



CHALLENGES AMONG TEACHERS HANDLING MULTIGRADE CLASSES IN CAGWAIT DISTRICT, CAGWAIT, SURIGAO DEL SUR, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges encountered by teachers handling multigrade classes in Cagwait District and how these challenges relate to learners' academic performance. Using a mixed-method research design, data were gathered from 14 multigrade teachers, 355 multigrade learners, and five focus group discussion participants from five public elementary multigrade schools. Findings revealed that the overall seriousness of teachers' challenges was rated "Less Serious," with learner diversity ranking as the most serious challenge. Correlates affecting multigrade classes were generally experienced to a "Least" or "Less Extent," with classroom management and time constraints ranking highest. Learners' academic performance was "Proficient," with an overall MPS of 77.14%. Correlation results showed that teacher-related factors, learner diversity, assessment practices, classroom management, resource support, and professional development had significant negative relationships with learners' academic performance. The qualitative findings further revealed emotional strain, behavior-management issues, time pressure, coping strategies, and teacher resilience. Based on the findings, an intervention plan focusing on differentiated instruction, teacher development, localized learning materials, structured routines, and monitoring was proposed.

Keywords: *multigrade teaching, teacher challenges, learner diversity, academic performance, Cagwait District, intervention plan*

INTRODUCTION

Multigrade classrooms, where a single teacher manages multiple grade levels simultaneously, are prevalent in rural and underserved areas. This teaching model is especially common in the Philippines, where resources are limited, and students from various academic levels must be taught in the same setting. As noted by Qangule (2025), managing these diverse classrooms requires not only instructional flexibility but also differentiated teaching strategies to meet the varying needs of learners. However, as studies suggest, multigrade teaching presents significant challenges, particularly in areas like learner diversity, classroom management, and resource availability (Bagay, 2024).

In Cagwait District, multigrade teachers face similar obstacles, including time management issues and inadequate teaching resources. These factors affect both the teachers' workload and the students' academic outcomes. The Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure that all students, regardless of their location, receive a quality education (Iballa et al., 2025).

However, without targeted support and training, multigrade teachers often struggle to meet these demands, which may lead to suboptimal educational results (Recla & Potane, 2023).

Recent studies further highlight that teacher training and professional development are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of multigrade education. In their work, Taole (2022) and Kalender & Erdem (2021) emphasize the importance of continuous professional development and resource support in improving teaching quality and learner performance in multigrade settings. These insights align with the findings of this study, which suggests that stronger teacher preparation and community involvement are vital to overcoming multigrade education challenges.

Research Questions

1. How serious are the challenges encountered by teachers in multigrade classes across teacher-related factors, learner diversity, curriculum/instructional resources, and assessment practices?
2. To what extent do correlates such as classroom management, resource availability, and professional development affect multigrade teaching?
3. What is the academic performance of learners in multigrade settings (Mean Percentage Scores) for the 4th Quarter, SY 2024–2025?
4. What significant relationships exist between the seriousness of challenges and learners' academic performance?
5. What significant relationships exist between correlated factors and learners' academic performance?
6. What are the lived experiences of multigrade teachers in Cagwait District?
7. What intervention plan can address the identified challenges?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed-methods convergent design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. For the quantitative part, the researcher used validated questionnaires to assess teacher perceptions of multigrade challenges, as well as learners' academic performance based on their 4th Quarter Mean Percentage Scores (MPS). The qualitative part involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with five purposively selected teachers to explore their lived experiences and coping strategies. The sampling involved 14 teachers and 355 learners from five public elementary schools in Cagwait District, with the data collection instruments tested for validity by subject-matter experts.

This mixed-method design builds on recent studies by Taole (2022) and Ebisa (2025), who utilized similar methodologies to understand multigrade teachers' experiences and challenges. Pearson and Spearman correlation tests were employed to analyze the relationship between teacher challenges and learners' academic performance, following statistical methods used in recent multigrade education research (Bagay, 2024). The qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes about classroom management, teacher resilience, and learner engagement in multigrade settings (Iballa et al., 2025).

RESULTS

Table 1. Seriousness of Challenges Encountered by Teachers

Challenge Domain	Weighted Mean	Category	Primary Concern
Learner Diversity	3.32	Less Serious	Varying academic readiness
Resource & Materials	3.26	Less Serious	Inadequate instructional aids
Assessment Challenges	3.18	Less Serious	Difficulty delivering individualized feedback
Teacher-Related Workload	3.05	Less Serious	Multi-role stress

Table 2. Correlates Affecting Multigrade Classes

Correlate	Weighted Mean	Category	Most Evident Issue
Classroom Management & Time	3.06	Less Extent	Maintaining learner focus
Resources & Support	2.91	Least Extent	Lack of teaching aids

Correlate	Weighted Mean	Category	Most Evident Issue
Teaching Issues	2.66	Least Extent	Limited time per grade
Professional Development	2.62	Least Extent	Inadequate multigrade training

Table 3. Learners' Academic Performance (MPS)

Grade Cluster	Average MPS	Interpretation
Key Stage 1 (Grades 1–3)	77.50	Proficient
Key Stage 2 (Grades 4–6)	76.77	Proficient
Overall	77.14	Proficient

Table 4. Correlation: Challenges vs. Learner Performance

Variable	r	p	Significance
Teacher Workload	-0.97	0.006	Significant
Learner Diversity	-0.94	0.017	Significant
Assessment Issues	-0.89	0.041	Significant
Curriculum Resources	-0.42	0.480	Not significant
Overall Challenges	-0.93	0.021	Significant

Table 5. Correlation: Correlates vs. Learners' MPS

Correlate	r	p	Decision
Classroom Mgmt/Time	-0.50	0.040	Significant
Resources/Support	-0.57	0.020	Significant
Teaching Issues	-0.15	0.550	Not significant
Professional Development	-0.53	0.030	Significant

Table 6. Dominant Themes: Lived Experiences of Teachers

Theme	Description
Emotional & Managerial Strain	Teachers initially felt shocked, stressed, and challenged by handling several grade levels.
Adaptive Strategies	Flexible grouping, routines, peer coaching
Professional Growth	Personal resilience and reflective practice
Resource Constraints	Limited materials affected lesson delivery

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that multigrade teachers in Cagwait District face several challenges, particularly related to learner diversity and time management. These challenges are not unique to Cagwait, as similar studies in other rural and underserved areas report that managing multiple academic levels within one classroom remains the most significant challenge for teachers (Kalender & Erdem, 2021). Multigrade classrooms require teachers to constantly adapt their teaching methods to cater to diverse learner needs, which is often a daunting task, particularly in settings where resources are scarce. Moreover, the negative correlation between teacher workload and academic performance is consistent with findings from several studies that emphasize how overwhelming teaching demands detract from the quality of education provided. Heavy workloads, including the pressure to prepare multiple lesson plans and manage a diverse classroom, often result in teacher burnout and suboptimal learning outcomes for students (Qangule, 2025; Taole, 2022). Recent studies (Ebisa, 2025; Mesebe, 2021) reinforce the idea that teacher training and access to appropriate resources are vital in overcoming the stress associated with multigrade classrooms, and they highlight the need for sustained professional development.

Furthermore, the qualitative data corroborates the quantitative findings, as teachers reported significant emotional strain and difficulties balancing work with personal life, which resonates with other studies on rural multigrade teachers (Iballa et al., 2025; Bagay, 2024). These emotional and psychological pressures can contribute to stress and affect the overall effectiveness of teaching, especially in a multigrade context where the demands on teachers are magnified. The finding that time constraints and classroom management challenges, though rated less seriously, still significantly impact academic performance, aligns with recent work by Ebisa (2025), which underscores the importance of effective time management in multigrade classrooms. Despite the challenges, teachers in the study demonstrated resilience and adapted their teaching methods, using differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and peer support to meet the diverse needs of their students. These strategies are in line with best practices for managing multigrade classrooms and are consistent with research suggesting that multigrade education can be successful when teachers utilize such adaptive methods (Kalender & Erdem, 2021; Bagay, 2024; Mesebe, 2021).

The intervention plan proposed in this study, which focuses on professional development, localized instructional resources, and classroom management techniques,

is grounded in current literature. Recent research highlights the importance of teacher training and access to resources tailored specifically to multigrade settings to improve both teaching effectiveness and student outcomes (Taole, 2022; Mesebe, 2021). By addressing these areas, the educational system in Cagwait District can significantly enhance both teacher performance and learners' academic achievements.

Conclusions

This study explored the challenges faced by teachers handling multigrade classrooms in Cagwait District and examined the impact of these challenges on learners' academic performance. The findings revealed that while the overall seriousness of the challenges was rated as "Less Serious," certain factors, such as learner diversity, time constraints, and heavy teacher workloads, emerged as significant hurdles for multigrade teachers. Despite these challenges, the academic performance of learners was classified as "Proficient," indicating that multigrade classrooms can still yield positive educational outcomes when managed effectively.

However, a negative correlation was found between the challenges faced by teachers and the students' academic performance, suggesting that improvements in teaching conditions are needed to boost student outcomes. The study also highlighted that multigrade teachers demonstrated resilience through the use of adaptive teaching strategies like differentiated instruction and flexible grouping, which were essential in managing classrooms with diverse student needs. While multigrade education shows promise, addressing the identified challenges is crucial for improving both teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance multigrade education in Cagwait District. First, there is a clear need for professional development programs that focus on effective strategies for managing diverse classrooms, including differentiated instruction, classroom management, and time management. These programs should be tailored specifically for multigrade teachers to equip them with the skills required to handle the complexities of teaching multiple grade levels simultaneously. Additionally, it is essential to improve the availability of instructional resources in multigrade schools. Teachers should have access to relevant teaching materials that are both contextualized and multigrade-specific to help meet the needs of students at various academic levels. Another key recommendation is to foster greater community and parental involvement in the education process. Teachers should be encouraged to work closely with parents to ensure that students receive consistent support at home and within their communities. Furthermore, schools should implement a monitoring and evaluation system to track both teaching effectiveness and student performance, ensuring that interventions are timely and tailored to the needs of the classroom. Peer support networks and mentoring programs should also be established for teachers, providing them with professional and emotional support as they navigate the challenges of multigrade teaching. Finally, policymakers and educational authorities should develop policies that provide equitable resource allocation and support the specific

needs of multigrade schools to ensure that they are able to deliver quality education to all students.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study adhered to stringent ethical standards throughout its execution to ensure the protection of participants' rights and to uphold the integrity of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. For minor participants, parental consent was also secured. To protect the privacy of participants, confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing all data, and only aggregated data were used in the analysis. The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative repercussions. The study was designed to minimize any potential harm to participants, ensuring that their involvement did not expose them to any physical, emotional, or psychological risks. All data were securely stored in password-protected files, with access limited to the research team, and personal data were deleted upon completion of the study. The study was conducted in a manner that respected the dignity and autonomy of all participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Saint Theresa College of Tandag Inc., ensuring that the research adhered to the highest ethical standards.

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