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Lived Experiences of Teachers in Contextualizing Multigrade Lesson Plans: A Phenomenological Analysis in Kalamansig I District

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ABSTRACT

Multigrade teaching remains a critical instructional approach in rural and resource-constrained contexts where learners of varying grade levels are taught within a single classroom. This study explored the lived experiences of teachers in contextualizing multigrade lesson plans in the District of Kalamansig I, Division of Sultan Kudarat, during the school year 2025–2026. It aimed to understand how teachers design, adapt, and implement instruction to address diverse learning needs while ensuring meaningful and inclusive learning experiences. A qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, was employed to capture the depth of teachers' experiences. Participants were purposively selected multigrade teachers from selected schools in the district. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and reflective narratives, allowing teachers to share their instructional practices, challenges, and coping strategies. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify key patterns and emerging themes. Findings revealed that teachers faced significant challenges in contextualizing lesson plans, including managing multiple grade levels simultaneously, limited instructional materials, time constraints, and the need to align lessons with varied competencies. Teachers also struggled with balancing individualized instruction and whole-class activities. Despite these difficulties, they demonstrated adaptability by employing differentiated instruction, integrating localized and culturally relevant content, and utilizing peer-assisted learning strategies. The study further highlighted the importance of creativity, resourcefulness, and contextual awareness in effective multigrade teaching. Teachers emphasized the value of collaboration, continuous learning, and support from school leaders in enhancing their instructional practices. The study concludes that contextualizing multigrade lesson plans requires sustained support, targeted training, and the development of flexible teaching resources to empower teachers in delivering responsive and effective instruction.

Keywords: Voices, Non-Native Teachers, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices, Multicultural Education



INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Across the world, multigrade teaching continues to serve as a vital instructional approach in many rural and resource-limited contexts. In countries where student populations are small, scattered, or Geographically Isolated and Disadvantage Areas (GIDA), multigrade classrooms provide an essential means of delivering education to communities that would otherwise be deprived of access to schooling. The responsibility of teachers in this kind of teaching-learning approach requires creativity, adaptability, and resilience. Teachers must design and contextualize flexible lesson plans that ensure inclusivity and effective time management, using limited instructional materials and local resources.

Despite these potential benefits, research on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in contextualizing multigrade lesson plans remains limited, identifying the gaps in this research. This study, therefore, sought to fill the gap by capturing the voices of teachers in Kalamansig I, providing deeper insights into the challenges they faced, the strategies they employed, the professional transformations they underwent in navigating the complexities of multi-grade education, and the institutional and administrative supports they needed to achieve accessible, equitable, gendered-sensitive, inclusive and quality education for all.

In the global context, according to Mulryan-Kyne (2007), teachers in Ireland relied on peer collaboration and multi-level grouping as coping strategies. These practices not only improved classroom management but also supported professional development by exposing teachers to innovative methods. This suggests that coping strategies in multigrade contexts are both practical survival tools and pathways to professional growth. Subsequently, studies from other countries highlight that multi-grade classrooms are not merely a compromise but also an opportunity to promote peer learning, independence, and community-based education when effectively supported.

Contextualizing a lesson plan for diverse learners in different levels taught in one setting is a challenging and complex activity for a teacher assigned in this particular situation. This burden of teachers was supported by Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) – Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology on their national review for Philippines (2020), states that commonly reported difficulties in multigrade schools are the preparation of daily lesson plans, inadequate instructional materials, large class size and weak facilities or support system and further backed-up by the result of descriptive study by Yco, K. R., & coworkers (2025) the burden of teachers in lesson planning activity.



In the Philippines, multigrade teaching is prevalent in remote and geographically challenged areas where schools face issues such as low enrollment, limited infrastructure, and inadequate teaching resources.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized the Multi-Grade Program in Philippine Education (MGPE) to address equity in education. This program was officially launched and stated in DECS Order No. 38, s. 1993, which aims to improve access to elementary education via combination and multigrade classes in public schools. In 1997, Policies and Guidelines on the Organization and Operation of Multigrade (MG) Classes reinforced the MGPE, as stated in DepEd Order No. 96, s. 1997 as a key strategy to provide quality education in remote areas. Moreover, to strengthen the MPGE in the country, DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2009 was issued to establish foundational guidance for organizing multigrade classes, followed by DepEd Order No. 63, s. 2010 for financial subsidies to support and sustain the program chargeable against Division Maintenance Operation and Other Expenses (MOOE).

Although policies of the Department of Education-Philippines have been established, rural areas and some urban cities continue to grapple with the realities of teaching combined classes under often difficult conditions, as teachers in the District of Kalamansig I who are assigned to mountainous and far-flung areas. Along with this experience and situation, one of the most complex aspects of the role of a multigrade teacher is the lesson plan contextualization, which is significantly more demanding than single-grade settings. Teachers must prepare instructional plans that cater to multiple curriculum levels, varying learning competencies, and diverse student needs—all within the same teaching period.

International organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have long recognized multigrade teaching as a key strategy in promoting Education for All (EFA) and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in education, particularly in marginalized settings.

This phenomenological study on the lived experiences of teachers in contextualizing multigrade lesson plans could be an avenue to explore the real situation in terms of challenges, coping strategies, professional growth, and institutional support, which align with several SDGs of UNESCO. SDG 4 concerns quality education, which is the core of this research. The study could contribute to the goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. With this, multigrade teaching is a strategic approach to reach learners in geographically isolated and underserved communities, and contextualized lesson planning enhances relevance, inclusivity, and learner engagement. SDG 10, which could reduce inequalities through the study's focus on multigrade education, which often serves marginalized populations. Exploring and analyzing the challenges and coping strategies of teachers in Kalamansig I, the research will highlight systemic disparities and promote equity in educational



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access and quality. SDG 8 entails decent work and economic growth, which relates to one of the cores of this study, as far as professional growth and institutional support that a multigrade teacher develops and attains is concerned.

In addition, the study includes SDG 5, which is about Gender Equality, that may be relevant to gendered experiences among multigrade teachers, addressing gender-specific challenges and promoting empowerment in educational settings that support the broader goal of achieving gender equality in education and employment.

Research Questions

This study primarily aimed to explore the lived experiences of teachers on contextualizing multigrade lesson plans in the District of Kalamansig.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What challenges do teachers encounter in contextualizing multigrade lesson plans?
2. What strategies do they employ to address these challenges?
3. How do these experiences influence their professional growth? And
4. What forms of support do teachers need to effectively contextualize multigrade lessons?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture and analyze the lived experiences of teachers in the lesson plan contextualization for multi-grade classrooms. This design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to focus on the participants' authentic voices and to uncover the deeper meaning of their experiences in relation to a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, through this design, the study sought to describe how teachers share their insights and genuine responses to their challenges, coping strategies, professional growth, and institutional support in the context of multigrade instruction.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were public elementary school teachers handling multi-grade classes in the District of Kalamansig I, particularly in the schools stated in the locale of this research. A total of fifteen teachers were invited, consistent with phenomenological research where smaller sample sizes are sufficient to achieve data saturation (Guest, et al, 2006). The teacher-participants were considered information-rich sources because of their direct and ongoing experiences in lesson planning for multigrade classes.



Sampling Technique

The population of this study was the public elementary school teachers in Kalamansig District I, Sultan Kudarat, who handled multi-grade classes. They represented the primary units of analysis because they were directly engaged in designing contextualized lesson plans and classroom management within the unique instructional context of multigrade education. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique appropriate for qualitative research. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants with rich and relevant experiences necessary to address the research objectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Only teachers with at least a year of experience in multi-grade teaching were considered to ensure that participants had sufficient exposure to the phenomenon of this study. The population frame for the study was obtained from the official list of teachers in Kalamansig District I, Division of Sultan Kudarat. From this frame, eligible participants will be identified and invited to participate voluntarily. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw were strictly observed in the recruitment and selection process in the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act Number 10173). Moreover, the use of purposive sampling and the reliance on data saturation ensured that the participants were not only information-rich but also representative of the lived realities of teachers in rural contexts in contextualizing multigrade lesson plans.

Data Gathering Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide as the primary data-gathering instrument. This instrument was more flexible and particularly suited to qualitative and phenomenological research since it allowed participants to share their lived experiences in depth while still providing the researcher with a clear structure for eliciting relevant information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions, including the teachers' challenges in lesson planning for multi-grade classes, the strategies they employed to address these challenges, and their experiences that contributed to their professional growth. and the support of the Department of Education that contributed to their experiences in crafting multigrade lesson plans.

Probing questions were prepared to encourage elaboration and clarification of responses, ensuring that participants' perspectives were captured comprehensively and authentically.

The interview guide was validated by experts in qualitative research and educational management to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study.



The final version of the interview guide was included in the Appendices of this study, along with interpretation tools on how the responses were categorized, coded, and analyzed for thematic patterns.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection in this study followed several stages to ensure systematic, ethical, and reliable gathering of information from participants.

Permission to Conduct the Study. Before the actual data gathering, a formal request for approval was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Sultan Kudarat and from the District Supervisor of Kalamansig District I. Upon approval, coordination with school principals was established to identify qualified multigrade teachers and facilitate scheduling of interviews.

Participant Recruitment. The researcher employed purposive sampling to identify participants who met the study's inclusion criteria: (1) currently handling multi-grade classes, and (2) with at least one year of experience in lesson planning for multi-grade settings. Teacher-participants will be formally invited to participate in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and teachers were informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Informed Consent. Following the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act Number 10173), the researcher ensured that before the interviews, the participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, confidentiality measures, and potential risks and benefits. Only those who signed the consent form were included in the study.

Conduct of Interviews. Data were gathered through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the teacher-participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, depending on the depth of responses. The researcher used an interview guide to maintain focus while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their lived experiences. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in transcription. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details.

Data Management and Organization. After the face-to-face interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms were used in transcripts and subsequent analysis. All digital files were stored in a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher.

Data Analysis Preparation

Transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed and organized for coding and thematic analysis. This step ensures that all relevant statements are captured as the basis for the interpretative process.



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Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) Thematic Analysis approach, which involved the following phases: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Themes were interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework and the study's four main dimensions.

Through this step-by-step procedure, the study ensured that data were being collected ethically, systematically, and comprehensively, in alignment with the principles of qualitative phenomenological research.

Data Privacy and Ethical Consideration

This study strictly adhered to the ethical principles of research involving teacher-participants, ensuring respect, confidentiality, and integrity throughout the research process. Guided by the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), all personal and sensitive information provided by participants was treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Further, in compliance with the Act, all data were be retained for a limited period and permanently deleted after the completion of the study to ensure privacy and security and protect teachers' rights and welfare. Moreover, as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the researcher was maintained reflexivity.

To acknowledge biases, assumptions, and prior experiences that may influence interpretation. A reflective journal was kept, ensuring transparency and analytical rigor.

To sum it up, this chapter outlined the qualitative phenomenological approach used to explore teachers' experiences in contextualizing multigrade lesson plans in Kalamansig I. It described the research locale, participants, data gathering and analysis procedures, and ethical safeguards to ensure the integrity of the research process.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on the lived experiences of teachers in contextualizing lesson plans for multi-grade classes in the District of Kalamansig I, Sultan Kudarat, Region XII, Philippines, particularly in schools located in mountainous areas.

It was limited to teachers currently assigned to multigrade classrooms in public elementary schools within the district with at least one year of experience. The study specifically examined challenges, coping strategies employed, professional growth experienced, and perceived institutional support needed.



The study did not cover other aspects of multigrade teaching, such as student performance, parental involvement, or community participation, except where these factors directly influence the contextualization of the lesson plan.

Furthermore, the research was limited by its qualitative, phenomenological design, which prioritized depth of understanding of the teachers' experiences handling multigrade classes and designing contextualized lesson plans for diverse learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Contextualizing Multigrade Lesson Plans

Contextualizing multigrade lesson plans presents a complex instructional landscape where teachers must simultaneously address diverse learner needs, curriculum demands, and contextual realities. Based on the participants' responses, five major challenges emerged: differentiation of instruction, curriculum alignment, resource constraints, time and workload pressures, and cultural adaptation for indigenous learners.

These challenges are not isolated but interconnected, reflecting the multifaceted nature of multigrade teaching in resource-limited and culturally diverse settings. The discussion below synthesizes the participants' experiences and relates them to recent related literature.

Differentiation of Instruction Across Diverse Learners

Participants consistently emphasized the difficulty of managing learners with varying abilities, grade levels, and learning paces within a single classroom.

Some participants noted that adapting lessons for different levels and abilities is difficult when handling two grades, while other highlighted the challenge posed by differences in learners' abilities and learning speeds. Similarly, Other participants revealed the complexity of aligning competencies and applying tiered instruction within one lesson. These experiences align with recent studies indicating that differentiated instruction is one of the core challenges in multigrade settings due to cognitive, developmental, and academic diversity among learners. According to Tomlinson (2021), effective differentiation requires continuous assessment, flexible grouping, and adaptive teaching strategies.

These were likely related issues that are often difficult to implement in multigrade classrooms with limited time and resources. Likewise, UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that multigrade teachers must design tiered activities and individualized learning pathways, which increases instructional complexity.

The participants' narratives reflected this reality, as they struggled to address multiple learning levels while maintaining instructional coherence.



Alignment of Competencies with Curriculum Requirements

Another major challenge is balancing contextualized teaching with strict curriculum standards. Participants expressed difficulty in ensuring that lessons remain culturally relevant while still meeting prescribed competencies and learning objectives. One of the participants specifically highlighted the difficulty of aligning competencies within a single class period, while other emphasized the challenge of constructing contextualized lessons that still comply with curriculum expectations. This aligns with recent literature asserting that curriculum alignment is a critical issue in multigrade teaching.

According to Akyeampong et al. (2020), teachers in multigrade contexts often experience tension between adhering to standardized curricula and adapting lessons to local contexts. Similarly, DepEd's contextualized curriculum framework encourages localization, but teachers must still ensure mastery of national competencies, creating a dual responsibility (DepEd, 2022).

The participants' responses reflected this balancing act, where instructional creativity must coexist with accountability to curriculum standards.

Limited Resources and Infrastructure Constraints

Resource scarcity emerged as a significant barrier to effective contextualization. Most of the participants reported lack of electricity, limited internet access, and insufficient instructional materials. These constraints force teachers to rely on improvised teaching aids and limit access to updated references and digital resources. This finding was strongly supported by literature highlighting infrastructural gaps as a persistent challenge in rural and multigrade schools.

According to Johnson et al. (2021), inadequate access to electricity and digital tools restricts the implementation of technology-enhanced and resource-based instruction. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) reports that the lack of learning materials and infrastructure significantly affects instructional quality and learner engagement in underserved communities. The participants' reliance on improvised materials demonstrated adaptive strategies; however, it also underscored systemic inequities that hinder effective contextualization.

Time Management and Workload Constraints

Participants also reported significant challenges related to time management and workload. They noted that preparing contextualized materials requires extra time. They also emphasized the difficulty of dividing attention among multiple groups within limited class time. Further, some described the extensive effort required for lesson planning and material preparation. These experiences are consistent with studies indicating that multigrade teachers often have heavier workloads than monograde teachers, with planning and instruction across grade levels.



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Little (2020) explains that multigrade teaching demands continuous multitasking, including preparing differentiated materials, managing groups, and assessing learners concurrently. Additionally, OECD (2022) highlights that time constraints reduce teachers' ability to implement innovative and learner-centered strategies. The participants' accounts reflect how time scarcity directly impacts the quality and depth of lesson contextualization.

Cultural and Contextual Adaptation for Indigenous Learners

Finally, participants emphasized the importance—and difficulty—of adapting lessons to learners' cultural backgrounds, many of whom are Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities.

Most of the participants highlighted the need to localize materials, use the mother tongue, and incorporate community context to ensure meaningful learning. This aligns with current research stressing culturally responsive and context-based pedagogy. According to Gay (2022) argues that culturally responsive teaching enhances engagement and comprehension by connecting instruction to learners' cultural experiences. Similarly, Ball (2021) emphasizes that localization and indigenization of curriculum content are essential in multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

In the Philippine context, DepEd (2021) promotes the use of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) to improve comprehension and participation among early learners and IP students. The participants' emphasis on localization reflected an understanding that contextual relevance is key to effective learning, yet implementing it remained challenging due to limited materials and training.

Strategies or Approaches Used by Teachers to Manage Multigrade Teaching Challenges

Teachers handling multigrade classes employed a range of adaptive strategies to address the complexities of teaching learners from different grade levels within a single classroom. Based on the participants' responses, six key strategies emerged: differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, contextualization, stakeholder collaboration, resourcefulness, and structured time management.

These strategies demonstrated how teachers proactively respond to instructional challenges by aligning pedagogy with learner diversity, limited resources, and contextual realities. The discussion below synthesizes these strategies and connects them with relevant literature from 2020 to 2025.

Differentiated Instruction and Tiered Activities

Participants emphasized the use of differentiated instruction as a primary strategy for learners' abilities.



One of the participants noted the use of tasks appropriate for each grade level, while some highlighted preparing varied activities under the same topic but with different levels of difficulty. Similarly, other participants described “unpacking” lessons to match learners’ levels and experiencing stressed in designing tasks that allow independent work through tiered instruction. These practices aligned with contemporary research on differentiated instruction as an essential approach in heterogeneous classrooms.

Tomlinson (2021) asserts that effective differentiation involves modifying content, process, and product based on learners’ readiness, interest, and learning profiles. In multigrade contexts, UNESCO (2021) also highlights tiered tasks as a key strategy to ensure that learners engage with content appropriate to their developmental level. The participants’ responses demonstrated practical application of these principles. Instruction is intentionally varied to accommodate learner diversity while maintaining a unified lesson theme.

Flexible Grouping and Peer Learning

Another prominent strategy is the use of flexible grouping and peer learning. Participants described older or more advanced learners assisting younger ones through peer teaching and mentioned group rotation and mixed-ability grouping. They also emphasized the importance of maximizing peer tutoring to enhance learning support within the classroom.

This approach is supported by Vygotskian learning theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners benefit from interaction with more capable peers. Recent studies also confirm that peer-assisted learning improves academic engagement and reduces teacher workload in multigrade settings (OECD, 2022). Flexible grouping allows teachers to manage multiple grade levels efficiently while fostering collaborative learning environments.

The participants’ strategies reflected an understanding that peer interaction can serve as an instructional scaffold, especially in resource-constrained classrooms.

Contextualization and Localization of Lessons

Participants consistently highlighted contextualization as a core strategy for making lessons meaningful. Some used daily life and community experiences as examples, while other emphasized understanding learners’ culture. Participants also connected lessons to farming and local livelihoods thus, incorporated storytelling and localized examples relevant to learners’ environments.

This is a culturally responsive teaching framework that emphasizes integration of learners’ cultural backgrounds into instruction. Gay (2022) argues that contextualized teaching enhances comprehension and engagement by making content relatable.



In addition, DepEd (2022) promotes contextualization and indigenization as part of the K to 12 curriculum frameworks to ensure relevance in diverse Philippine contexts. The participants' use of local examples and cultural references reflects an effort to bridge curriculum content with learners' experiences, thereby improving understanding and retention.

Collaboration with Stakeholders and Community Engagement

Collaboration with parents and community members emerged as an important support strategy. Participant highlighted working with stakeholders to support learners at home, incorporated community-based materials and considered family contexts in instruction. They also noted that parents reinforce learning at home, contributing to continuity of learning beyond the classroom.

This finding is supported by Epstein's framework of school-family-community partnerships, which emphasizes that student achievement improves when stakeholders are actively involved in the learning process. Recent literature also indicates that community engagement strengthens contextualized learning by providing authentic inputs and real-life connections (UNESCO, 2023). In multigrade settings, where teacher attention is divided, parental and community support become crucial in reinforcing lessons and monitoring learner progress.

The participants' experiences highlighted the collaborative nature of effective multigrade teaching.

Resourcefulness and Use of Local/Improvised Materials

Participants demonstrated resourcefulness in addressing limited instructional resources. They described creating improvised materials and visual aids due to a lack of technology, used materials found in the environment and emphasized the development and use of localized and self-directed learning materials to support instruction. This strategy reflected adaptive teaching practices in resource-constrained environments.

According to Johnson et al. (2021), teachers in low-resource settings often rely on locally available materials to sustain instruction and enhance learner engagement. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) notes that improvisation is a common and necessary response to infrastructure gaps, particularly in rural schools. The participants' resourcefulness illustrates creativity and resilience, enabling them to deliver instruction despite limitations in technology and formal teaching materials.

Time Management and Structured Lesson Planning

Effective time management and structured planning were also identified as key strategies. Participants emphasized preparing weekly plans and organizing lessons to manage multiple groups efficiently and highlighted that careful planning ensures smooth classroom management and improved lesson delivery. This aligned with findings that structured planning is essential in



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multigrade classrooms due to the simultaneous instruction of multiple grade levels. Little (2020) explains that multigrade teachers must allocate time strategically to balance direct instruction, independent work, and group activities.

Recent educational reports also stress that advance planning enhances instructional efficiency and reduces classroom disruptions (OECD, 2022). The participants' emphasis on preparation and organization demonstrates how time management serves as a foundational strategy for sustaining effective multigrade instruction.

Influence of Contextualizing Multigrade Lessons on Teachers' Professional Growth and Identity

Contextualizing multigrade lessons not only shapes instructional practices but also significantly influences teachers' professional growth and identity. Based on the participants' responses, contextualization fosters flexibility and strengthens teachers' identity as facilitators of learning. Further, it enhances creativity and resourcefulness, deepens commitment to inclusive education, reinforces professional purpose, and promotes reflective practice.

Development of Flexibility, Adaptability, and Resilience

Participants consistently described how multigrade teaching enhanced their flexibility and adaptability. Participants emphasized becoming more flexible, innovative, and resilient. They highlighted the development of patience and creativity. Similarly, some participants noted improved adaptability to diverse learning contexts, and underscored resilience in managing multigrade learners. These experiences aligned with recent literature emphasizing that multigrade teaching requires teachers to constantly adjust instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs.

According to OECD (2022), teachers in complex classroom environments develop adaptive expertise as they respond to varying student abilities and contextual demands. Likewise, UNESCO (2021) notes that multigrade settings cultivate resilience among teachers due to the need to manage simultaneous instructional challenges.

The participants' narratives reflect this professional growth, where continuous exposure to diverse teaching situations strengthens their capacity to cope and adapt effectively.

Strengthened Professional Identity as Facilitator of Learning

Participants reported a transformation in their professional identity from traditional knowledge transmitters to facilitators of learning. Participants explicitly stated that they now see themselves as facilitators of meaningful learning rather than mere content deliverers. Further,



they described a shift toward bridging knowledge and real-life experiences. Participant emphasized nurturing learners' dreams, and rejected the "spoon-feeding" approach in favor of facilitation.

This shift aligned with constructivist and learner-centered pedagogical frameworks. According to Freire's (adapted in modern pedagogy) concept of facilitation, teachers act as guides who support learners' active knowledge construction. Recent studies also affirm that contextualized and learner-centered teaching strengthens teacher identity as facilitators rather than authoritative knowledge providers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In multigrade contexts, this identity is further reinforced as teachers must guide independent and group learning simultaneously. The participants' reflections demonstrate a clear evolution in professional self-concept shaped by contextualized teaching practices.

Increased Creativity, Resourcefulness, and Innovation

Participants highlighted how contextualizing multigrade lessons fosters creativity and innovation.

Some of the participants described becoming more resourceful and innovative, other emphasized creativity in using limited resources. They also noted reflective and innovative practices, including the use of external materials such as videos and references to enrich lessons.

This is supported by literature indicating that constrained environments often stimulate teacher innovation. According to Johnson et al. (2021), teachers in low-resource settings develop creative instructional strategies, including improvisation and localized material development, to sustain teaching effectiveness. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that resource limitations encourage adaptive and innovative pedagogical approaches.

The participants' experiences reflected this phenomenon, where limitations become catalysts for professional creativity and instructional improvement.

Deepened Commitment to Learner-Centered and Inclusive Education

Participants expressed a stronger commitment to inclusivity and learner-centered education and emphasized ensuring that no learner is left behind. They highlighted inclusive and responsive teaching practices, focused on genuine care and support, and prioritized relevance and inclusivity over rigid routines.

The participants' responses aligned with global educational frameworks that promote inclusive education as a core principle. According to UNESCO (2020).



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Inclusive education ensures that all learners, regardless of ability or background, have equitable access to meaningful learning opportunities. Additionally, Gay (2022) underscores that culturally responsive and learner-centered teaching enhances equity and participation. The participants' responses demonstrate how contextualized multigrade teaching reinforces their commitment to addressing diverse learner needs and promoting equitable learning environments.

Strengthened Professional Purpose and Sense of Fulfillment

Participants reported that contextualization contributes to a stronger sense of professional purpose and fulfillment, described teaching as having deeper meaning, and highlighted strengthened dedication to community service.

Some emphasized motivation derived from seeing the impact of contextualized teaching on learners, and focused on delivering quality education to all students.

This finding is consistent with research indicating that meaningful teaching experiences enhance intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. According to Klassen and Kim (2021), teachers who perceive their work as impactful are more likely to experience professional fulfillment and sustained commitment. Similarly, OECD (2022) notes that teacher motivation is closely linked to perceived effectiveness and positive student outcomes.

The participants' narratives suggested that contextualization reinforces their sense of purpose by allowing them to witness tangible improvements in learner engagement and achievement.

Enhanced Reflective Practice and Continuous Professional Growth

Finally, participants highlighted the role of contextualization in promoting reflective practice and continuous professional growth. They described how challenges prompted them to reflect and improve their teaching practices, identified themselves as a reflective educator. Some also emphasized continuous adaptation for new learning resources for improvement.

This aligns with the concept of reflective practice as a cornerstone of professional development. According to Schön (2020), reflective practitioners continuously evaluate their experiences to inform future actions. Recent educational research also highlights that reflection enhances instructional effectiveness and supports lifelong learning among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

In multigrade contexts, reflection becomes even more critical due to the complexity of managing diverse learners. The participants' experiences demonstrate how contextualization



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fosters a cycle of reflection, adaptation, and improvement, contributing to ongoing professional growth.

Essential Support Needed to Effectively Contextualize Multigrade Lessons

Effective contextualization of multigrade lessons requires not only teacher competence but also strong institutional, material, and community support systems.

Based on the participants' responses, six essential forms of support emerged: professional development and training, availability of contextualized materials, administrative and leadership support, collaboration among teachers, community and parent involvement, and adequate infrastructure. These supports collectively enable teachers to implement contextualized instruction more effectively despite the inherent complexities of multigrade settings.

Professional Development and Training Support

Participants strongly emphasized the need for continuous professional development and highlighted access to specialized training in differentiated instruction and multigrade classroom management. Most of the participants in this theme stressed the importance of ongoing seminars, workshops, and training programs to enhance contextualization skills and align with curriculum changes.

This aligns with research indicating that continuous professional development (CPD) is critical in equipping teachers with the competencies required for complex teaching environments. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), sustained and job-embedded professional learning significantly improves instructional practices and teacher effectiveness.

Similarly, OECD (2022) notes that ongoing training enhances teachers' ability to adapt to diverse learners and implement innovative pedagogies such as differentiation and contextualization. The participants' responses reflect a strong recognition that without continuous training, teachers may struggle to meet the demands of multigrade teaching effectively.

Availability of Contextualized and Localized Instructional Materials

Participants identified the availability of appropriate instructional materials as a key support. The participants emphasized access to localized and culturally responsive materials. They revealed the need for textbooks, visual aids, and printed references suited for different grade levels.

This is supported by UNESCO (2021), which highlights that the availability of relevant and localized learning materials is essential for effective multigrade teaching, particularly in rural and culturally diverse contexts. Likewise, recent studies show that culturally responsive materials improve learner engagement and comprehension by connecting lessons to students' lived experiences (Gay, 2022).



The participants' emphasis on grade-appropriate and context-based resources underscores the importance of aligning instructional materials with both curriculum standards and local realities to facilitate meaningful learning.

Administrative and School Leadership Support

Strong support from school administrators and instructional leaders was repeatedly mentioned. Almost of the participants highlighted mentoring, coaching, technical assistance, and guidance as essential forms of leadership support. LAC (Learning Action Cell) sessions were also noted as valuable platforms for instructional improvement and collaboration.

This aligns with literature emphasizing the critical role of instructional leadership in teacher development. According to Leithwood et al. (2020), effective school leadership positively influences teacher performance by providing guidance, supervision, and professional support.

Additionally, DepEd's LAC framework institutionalizes collaborative learning among teachers to strengthen instructional practices (DepEd, 2021).

The participants' experiences indicated that leadership support not only enhances teaching competence but also built confidence in managing multigrade classrooms.

Collaboration Among Teachers and Peer Support

Participants also highlighted the importance of collaboration and peer support.

Some of the participants emphasized sharing best practices through collaboration and LAC sessions, while other pointed to technical assistance from experienced teachers.

They also noted that exchanging ideas with colleagues strengthens contextualization practices. This is consistent with research showing that professional collaboration enhances teacher learning and instructional quality.

According to Hargreaves and O'Connor (2021), collaborative professional cultures enable teachers to share knowledge, reflect on practices, and co-develop solutions to instructional challenges.

Similarly, OECD (2022) reported that peer learning communities, such as professional learning communities (PLCs), improve teaching strategies and student outcomes.

The participants' reliance on peer collaboration reflected the value of collegial support in addressing the complexities of multigrade teaching.

Community and Parent Involvement



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Community and parent involvement emerged as a crucial support system. Majority of the participants emphasized the role of parents and community members in sharing local knowledge, supporting learners at home, and encouraging school attendance.

This aligns with Epstein's framework on school-family-community partnerships, which underscores the positive impact of stakeholder engagement on student achievement and school effectiveness.

UNESCO (2023) also highlights that community involvement enriches contextualized learning by providing authentic cultural and experiential inputs. In multigrade settings, where teacher attention is divided, parental support becomes especially vital in reinforcing learning and ensuring continuity between school and home. The participants' responses demonstrate that strong community ties enhance both instructional relevance and learner support.

Adequate Infrastructure and Learning Environment Support

Participants identified infrastructure as a foundational requirement for effective contextualization. They also emphasized access to electricity for improved instruction and technology-based learning and highlighted the importance of internet connectivity. They also noted that adequate school resources significantly improve lesson preparation and delivery.

This is supported by global reports indicating that infrastructure plays a critical role in enabling effective teaching and learning. According to UNESCO (2023), access to electricity, internet, and adequate facilities enhances educational delivery, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2021) found that infrastructure constraints limit access to digital resources and reduce opportunities for innovative instruction.

The participants' experiences illustrated how infrastructural support directly influences the feasibility of contextualized and technology-supported teaching practices.

Conclusion

Considering the findings of the study, the following were concluded:

Contextualizing multigrade lessons is inherently complex because it requires balancing multiple grade-level expectations with localized relevance, indicating that effective planning in such settings demands both pedagogical flexibility and adaptive decision-making.

The strategies adopted highlight teachers' ingenuity and adaptability, suggesting that effective multigrade teaching relies heavily on practical, context-sensitive approaches rather than standardized methods alone.



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Engagement in multigrade contextualized teaching is a continuous learning process that fosters professional maturity, reinforcing the idea that challenging teaching environments can be catalysts for sustained professional development.

Effective contextualization in multigrade settings is not solely dependent on teacher effort but is significantly strengthened by a holistic support system that integrates institutional, material, and community-based resources.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

1. DepEd may strengthen targeted policy and funding for multigrade schools by prioritizing the provision of contextualized, grade-appropriate instructional materials and regular, mandatory multigrade-focused training programs to directly address teachers' difficulties in lesson alignment and resource limitations.
2. School Administrators may establish a structured support system that includes scheduled coaching, LAC sessions, and resource-sharing mechanisms among teachers to reduce planning burden and improve alignment of differentiated and contextualized lessons.
3. Curriculum Planners may develop flexible, modular, and locality-adaptable curriculum guides and lesson exemplars specifically designed for multigrade classrooms to ease integration of varying grade levels and local contexts within one lesson plan.
4. Teachers may continue strengthening collaborative practices such as peer mentoring, sharing of localized teaching strategies, and co-developing contextualized materials to maximize existing resources while managing diverse learner needs more effectively.
5. Future Researchers may conduct intervention-based and comparative studies focusing on scalable models of multigrade contextualization, particularly on the effectiveness of localized instructional materials, training programs, and support systems in improving teaching outcomes in resource-constrained settings.

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Declaration AI Tools Utilization

I do hereby declare the use AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly for grammar checking and sentence organization purposes only.



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