

Teachers' Accounts of Multi-Grade Teaching in the Philippines: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract. This study aimed to describe the accounts or experiences of multigrade teachers. Specifically, it focused on describing teachers' perceptions of multi-grade teaching, their experiences in this context, the strategies they employed to address the challenges they encountered, and their insights into these experiences. The Malungon 1 district served as the study's location. The twelve (12) multi-grade teachers of the East Malungon District participated in this study. The information was gathered through in-depth interviews, and a thematic analysis was employed to examine the data. The study's findings revealed that teachers' views on multi-grade teaching primarily centered on multifaceted pedagogy, which involves managing diverse grade levels to meet learners' needs. Additionally, in terms of the experiences of teachers in multigrade teaching, the central theme that emerged was navigating a learning environment with the multifaceted nature of teaching that is conducive to diverse grade levels. Additionally, in terms of the strategies employed by teachers to address the challenges they have encountered, the central theme was providing the best services to promote meaningful learning experiences for learners in a multigrade classroom. Lastly, in terms of the insights of the multigrade teachers, the central theme was to commit to cultivating a positive and effective multigrade learning environment through patience, passion, and professional development. In this study, the multi-grade teachers have shared meaningful experiences that can be shared with other teachers in the field. With this, the Department of Education may implement initiatives to address the negative experiences of the multigrade teachers.

Keywords: Educational management; Multi-grade teaching; Phenomenological inquiry; Philippines; Teachers' experiences.

1.0 Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 4 focuses on delivering quality and accessible education for all. Specifically, it aims to achieve inclusive and quality education for all, reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. In materializing this, teachers' duties are essential. A teacher's noble duty extends beyond the classroom in which she teaches. It goes further than that. Even if she is not in a traditional classroom or a different one than the others, she is still teaching because molding and enhancing one's mind is her calling. The same is true for multi-grade education, in which students from multiple grade levels are grouped in a single classroom under the supervision of a single teacher. However, there are instances where a teacher shortage exists in last-mile communities. With this, teachers are handling multiple levels. A multi-grade classroom is a single class that has two or more grade levels. A multi-grade classroom is one with students from various grade levels and a single teacher.

Furthermore, the multi-grade teaching scenario illustrates numerous aspects regarding learning and teaching. It has been utilized in many nations around the world to provide comprehensive basic education to children, particularly in rural areas of developing countries. Geographical abnormalities, social and economic quirks, and a lack of suitable educational infrastructure and personnel are some of the reasons cited. Due to the exact circumstances of teacher scarcity and relatively small student numbers, this approach is particularly applicable in rural locations (Msimanga, 2020).

On the other hand, a multi-grade classroom is one that includes two or more grade levels. A multi-grade classroom is one in which the same teacher teaches students from various grades or age groups. Furthermore, in multi-grade classes, a single instructor must educate students from multiple grade levels in the same classroom. As a result, in multi-grade classrooms, one instructor teaches students of all ages and levels simultaneously in a single classroom. However, teachers assigned to teach in a multi-grade class have encountered various problems, such as the availability of resources and managing multi-level classes (Naparan & Alinsug, 2021).

In South Africa, for example, the benefits and drawbacks of multi-grade teaching were investigated. Low enrollment, well-informed key stakeholders, large classrooms, and an adequate supply of teachers were found to be beneficial for the successful implementation of Multi-Grade Teaching in a school. Teachers also discovered that suitable training, relevant teaching materials, implementation guidelines, and appropriate furniture were necessary for the implementation of MGT. The study also revealed that, while MGT has advantages over mono-grade teaching, it also has problems in both its design and implementation, demanding specific changes for flawless execution (Mutambala, 2022).

In the Philippines, multi-grade classes are often conducted in far-flung communities where there is a scarcity of teachers and an insufficient number of classrooms to cater to the varying needs of learners. For instance, all public multigrade elementary schools in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City suffer major issues related to the dual concerns of classroom education and low student accomplishment. The national achievement test results of multigrade schools offered vital evidence that Kagay-anon children's academic performance varies across learning areas from the school year 2008-2009 to the present (Tayoni & Abocejo, 2023).

Consequently, due to an insufficient number of teachers to handle the different grade levels, teachers are urged to teach in multi-grade classes. With this scenario, the teachers may have different stories to tell based on their meaningful experiences in handling such classes. On the contrary, numerous studies have already been conducted on multi-grade teachers. Some studies have focused on the roles of multi-grade teaching in promoting sustainable development goals, such as the study by Brown (2010). There is also a study conducted by Ramrathan and Ngubane (2013) on the learning experiences of multi-grade teachers. However, no phenomenological work has examined multigrade teachers in Sarangani; therefore, the conduct of this study is urgent to amplify the voices of multigrade teachers and share their untold stories.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study used a Qualitative-Phenomenological research design. Phenomenological research deals with the description of the lived experiences of participants in a given phenomenon. In this study, the experiences of teachers in multi-grade teaching were described, focusing on their perceptions of these experiences, the challenges they encountered, and their coping mechanisms in dealing with these challenges. Additionally, this study explored the insights of the participants regarding their experiences. As highlighted by Moustakas (1994), Phenomenological research methodologies are concerned with learning about a person's past, lived experiences as they recall them. Thus, this research design is the most appropriate for this study, as it involves examining the meaning that humans attribute to ordinary experiences. It is distinct from ethnography (the study of meaning within specific cultures) and sociology (the study of meaning within specific social groups). "What do we know as persons?" is the critical question in phenomenology. This is the best tradition of inquiry used in the study, as it delved into understanding the experiences of the multigrade teachers.

2.2 Research Locale

This study was conducted in the East Malungon District. The district comprises more than twenty schools, with most of them located in last-mile communities. There are schools in this district whose teachers are handling multi-grade classes. This is the reason why the researcher is interested in conducting this study in this district. Malungon is a landlocked town in Sarangani's north-eastern region. It is bordered on the west by Tupi, South Cotabato; on the north by the province of Davao del Sur; on the east by Malita, seat of the newly formed province of Davao Occidental; on the south by Alabel and General Santos; and on the southwest by Polomolok, South Cotabato. Additionally, this study was conducted during the current school year.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants of this research were the twelve (12) multi-grade teachers in East Malungon District. The number of participants ensured that data saturation was achieved. To determine the study participants, an inclusion criterion was established. Specific criteria were used to select the study participants. First, they were regular or permanent teachers in the Department of Education, Sarangani division. Second, they have been teaching in a multi-grade class for more than three (3) years now. These participants were coming from Kanyugan Elementary School, Kidengen IP School, Kalbangan Elementary School, and Ambang Elementary School. For the exclusion criteria, newly hired multigrade teachers were excluded because they did not meet the criteria for the required number of years of teaching experience. Those who desired to withdraw their involvement in the research owing to illness or other legitimate reasons were respected.

2.4 Research Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a Key Informant Interview (KII) guide that contains probing or elucidating questions. The interview questions were placed in the appendices. The interview questions focused on perceptions and experiences of multigrade teachers in teaching. The instrument first underwent a series of validation processes conducted by experts. The validators are typically Doctors of Education or experts in the field of research, with a focus on qualitative approaches. There were three (3) internal validators and one (1) external validator who checked on the prepared interview questions. The validators were doctoral-level educators who specialized in qualitative research. They were also those who have experienced thesis advising for three (3) years now.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The method used by the researcher to collect data was based on the objectives and aims of this study. Before the data were gathered, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Graduate School Office in August 2024. Thereafter, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews to gather information. In-depth interviews are a common technique in the design of narrative inquiries. It enables key informants to use their own words, allowing the researcher to examine the perspectives and develop insights into how key informants interpret their reality of the phenomenon under consideration. The protocols followed during the study, observed before, during, and after the interview, are of primary consideration in data collection.

During the in-depth interview, the researcher first oriented the participants on the goals and objectives of the study before it began. Then, the researcher informed the participants about what would happen during the interview. The researcher obtained permission from the participants to audio-record the interview process. The first step in data collection was to obtain permission and schedule the interview. The researcher sought permission to conduct research from the Sarangani Division Superintendent, the Public Schools District Supervisor in East Malungon District, the School Principals of the identified participants, and the research informants. The conduct of in-depth interviews is the second stage of data collection. To build rapport with the key informants, all interviews began with a brief orientation on the research title and intended outcomes. This is to ensure that participants understand what they are participating in and how they can contribute to the success of this endeavor. After securing all the needed documents, the researcher proceeded to conduct the in-depth interviews.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher was observing various ethical principles. This followed the standards of the DSSC Ethics and Review Committee for the guidelines of ethical consideration, particularly in addressing the population and data, such as, but not limited to:

Voluntary Participation

Participants were offered the option to participate without fear of repercussions, recompense, or loss of benefits.

When the purpose of the study and its benefits were described to the participant, the participant's rights to contribute to the body of knowledge were carefully considered and anticipated. The participants who opted to withdraw their participation from the study were respected. This is because the research ensured the participants' participation was voluntary. The researcher prepared an informed consent form because it attested that the informants were willing to participate in her study. Informants were asked to sign informed consent forms. Signing the letter indicated that the participants agreed to take part in the study.

Gender Sensitivity

The researcher always maintained gender sensitivity and was conscious of the informants' gender preferences. The researcher believed it was essential to be attentive to the feelings of the participants at all times and ensured that respect for other people's gender orientation was observed throughout the study period. The researcher was not saying anything that would offend or anger anyone's gender preference, and must always ensure that her words are kind and not hurtful. The researcher will also create a solid rapport with the participants.

Cultural Sensitivity

Informants from a wide range of origins and cultures. The researcher ensured that the cultures of all informants were respected. At all times, the researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity. Throughout the interview, be mindful of the informants' culture, traditions, and beliefs. Honoring the informants' culture is as important as honoring their gender preferences.

Data Privacy

The informants' right to data privacy was honored in this study. This was done to ensure that their data privacy is maintained. The suggestions and information obtained from informants were kept with utmost confidentiality. The researcher used codes in the discussion of results to protect the participants' privacy.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The first research question of the study focused on teachers' views on multi-grade teaching. The teachers have been teaching in a multi-grade class for several years already, and they have gained many realizations through their experiences. Some teachers view multi-grade teaching as advantageous, while others view it differently. Multi-grade teaching is just one of the strategies employed by the Department of Education to meet the needs of learners, especially those in far-flung communities. Considering the limited number of teachers assigned to last-mile communities, teachers are encouraged to teach in multi-grade classrooms.

During the in-depth interview, the researcher asked situational questions to the teachers. These questions encouraged them to delve deeply into their experiences and share them during the interview. While it is true that teachers have positive experiences as they navigate multi-grade teaching in far-flung schools, they have also encountered various challenges that test their patience and passion for teaching. The teachers highlighted some of these challenges, one of which is the need to expend extra effort in preparing learning materials, as they must create different materials for each grade level. Some teachers have experienced challenges in classroom management because they are dealing with two grade levels in one classroom. Thus, there is a need to be more cautious in managing learners. On the other hand, the teachers are also encountering challenges in allotting time during their classes.

3.1 Teachers' Perceptions on Multigrade Teaching

This section discusses the perspectives of multigrade teachers on multigrade teaching. The study's participants shared a plethora of knowledge regarding their perspectives on multigrade teaching. Given that they work with a variety of students from different grade levels, they have characterized it as having a complex pedagogical aspect. The table below displays the rising themes and clustered themes together with the primary topics. The table presents the views and perceptions of teachers regarding multi-grade teaching. After thoroughly analyzing the participants' responses, it was noted that the central theme that emerged was Multifaceted pedagogy in managing diverse grade levels to meet learners' needs.

Table 1. Perception of Teachers on Multigrade Teaching

Major Theme	Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Multifaceted pedagogy in managing diverse grade levels to meet learners' needs	A complex nature of pedagogy to manage diverse grade levels and learners' needs. Dynamic and Student-Centered Approach with Teachers' Innovativeness, Flexibility and Adaptability	A challenging educational approach of facilitating multiple grade levels. A pedagogical method with arduous instructional activities for multiple grade levels. Differentiated instruction to address individual needs of learners. A teaching approach which promotes passionate engagement in addressing learner differences. A teaching pedagogy of innovative approach. A teaching approach promoting flexibility and adaptability.

3.2 Multifaceted Pedagogy in Managing Diverse Grade Levels to Meet Learners' Needs

The idea that multigrade teaching is a multifaceted approach for managing multiple grade levels to fulfill learners' requirements emerged as the main topic in the perceptions of multigrade teachers. The teachers discussed how challenging it may be to teach in a multigrade classroom, as they work with students from various grade levels. These were evident in the experiences shared by the participants during the in-depth interviews. Multigrade teachers tailor their classes to meet the individual needs of each student. They also take care to attend to and address the demands of each grade level of students. The research conducted in 2021 by Naparan & Alinsug supports this conclusion. The most common issues in multigrade classrooms in the Philippines were found to be large class sizes, unfavorable working conditions for teachers, inadequate pre- and in-service training, familiarity with various teaching schemes in multigrade classes, application of teaching methodology in real teaching-learning situations, lack of school facilities, activity schedules, and daily lesson preparation and planning.

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This was evident in the experiences shared by the participants during the in-depth interviews. These can be seen on the lines:

"I have 3 sections being handled. There are only limited resources like books. It is crucial as teacher to comprehend the procedure in order to design and execute in classes with many grade levels." P3

Further, Teacher 5 said that:

"Difficult because I have 2 grades handled in one classroom. Example. In my case during discussion sa Grade 2, I need to give an activity in Grade 1 so they will behave while I'm discussing on other grade, so I have to prepare more activities and worksheets based on my experiences." P5

Also, teacher 12 stated that:

"It is quiet challenging, it's difficult to meet the various learning demands of children in one classroom who are in different grade levels. You need to be careful in ensuring that your instructional materials can really cater all the needs of the learners." P12

The multi-grade teachers also benefited from their experiences in multi-grade teaching. They have become flexible in their teaching and have developed effective teaching pedagogies and strategies through their experiences. Instructors have amazing experiences despite the unique work environment. They loved their jobs as teachers because of the fulfilling aspects of teaching, particularly realizing how important multi-grade training is for children's social and cognitive development. They are now inventive, accomplished teachers. The significance of multigrade education in fostering long-term human development in underprivileged communities was also underlined. When the variety of the student body is recognized and supported, multigrade teaching is a promising

instructional strategy. When they see their pupils excel, teachers feel a sense of success (Grimes, 2019).

3.3 Teachers' Experiences in Multigrade Teaching

The experiences of teachers in multigrade teaching are also explored in this study. During the in-depth interview, questions were raised about the multi-grade teachers' experiences, both positive and negative. During the interview, the multi-grade teachers freely expressed their rich experiences. They have shared how their experiences helped them become more flexible and passionate teachers. It helped them become resourceful and innovative because their classrooms lacked many resources, and they always found ways to provide them to foster a quality teaching and learning process for the learners.

However, the teachers have also discussed the difficulties or unpleasant aspects they have encountered when working with a multi-grade class. One of these challenges is managing students who misbehave in class. They expressed that there are instances in which their patience is being tested, especially when the learners misbehave in the classroom. There are those learners who are committing several absences because they are also working for a living. They are also having a hard time giving proper interventions to these learners because they have many learners to cater to inside the classroom. Some of the teachers also experienced challenges in classroom management, especially those who lacked training in classroom management for multi-grade classes. Additionally, they have disclosed that to instruct students effectively, multi-grade teachers must employ first-rate classroom management techniques. For the students to truly comprehend the topics being covered, additional teachers must translate the lessons. On the other hand, some of these teachers also face language barriers when teaching their learners. There are instances in which the learners did not understand the material due to the language used by the teachers. Additionally, multi-grade teachers need to contextualize the learning resources and carefully ensure that the learning activities they prepare are well-suited to the learners' capacities.

3.4 Experiences of Multigrade Teachers

The multigrade teachers also shared about their experiences as they navigated multigrade education. Multigrade teaching fosters positive learning outcomes. On the other hand, the teachers were also dealing with various challenges, such as learners' misbehavior. A detailed discussion is presented below:

Table 2. Experiences of the Teachers in Multigrade Teaching

Major Theme	Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Navigating learning environment with multifaceted nature of teaching conducive to diverse grade levels	Handling multiple grade levels in a proactive manner to foster positive learning outcomes	Extending efforts and determination to foster positive learning. Self-engaging and proactive approach in teaching practice. Demonstrating improved instruction and refined teaching methods and strategies. Equipped with effective teaching strategies.
	Dynamic and Student-Centered Approach with Teachers' Innovativeness, Flexibility and Adaptability	Getting physically tired that affects learning of the learners. Getting higher workload and being stress that impede teachers' performance and learning outcomes. Dealing with learners from higher levels who behave differently. Managing learners' absenteeism issues.

3.5 Navigating Learning Environment with Multifaceted Nature of Teaching Conducive to Diverse Grade Levels

The central theme that emerged from the experiences of the multigrade teachers is navigating a learning environment with the multifaceted nature of teaching, which is conducive to diverse grade levels. The teachers shared that they experience various challenges in terms of personal and environmental aspects that affect the quality of the teaching-learning process. Navigating internal and external issues that obstruct learners' learning outcomes and experiences in a multigrade classroom emerged as the sole significant pattern in the experiences of the multigrade teachers handling multigrade classes. Along with other external issues, such as the attitudes and misbehavior of students, teachers faced personal problems in their teaching careers.

Educators might have faced numerous drawbacks when teaching multiple grades. However, because they have been handling all of these challenges, they are robust. Some benefits of teaching multiple grades could be as

follows: fewer students mean more opportunities for reteaching; less competition among peers in terms of academics, behavior, and social interactions because cooperation is prioritized over competition; older students become more responsible as they teach younger ones; and longer teacher-student interactions lead to increased trust, understanding, and positive receptivity. Nonetheless, instructors are often seen as resilient, as they can effectively handle these difficulties and instruct students in a multi-grade classroom (Rondero & Casupanan, 2024).

This is evident when the multi-grade teachers emphasized that:

"Overcome the challenges and I do research and study more on how to handle a Multi-grade class and the lessons that you will give to your learners." P1

Additionally, teacher 7 commented that:

"As a teacher in a multi-grade class, I learned that you need to be ready every day and prepared always. I have to be eager to teach my learners what they need to learn every day." P7

Also, teacher 9 added that:

"I noticed to my self-engaging multi grade teaching, I been made challenges facing the real situation in the station. I know its hard, but I'll do my best. Be optimistic and be flexibility the situation." P9

As a matter of fact, during the in-depth interview with the participants, they shared that:

"As teacher you will learn how to research on what to give to the learners and you will also learn a lot from it for you to improve your teaching practices." P3

On the other hand, Teacher 7 said that:

"Because the teacher is equipped with different strategies he/she can effectively manage and facilitate learning in a multigrade class setting. I consider it easy because you know as a teacher how to deal with your learners need." P7

Working in a multigrade classroom, according to the multigrade teachers, has boosted their teaching abilities. This is what their created strategies have produced. They can now adjust to changes with ease. Multi-grade teaching is one strategy used to overcome educational barriers and deliver a successful, high-quality education.

3.6 Strategies Employed by the Multigrade Teachers

The multi-grade teachers employed various strategies to cope with the challenges they encountered. They were innovating techniques and steps to address the challenges they faced as they navigated multi-grade teaching. For teachers, their tasks were never easy, but strategizing helps them overcome these challenges and turn them into opportunities. During the in-depth interview I conducted with the multi-grade teachers, I gained significant realizations and insights. Several major themes emerged regarding the strategies employed by teachers to address the challenges and negative experiences they encountered in teaching, including utilizing available resources, providing more group activities, and broadening their imagination.

Table 3. *Strategies Employed by the Teachers in a Multigrade Classroom*

Major Theme	Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Providing Best Services to Promote Meaningful Learning Experiences for the Learners in a Multigrade Classroom	Handling multiple grade levels in a proactive manner to foster positive learning outcomes	Downloading available learning materials and use them. Using available materials in the classroom.
	Dynamic and Student-Centered Approach with Teachers' Innovativeness, Flexibility and Adaptability	Grouping learners instead of giving individual activities. Ensuring that all learners are participating in the activities they need to accomplish.
Better ways to develop new strategies in teaching.	Broadening One's Imagination	Better ways to develop new strategies in teaching.

Table 3 presents the emerging and core ideas on the strategies employed by the multigrade teachers in a multigrade classroom. There were only two major themes that emerged: providing the best services to Promote Meaningful Learning Experiences for learners in a Multigrade Classroom and Better ways to develop new teaching strategies.

3.7 Providing Best Services to Promote Meaningful Learning Experiences for the Learners in a Multigrade Classroom

Multi-grade teachers recognized that resources are insufficient. They knew that there were a lot of unavailable learning materials in the classroom. Thus, they always utilize what is available. In multi-grade classes, one teacher instructs pupils of all ages and levels simultaneously in a single classroom. However, teachers tasked with teaching students at multiple grade levels have been facing several challenges, including managing multi-level classrooms and a lack of resources.

The teachers shared that:

"I just download materials, give fun activities so they will be eager to learn and answer the activities, and give rewards." P2

Additionally, teacher 8 highlighted that:

"Integrate ICT teaching, provided lesson plan and open time to cope up the lessons. I use what is available in my classroom." P8

Also, the teachers reiterated that:

"Groupings always because if I do individual activities, it will consume time and I cannot divide my time well." P3; Lines 170-171

"Personalized learning and flexible groupings. These are some of my strategies to make sure that all of them will have something to do in the class." P7

Group work is a staple of the curricula of multigrade teachers. As a result, students will be able to collaborate and contribute to the various assignments that they are assigned. Additionally, this will promote teamwork and collaboration among the group's members. It is believed that mixed-age groups foster children's social development and improve teamwork in the classroom. In multi-age classes, pupils are taught by the same teacher for several years, usually three, and ages and grade levels are intentionally combined. Expected educational gains are taken into consideration when designing multi-age classrooms (Cahapay, 2020).

3.8 Better Ways to Develop New Strategies in Teaching

The teachers also shared that they used various strategies and have developed new strategies in teaching the learners. One of the strategies employed by the multi-grade teachers is developing their creative imagination. This helped them because they became more creative in thinking of the best teaching strategies to use in their teaching. This will also help them innovate new approaches in teaching. To help students become more adept and perceptive learners, teachers must adopt a creative approach to teaching. Furthermore, with the aid of creative instruction, which may make learning engaging, relevant, and highly immersive, students can more successfully acquire the fundamental cognitive and emotional abilities (Rodríguez & Marquínez, 2024).

3.9 Insights of the Multigrade Teachers

The study's last focus is on how multigrade teachers describe their experiences in multigrade classes and their findings. The in-depth interview revealed rich and significant realizations from the professors. They discussed how important it is for instructors to have infinite patience when they are working with two or more grade levels in a single classroom. They have diverse needs and exhibit distinct behaviors. Patience is, therefore, quite important. They have also stated that even if the experience may be challenging, teachers' devotion to their students must always prevail. It is never easy to teach in a multi-grade classroom. These educators, nevertheless, have been able to remain in their current positions for several years.

Table 4. *Emerging Themes and Major Themes on the Insights of the Multigrade Teachers*

Major Theme	Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Commit to cultivate a positive and effective multigrade learning environment through patience, passion and professional development	Managing diverse learners and grade levels effectively	Cultivate patience in handling multiple grade levels. Nurture various learners patiently.
	Demonstrate deep passion for teaching and commitment to professional growth	Show profound passion in the teaching profession. Seek continuous professional development and quality practices to enhance teaching.

The last topic explored in this research is the insights of the multigrade teachers about their experiences in the multigrade classroom. The participants have also shared various positive insights as they navigated multigrade teaching. They shared that they have successfully managed diverse types of learners and are passionate about education and their professional growth. A detailed discussion on the clustered, emerging, and significant themes is presented below. The table presents the core ideas and emerging themes, as well as the central theme, based on the insights of multigrade teachers about their experiences. There was only one central theme that emerged: commit to cultivating a positive and effective multigrade learning environment through patience, passion, and professional development.

3.10 Commit to Cultivate a Positive and Effective Multigrade Learning Environment through Patience, Passion, and Professional Development

The multi-grade teachers clearly emphasize the importance of being patient in teaching. They may have encountered various struggles and challenges, but these do not hinder them from giving their best. Teachers who exhibit patience can handle challenging or discouraging situations and delayed outcomes with poise, which lends credence to this conclusion. Patience is believed to be able to bridge the gap between what someone (like a teacher) is doing and their unmet goals by lowering negative emotions and igniting activity.

The participants shared the following remarks:

"You may need to extend your patience more because of the different struggles, but you know, we are teachers and I know how patient are we." P1

Also, teacher 4 mentioned that:

"Though there are times that my patience is being tested, but I am still fighting and will continue to nurture the young minds of my learners." P4

"I also would want to share that we should love our learners and the teaching profession. Aside from it is our bread and butter, it is also very inspiring and rewarding if we see our learners becoming successful in their own fields." P8

In addition, Teacher 11 stated that:

"More research. It is for our learners and for our love towards them. In the end, we will be rewarded because of our efforts in making sure that every learner is given the quality of education they truly deserve." P11

Truly, the teachers loved their profession because they do not just do it for their salary. They do it because they care for the future of their learners. One of the best things a teacher can do for their students is to show them love. Students need to know how much their teachers appreciate them. A professional views their employment as more than just a career; it is a calling that centers around caring for children. The ability to establish a strong rapport with students is a key quality that distinguishes an excellent teacher from others (Asante, 2025). Teaching in a multigrade class requires a great deal of passion. Teachers must love what they do to become successful multigrade teachers. The multigrade teachers have demonstrated that it is possible to break down barriers and foster a sense of community among students from diverse backgrounds and age groups. They have shown that every student has something valuable to offer, regardless of their grade level.

4.0 Conclusion

The multi-grade teachers have different perceptions of multi-grade teaching. There are positive and negative perceptions. Negative perceptions include the challenges in preparing instructional materials, as they also ensure that these are age-appropriate for the learners. Also, the varying needs of the learners are challenging them because they are not only dealing with one class, but two grade levels in one classroom. On the positive note, the teachers perceived that they are becoming more innovative and resourceful due to the situation, as they are encouraged to think of ways to foster quality learning. On the other hand, they also developed proper and new classroom management strategies that have become part of their best practices in teaching. With this, the department may provide in-service modules on multigrade classroom management to assist teachers in effective classroom management, especially those who teach across different grade levels in one classroom. The same is true with the experiences of the multi-grade teachers. There are two sides to the coin. Teachers have both positive and negative experiences. On the positive side, they have become more resilient as a result of the situation. Whatever they are going through, they always believe that they can overcome it. Additionally, the situation helped improve their teaching competence. However, the situation has also caused negative experiences for the

teachers. First, they were dealing with learning barriers, including insufficient resources and limited instructional materials. Additionally, some learners misbehave in class, which also causes them to feel upset and discouraged.

Additionally, the teachers employed various strategies in teaching within a multi-grade classroom. The first one is on utilizing what is only available, but making the most out of it. They still ensure that quality learning is not compromised because of a resource insufficiency. One of the most commonly used strategies by teachers is group work. They assigned specific types of activities to the different groups of learners. Additionally, teachers broaden their imagination by thinking of creative and innovative ways to teach learners. The teachers highlighted the importance of extending patience a thousand miles more because it is challenging to teach in a multi-grade class. Additionally, they emphasized that despite these issues and concerns, the teachers' love for the teaching profession and their passion must always prevail.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

The lead author was the primary author who planned and conducted the study, while the co-author served as the thesis advisor, guiding her throughout the entire research process.

6.0 Funding

The lead author provided all the financial resources for the successful conduct of the study.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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