline the necessity for ongoing professional development and resource provision to help teachers better prepare and execute their lessons (Adoro, et al, 2024).

Physical and Material Resources

Challenges related to physical and material resources had an overall mean of 4.11 (Agree). Significant issues included the absence of internet connectivity (4.34, Strongly Agree) and the lack of classrooms designed for multi-grade teaching (4.22, Strongly Agree). These findings emphasize the infrastructural gaps that hinder effective teaching and learning. Teachers also faced a lack of teaching resources (4.18, Agree) and ready-made contextualized learning materials (4.11, Agree), indicating the need for better resource allocation to support multi-grade instruction (Southwick et al., 2016).

Other challenges identified were the unavailability of assessment tools designed for multi-grade learners (4.06, Agree), transportation difficulties (4.03, Agree), and social and economic conditions (3.99, Agree). These logistical and socio-economic barriers further complicate the teaching environment, underscoring the necessity for systemic support to address these issues.

Additionally, the lack of leveled reading materials across multi-grade classes (3.94, Agree) indicates a need for materials catering to diverse learning needs.

Time Management

Time management challenges were prominent, with an overall mean of 4.01 (Agree). Teachers struggled with classroom management (4.11, Agree) and time constraints for preparing leveled assessment tools (4.05, Agree). These challenges suggest the need for effective time management strategies and possibly administrative support to manage multiple roles efficiently. Other issues included time constraints for conducting home visits (4.05, Agree), preparing reports (4.03, Agree), conducting learning adjustments (3.99, Agree), and preparing sufficient materials for multi-grade teaching (3.84, Agree). These findings highlight the critical need for effective time management strategies and adequate administrative support (Oziegbe, 2023; Paudel, 2020).

Support to Teachers

The study found that teachers faced challenges related to the support they received, with an overall mean of 3.96 (Agree). A major concern was the lack of training related to multi-grade teaching (4.32, Strongly Agree), indicating a significant gap in professional development that needs to be addressed to better support teachers. Teachers also highlighted the need for a more careful study of learners' developmental characteristics, effective strategies, and approaches within a multi-grade class (4.22, Strongly Agree). This suggests that a deeper understanding of student diversity and tailored instructional strategies are crucial for effective teaching (Boelens et al., 2018).

Additional challenges included insufficient follow-up from parents (4.03, Agree), dangers in traveling to teaching stations (3.90, Agree), lack of technical assistance (3.87, Agree), low learner interest in participating in instructional activities (3.85, Agree), low allowances for multi-grade teachers (3.81, Agree), and lack of support from barangay officials (3.65, Agree). These findings indicate the need for a supportive network involving parents, local officials, and adequate financial incentives to foster a conducive teaching environment (Nobis & Caparros, 2024).

The overall mean for teachers' challenges in teaching multi-grade classes was 4.03 (Agree), indicating that teachers generally agree they face significant challenges in their roles. These challenges span instructional demands, physical and material resource limitations, time management difficulties, and a lack of adequate support. Addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, enhanced resource allocation, and improved support mechanisms could significantly improve the effectiveness and satisfaction of multi-grade teachers, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for their students.

Table 2: Teachers' Challenges in Teaching Multi-grade Classes

	Performance Indicators Teachers' Challenges in Teaching Multi-grade Classes	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Instruction			
1	Requires investment in teachers, supervisors, and administrative personnel training to prepare them for the demands of multi-grade teaching and administration of multi-grade schools.	4.39	Strongly Agree
2	Many responsibilities and workloads apart from in-class teaching-learning practices	4.20	Strongly Agree
3	More meticulous and systematic record-keeping track of pupil progress, curriculum development, and implementation is required.	4.06	Agree
4	Requires more preparation of curriculum learning materials	4.02	Agree
5	No ready-made lesson plans for the different multi-grade classes	3.99	Agree
6	Time constraints to prepare the lesson plans for multi-grade instruction	3.96	Agree
7	Lack of technical knowledge in preparing leveled assessment tools.	3.92	Agree
8	Lack of technical knowledge in lesson planning for multi-grade teaching	3.83	Agree
	Mean	4.05	Agree
Physical and Material Resources			
9	No internet connectivity	4.34	Strongly Agree
10	No available classrooms designed for multi-grade teaching	4.22	Strongly Agree
11	Lack of teaching resources	4.18	Agree
12	No ready-made contextualized learning resources	4.11	Agree
13	No ready-for-use assessment tools designed for multi-grade learners	4.06	Agree
14	Difficulty in transportation	4.03	Agree
15	Social and economic conditions	3.99	Agree
16	Lack of leveled reading materials across multi-grade classes	3.94	Agree
	Mean	4.11	Agree
Time Management			
17	Classroom management struggles	4.11	Agree
18	Constraints of time in the preparation of leveled assessment tools.	4.05	Agree
19	Constraints time to do home visits	4.05	Agree
20	Constraints of time to prepare the reports	4.03	Agree
21	Constraints of time to conduct learning adjustment	3.99	Agree
22	Constraints of time to prepare enough materials for multi-grade teaching	3.84	Agree
	Mean	4.01	Agree
Support to teachers			
23	Lack of training related to multi-grade teaching	4.32	Strongly Agree
24	Requires more careful study of learner's developmental characteristics across the age levels involved in the class, approaches, and effective and variable strategies within a multi-grade class.	4.22	Strongly Agree
25	No follow-up coming from some parents	4.03	Agree
26	The danger in going to stations	3.90	Agree
27	Lack of technical assistance	3.87	Agree
28	Lack of learners' interest to participate in instructional activities	3.85	Agree
29	Low multi-grade allowances	3.81	Agree
30	Lack of support from barangay officials	3.65	Agree
	Mean	3.96	Agree
	OVERALL MEAN	4.03	Agree

3.3 Test of Relationship between the Attitude and Challenges of Multi-grade Teachers

The Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.743 indicates a strong positive relationship between the attitudes of multi-grade teachers and the challenges they face across all categories. The significance value (Sig. (2-tailed)) of 0.001 suggests that these relationships are statistically

significant. This implies that as teachers' attitudes towards their roles and responsibilities improve, they perceive challenges more positively or feel better equipped to handle them.

The significant positive correlation ($r = 0.743, p < 0.05$) emphasizes the importance of fostering a positive attitude among teachers to better manage the inherent challenges of multi-grade teaching. It suggests that interventions aimed at improving teachers' attitudes, such as professional development and support systems, could lead to more effective coping strategies and better educational outcomes.

According to Bongala & Bobis (2020), continuous professional development significantly improved teachers' attitudes, helping them manage the challenges of multi-grade teaching more effectively. Similarly, Booc & Potane (2023) highlighted that teacher who received consistent support and training were better equipped to handle the complexities of multi-grade classrooms. These findings align with the present study's results, demonstrating a strong positive relationship between positive attitudes and managing challenges.

Moreover, Cornish (2021) emphasized the importance of a supportive environment and adequate resources in enhancing teachers' attitudes. A positive attitude is crucial for navigating the challenges of multi-grade teaching, and adequate support and resources can significantly impact teachers' ability to manage these challenges effectively.

Fostering a positive attitude through targeted professional development, adequate support systems, and resource allocation can significantly enhance teachers' resilience and effectiveness in multi-grade settings, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for both teachers and students.

Table 3: Relationship between Attitude and Challenges of Multi-grade Teachers

Category	Attitude Mean	Attitude Interpretation	Challenges Mean	Challenges Interpretation	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Instruction	4.14	Favorable	4.05	Agree	0.743	0.001	Significant
Physical and Material Resources	4.14	Favorable	4.11	Agree	0.743	0.001	Significant
Time Management	4.14	Favorable	4.01	Agree	0.743	0.001	Significant
Support to Teachers	4.14	Favorable	3.96	Agree	0.743	0.001	Significant
Overall	4.14	Favorable	4.03	Agree	0.743	0.001	Significant

4. Conclusion

The findings from this study provide significant insights into the attitudes and challenges faced by multi-grade teachers. Overall, teachers exhibit a positive and proactive attitude towards their roles, demonstrating a strong commitment to creating conducive learning environments, engaging in professional development, and applying innovative teaching strategies. This positive attitude is vital as it strongly correlates with their ability to manage and perceive challenges more favorably.

However, the challenges identified are substantial and multifaceted. Key instructional challenges include the need for extensive preparation, meticulous record-keeping, and a lack of technical knowledge in lesson planning and assessment. Physical and material resource constraints, such as the absence of internet connectivity and insufficient teaching resources, further exacerbate these difficulties. Time management issues and inadequate support from parents and local officials compound the challenges faced by multi-grade teachers.

These findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions to address these challenges. Enhanced professional development, better resource allocation, improved time management support, and robust support systems are essential to enable teachers to perform their roles effectively. By creating a more supportive and resource-rich environment, the overall quality of multi-grade education can be greatly improved, benefiting both teachers and students alike.

The study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to supporting multi-grade teachers. Recognizing their dedication and addressing the significant challenges they face through collaborative efforts and targeted strategies can enhance the effectiveness and satisfaction of multi-grade educators. Ultimately, this will lead to improved educational outcomes for their students, fostering a more productive and rewarding educational environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve the effectiveness and satisfaction of multi-grade teachers:

- i. Implement ongoing programs focused on multi-grade teaching strategies, lesson planning, and assessments. Encourage participation in seminars and workshops to keep teachers updated with new methodologies and innovations.
- ii. Increase the availability of teaching resources, including contextualized materials and leveled reading materials. Ensure internet connectivity and provide classrooms designed for multi-grade teaching.
- iii. Provide assistance with workloads, record-keeping, and reporting. Develop ready-to-use lesson plans and assessment tools tailored for multi-grade settings to enhance efficiency.
- iv. Facilitate regular meetings and feedback sessions between teachers and school heads. Encourage collaboration among teachers through professional learning communities or peer mentoring programs.
- v. Increase access to instructional coaches and technology specialists. Strengthen partnerships with parents and barangay officials to provide additional support for multi-grade teachers.

Provide incentives and recognition for exceptional performance and dedication. Foster a positive work environment by acknowledging challenges and celebrating achievements to boost morale and motivation.

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