
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teaching Pedagogies of Multi-grade Public Elementary Teachers

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| ABSTRACT

This qualitative study employed the phenomenological approach to determine the teaching pedagogies of multi-grade public elementary teachers in San Isidro, North and South District, Division of Mati City. Ten (10) multi-grade public elementary teachers were taken as participants. The study explored how multi-grade teachers employed their teaching pedagogies in the multi-grade classroom environment. After thematic analysis, results revealed that the multi-grade public elementary teachers used varied teaching strategies in teaching multi-grade classes. There were seven (7) major themes that emerged: lecture method, collaborative learning, experiential strategy, deductive approach, diagnostic approach, explicit teaching, and integrative approach. It was also found out from the themes generated, teachers utilized varied classroom activities, classroom observation, and the use of books. Moreover, the professional knowledge and pedagogies are necessary to effectively teach multi-grade classroom. This needs tedious preparation so teachers would not be able to compromise the content of the subject taught. Thus, in the context of equal education for all, teachers have to be resourceful and creative by offering possible alternative pedagogy of learning including collaborative processes and individual performances.

| KEYWORDS

Education, multi-grade, teaching pedagogies, teachers, phenomenological, thematic analysis, Mati City, Philippines

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Multi-grade schools and multi-grade instruction are neither a new educational innovation nor a recent experiment introduced by educational experts. These have been adopted for over a century, a reality based on the geographical and economic necessity for many countries in the developing world. The multi-grade approach has become an imperative in these countries, particularly in poor, rural, and remote locations, as part of broader efforts to widen and improve access to quality education for all.

Ensuring the right to education is at the very heart of UNESCO's mission, a right that is also affirmed and recognized by its member states. UNESCO has emphasized not merely the right to education but also, in particular, the right to quality education for all (Kim, 2015). While multi-grade classrooms address the right to education to many students, teachers on the other side of the coin have difficulty in ensuring the set quality standards of education especially when they need to work with more than one grade at the same time in a single classroom setting. Thus, multi-grade teachers find their work challenging in terms of teaching pedagogies targeting the curriculum designed for multi-grade classes since they need to respond to the varied students' interests and abilities within their classrooms.

In Myanmar, multi-grade teachers use the transmission model in teaching in primary schools. The teachers often use a chalkboard and textbook to transmit recipes of knowledge which draws evidence that there is a training need for primary teachers in Myanmar in the light of proposed reforms to teacher education at the pre- and in-service stages (Hardman, 2015). However, the policy brief of Indonesia in 2010, states that hundreds of multi-grade teachers have completed training, online assignments and modules on how to develop and upgrade multi-grade teaching but the extent to of teachers now use multi-grade teaching techniques is unknown. Therefore, there is a need to consider the will of the teachers to implement such multi-

grade program, for this is potentially affected by factors such as lack of faith in multi-grade teaching pedagogy, difficulties of teaching in a multi-grade classroom, and ownership of multi-grade teaching (McEwan, 2000).

In the Philippines, it is a practice that a neophyte teacher is assigned to less attractive places, like far-flung schools. In the far-flung area of Samar, Philippines, schools are multi-grade which particularly makes it even more challenging for a neophyte teacher. Classes in the locality are and grade level are one of the greatest classroom knowledge-management challenges. Far-flung schools in Samar are difficult to reach and often dangerous. Travelling to and from the nearest accessible road requires stamina and courage. A neophyte teacher given a first professional teaching task is already a huge challenge. Especially to the teachers who were assigned in Samar, which is far from all possible comfort. The school itself is poor and lacks the resources for teachers to deliver the kind of education they must ideally have. And when most of the times the teachers provide classroom paraphernalia from their own pockets knowing that students are poor and could hardly eat (Quejada & Orale, 2018).

The abovementioned situations have prompted the researcher to further investigate the pedagogies of multi-grade public school teachers in San Isidro North and South District, Division of Mati City. The issues of multi-grade teaching in this district seem to be alarming because newly hired teachers were hesitant to accept their teaching position as a teacher 1 after identifying the nature of multi-grade teaching. Since multi-grade instruction was not given enough focus during their college years, newly hired teacher applicants do not have any idea what teaching strategy is effective when teaching multi-grade classes. The result of this study may be a baseline for creating pedagogical program support for the newly-hired elementary teachers in the context of multi-grade teaching. This situation sparks this study to roll over the teaching pedagogies of multi-grade teachers to help other teachers who are about to engage in this kind of teaching environment while complying with the standards set by the Department of Education in achieving excellence and pride. This would create a new venue for explorations of the target participants' teaching pedagogies and challenges stories.

2. Research Questions

- 1.) What are the teaching strategies of the multi-grade public elementary teachers?
- 2.) How do multi-grade public elementary teachers implement these teaching strategies?
- 3.) What are the insights that the participants can share to incoming teachers teaching in a multi-grade classroom?

3. Theoretical Lens

This study is seen through the Cognitive Development Theory of Piaget (1952), which states that the children in primary school age need opportunity to interact with peers, and their environment to enhance learning. In fact, Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1978) supported the idea that the cognitive development of young children is a result of a continual effort to adapt to the environment. As the Social Development Theory of Vygotsky (1978) states that the cognitive development of the child depends upon the zone of proximal development or the level of development attained when children engage in social behavior. To fully build up the zone of proximal development, the child must be engaged in a full social interaction where the skills that can be developed with the guidance of an adult or peer collaboration exceeds compared to what can be attained alone.

Moreover, the Cognitive Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) stresses the importance of observing and modelling behaviors, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. Michelson (1983) added that social skills are acquired behavior that can learn through modelling, observation, practice and feedback. In multi-grade classes, younger students have the opportunity to observe the older students' social behaviors. A positive working model of a mixed age classroom allows for the development of social skills as the teacher encourages age interactions through monitoring and shared discovery.

However, teaching and learning in the multi-grade classes is seen to be more challenging than single grade classes because they need in depth repertoire of instructional strategies than most single-grade teacher possess (Russel, 1998). Therefore, multi-grade teachers must design open-ended and divergent learning experiences accessible to students functioning at different levels. Multi-grade teachers must identify when and how to use homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping and how to design cooperative group tasks (Vincent, 1999).

In this context, it is theorized therefore, that the multi-grade public elementary teachers of San Isidro North and South District Division of Mati City have teaching pedagogies implemented and used in their multi-grade classroom which helps them cater the needs of the large number of students having different intelligences, diverse culture, age and grade levels.

3.1 Multi-grade Teaching and the Need for its Existence

The term multi-grade teaching refers to a wide range of graded classroom organizations in which one teacher is responsible for children in two or more curriculum grade levels at the same time, usually in one class (Little, 2006). The children are usually of different ages and competence levels, but they learn and work in one class simultaneously and play together as a single class. A necessary and sufficient condition well illustrated by Little (1994) is that any school with more grades than teachers must organize learning for some of its teachers and students along multi-grade lines.

Multi-grade schools existed, established and organized because of the need of children in remote, isolated and scattered communities to have access to schooling (Maxwell & Carboni, 2016). Multi-grade teaching occurs within a graded system of education when a single class contains two or more student grade levels. It is contrasted with the usual pattern of classroom organization in graded systems where a single classroom contains students of only one grade level. In many graded systems, age and grade are congruent, so a grade level is also equivalent to a particular age group of students. However, this may not be the case in systems where grade level repetition and acceleration are common (Berry, 2001).

In multi-grade instruction, children of at least a two-year grade span and diverse ability levels are grouped in a single classroom and are encouraged to share experiences involving intellectual, academic, and social skills (Goodlad & Anderson, 1987; Katz & Hartman, 1990; McClellan & Kinsey, 1996). Consistency over time in relationships among teachers, children, and parents is viewed as one of the most significant strengths of the multi-grade approach because it encourages greater depth in children's social, academic, and intellectual development. The concept of the classroom as a family is encouraged, leading to expansion of the roles of nurturing and commitment on the part of both students and teacher (Feng, 1994; Hallion, 1994; Marshak, 1994).

The adequate implementation of a multi-grade approach to education extends beyond simply mixing children of different grades together. A positive working model of a multi-grade classroom allows for the development of academic and social skills as the teacher encourages cross-age interactions through tutoring and shared discovery. The multi-grade classroom is labor intensive and requires more planning, collaboration, and professional development than the conventional graded classroom (Cushman, 1993; Gaustad, 1992; Miller, 1996). Sufficient planning time must be available to meet the needs of both teacher and students. Insufficient planning, staff development, materials, support, and assessment procedures will have an impact on the success of the multi-grade program (Fox, 1997; Miller, 1996; Nye, 1993).

3.2 School and Community

Multi-grade schools are often located in remote and difficult-to-reach areas. They may be far from the educational center and receive little pedagogical support. The communities in which they are located may not see the value of education, and may speak a different language from the official language of the schools. For these reasons, it is essential that the community be involved in the life of the school. Parents can be asked to come in to act as a resource, the curriculum of the school might extend out into the community, or the community can be asked to support the school in other ways. Multi-grade teachers should be trained in approaches that help to develop relations between the school and the community (Birch & Lally, 1995).

Home visitations provide an effective strategy for engaging families if the home visiting services are carefully and thoughtfully planned, implemented, and monitored (Hallam, Han, Vu et al. 2015). In order to achieve change and improved learning outcomes for students, it is often necessary to work with or meet family members outside the school environment (Department of Education, 2012). Education programs which engage families offer significant opportunities to strengthen parent-child interactions and relationships (DEC, 2014).

3.3 Advantages and Challenges for Multigrade Teaching

A UNESCO/APEID study (1989) collated perceptions about the benefits of multi-grade teaching from educators in twelve countries in the Asia and Pacific Region. These included learners develop self-study skills, learners cooperate across age groups, resulting in collective ethics, concern and responsibility, learners help each other, teachers can organize both remediation and enrichment activities for low and high achievers respectively more discreetly than in mono-grade classes. Alongside the perceived benefits for learners, the perceived challenges posed by the multi-grade classroom for teachers.

In the study of multi-grade teachers in London, these included the pressure to prepare one group of learners within the multi-grade class for critical public assessments. Teachers feel unprepared to work in multi-grade classrooms, judge that children don't get the same as in mono-grade classrooms and report that they have insufficient educational materials to support learning

in the multi-grade classroom. The isolated and isolating conditions of work and the poverty of the communities served by multi-grade schools reinforce teachers' negative attitude to the school (Ames, 2004).

Birch & Lally (1995) referred to several other challenges faced by teachers, most of which are related to the remoteness of the contexts in which multi-grade schools are located, the non-filling of vacancies in multi-grade schools in rural areas, the absence of teacher accountability in remote multi-grade schools, the inattentiveness of education officers to the needs of multi-grade teachers and school, lack of financial incentives for teachers to teach in remote multi-grade schools, inadequate provision for housing, employment for spouses and children's' education, absence of promotion incentives, and restricted opportunities for in-service training.

However, the Department of education issued the DepEd Order No. 8 series of 2018 addressed to the School Division Superintendents and Public Elementary School Heads. This order mandates multi-grade schools to strengthen the implementation of multi-grade classroom towards professional development for teachers in the field (DO 08, s. 2018).

3.4 Multi-grade Teaching Pedagogies

Because multi-grade teaching is not usually included in pre-service programs, Schafer (1999) identified a need for in-service and pre-service teacher education to cater for multi-grade teaching and offer support, advice and training in coping with an approach which is fundamentally different from the traditional single grade. These teachers are often left alone to find their way in terms of delivering content to more than one grade at the same time. Many teachers gain experience through practice. Teacher educators need to acknowledge the existence of multi-grade teaching in order for them to prepare teachers adequately in this area. The training program should contain material design, creativity and innovativeness as these teachers may be the only source of information especially in rural areas.

Teachers teaching in multi-grade classes have different pedagogies in teaching pupils of different age groups and a variety of learning needs (Hascher& Beihammer, 2015). A previous study of 47 multi-grade teachers and head teachers in an inner-city area of London, England, reported a number of positive opportunities presented by the multi-grade classroom. The most commonly mentioned was the opportunity for cognitive stretching of the younger, less able and lower achieving learners, expressed variously by teachers as stretching, modelling, moving on and developing, extending, looking up and emulating. The second most commonly mentioned was the opportunity for the use of peer tutoring learning strategies. A third commonly mentioned opportunity was behavior stretching, or the opportunity for younger learners to learn appropriate social behaviors from the role models offered by older learners (Berry and Little,2001).

On the other hand, Sampath& Sivaraman (1987), as cited by Kaur (2011), stated that with the use of lecture method and proper perspective, orientation of a subject can be presented and the general outline of scope of the subject can be brought out. Many facts can be explained in a short period in an impressive way. The attention of the students however can be secured and maintained, as interest leads to attention of the students. Lecture method can present a number of facts belonging to subjects which can also facilitate inter-disciplinary approach to topics. Leish (1976) also stressed that the lecture-explanation approach, can inspire enthusiasm and capture the student imagination when used properly.

In addition, Howe (1980) as cited by Kaur (2011) stated that the lecture method of teaching was frequently criticized, thus this only proves that the lecture method managed to survive for so long in pace of many technological advancements. However, Joseph (2018) argued that the lecture method is a traditional method of teaching which brought worriment to pupils. In this method, learners are mere passive listeners while the teachers deliver knowledge to pupils through lectures. With this, pupils will not learn to use their meta-cognitive skills in learning and their application in real life situations.

Digital literacy is also regarded as an essential skill in multi-grade education. As Buckingham (2006) argues, while this term is not new, in contemporary society there is a growing awareness of both the diversity of different forms of literacy as well as the need for multi literacy competence (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Thus, Underwood (2009) argues, the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution has a powerful defining impact on all important aspects of our lives and is resulting in dramatic changes in education. Lack of access to ICTs in developing countries, therefore, results in both economic exclusion and denial of the skills required for active participation in the 21st century (Fuchs & Horak, 2008). Underwood (2009) points to research demonstrating that such use of ICTs in education can increase learner effectiveness, increase learner efficiency and promote greater learner engagement, leading to more positive learner attitudes.

Another is experiential learning where students decide themselves to be personally engaged in the learning process. Wurdinger & Carlson (2010), stated that this is where students are actively participating in their own learning, considering their role in the direction of learning. Experiential learning is effective because students in experiential learning situations cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi-structured approach (UC Davis, 2011). Experiential learning involves a number of

steps that offer students a hands-on, collaborative and reflective learning experience which helps them to fully learn new skills and knowledge (Haynes, 2007).

Widodo (2006), noted that the deductive approach is derived from the notion of reasoning from general to specific. This is an effective method used in large classrooms. The deductive method is structured and predictable therefore the verification of information comes from a source who is the teachers (Shoaib, 2010 as cited by Atta, 2015).

However, Nicole (2007), argued that by using the deductive method of teaching we cannot develop the thinking of the students unless we use the inductive method of teaching. With the use of inductive method, a teacher can create the spirit of curiosity in their students, the penchant for independent mental work and to show them ways to new discoveries (Kurnik, 2008 as cited by Atta, 2015).

On the other hand, Trochim (2006), as cited by Soiferman (2010), emphasized that arguments based on experience or observation are best expressed inductively however, arguments based on laws, rules, or other widely accepted principles are best expressed deductively. This method is effective since learners will undergo a process of reasoning from one or more statements to reach a logically certain conclusion (Atta, 2015).

3.5 Classroom Management Techniques in Multi-grade

Managing a multi-grade classroom is difficult because there is more than one grade level in the classroom. Hence, the teacher must be skilled in managing instruction to reduce the amount of dead time during which children are not productively engaged on task. This means that teachers must be aware of different ways of grouping children, the importance of independent study areas where students can go when they have finished their work, and approaches to record keeping which are more flexible than those prevalent in the mono-grade classroom. Students may need to be taught the value of independence and cooperation by involving them in classroom decision making (Mingat & Jarousse, 1991).

3.6 Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategies are seen as a key to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the multi-grade classroom. The promotion of approaches that increase the level of student independence and cooperative group work tends to be suggested. These involve a change in the role of the teacher from giver of information to facilitator. This is to ensure that time spent away from the teacher is spent productively. Three important strategies are peer instruction, in which students act as teachers for each other, cooperative group work, which involves small groups engaging in collaborative tasks, and individualized learning programs which involve the student in self-study (Berry, 2001).

Amory (2017) stated that, learners who engaged collaboratively in complex tasks together with the group will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their work with their groups as a whole class. In collaborative learning, there is instructional use of small groups so that students will work together to maximize their own learning (Johnson et.al, 1990). The goals and processes of collaborative activities also vary widely which teachers designed small groups by following steps in the structured tasks. In some collaborative learning setting, the students' task is to create a product, participate in the process, exercise of responding each of the learners' work or engaging in analysis and meaning making (Smith & MacGregor, 1992).

Diagnostic tests help the teacher in scheming a suitable corrective plan, which assist the learner in correcting his errors in order to achieve the desired skills and competencies (Al-Thubaiti, 2014). Diagnostic tests have a positive impact on increasing the success of learners (Al-Tarawneh, 2003), as cited by Obaidat, Hamadneh & Yaghmour et.al., 2016).

Further, Archer (2011) added that explicit teaching focuses on critical content in the instruction. The content must be anchored to the designed curriculum which is shared with the students. It is suggested by Cornish (2006) that preparation of materials matters in both grades being taught. It may require enough time and extra effort (Kalaoja, 2006), but worth it of the teachers.

Furthermore, integrative approach promotes critical thinking skills. This involves higher thinking skills as presented in the Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson, 2011). It also supports the students' critical understanding development especially in understanding the content. It promotes awareness of the student's ability to determine the relationships of the concepts or even synthesize the information (Shutterstock, 2013). Kauchak and Eggen (2012), added a similar idea that the integrative approach gives room for the students to organize knowledge, combine and integrate facts, concepts, generalizations, principles and rules.

3.7 Implementation of Teaching Strategies

According to Ashman (2018), the implementation of explicit teaching follows a system that explains a concept wherein novice learners are guided by the teachers. It also follows the concept of Rosenshine (2012) that the achievement of the students

depends on the activities given by the teachers in the classroom. Likewise, Goeke (2008) statement is that the teacher in the process of implementing the teaching strategies has responsibility to monitor the needs of the students and provision of appropriate guidance in the learning process.

In classroom observation, Hora (2013) defines that it is often used in coaching and mentoring of the students. The University of Washington Center for Instructional Development and Research (2012), reiterates that through classroom observation, it provides a balance, threatening-free perspective on the students' performance. It also helps teachers where and how to make changes in the classroom environment. However, to the argument of Guarino & Stacy (2012), that the totality of teachers' performance is not equivalent to only classroom observation. Thus, there is a need to craft procedures of assessment for quality instruction.

4. Methodology

Research Design

Phenomenological qualitative research design is used in this study. This research design explores and describes the perceptions, perspectives and understanding of participants of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). This allowed the researcher to dig deeper in determining the teaching pedagogies of the multi-grade public elementary teachers and what insights the participants can share with other teachers who are about to teach in a multi-grade class.

The researcher employed, as suggested by Creswell (2007), rigorous data collection procedures. This means that the researcher collects multiple forms of data and adequately summarizes them in table. Through this design, the participants are empowered to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationship that often exists between the researcher and participants. To further de-emphasize a power relationship, a researcher collaborated directly with participants by having them review the research questions, or by having them collaborate with the researcher during the data analysis and interpretation phases of the study.

In addition, qualitative researches strive to understand from the perspectives of the individuals who live within it (Hatch, 2002). These perspectives are experiences in the context of the participants' direct interaction with the phenomenon. In the process, the researcher endeavored to discover meaning and insight from the situations. The researcher examined the qualitative data working inductively from particulars to more general perspectives, whether these perspectives are called themes, dimensions, codes, or categories (Creswell, 2007).

Research Participants

To comply with the number of participants in this study, Creswell (2013) advised that a phenomenological study with a heterogeneous group would require a minimum of 3 to 15 individuals.

This study was participated in by ten (10) multi-grade public elementary teachers from San Isidro North and South District of Davao Oriental, Division of Mati City. The participants of this study were teachers who have been teaching in a multi-grade classroom for at least 1 year and above in public schools. Teachers who have experienced teaching multi-grade classes for a year and above, but currently teaching in a single-grade classroom also took part in this study.

Each of the participants was invited to conduct the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In- Depth Interview (IDI). They were informed of the research objectives and the methodology of this study. Five participants from the San Isidro South district are intended to participate in the Focus Group discussion, and the other five from San Isidro North district for the In-Depth Interview.

Determining the multi-grade public teachers in San Isidro North and South District can be quite difficult. Hence, in this phenomenological study, the researcher utilized the Snowball Sampling method in determining the research participants. Vog (1999) stated that this is a technique for finding the research subjects. One subject will give the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third subject, and so on. This strategy is suited in this study because of isolated problem of finding restricted number of multi-grade public elementary teachers in San Isidro North and South District of Davao Oriental, Division of Mati City. Through this sampling method, the researcher had an advantage of identifying participants by providing potential contacts to participate in the conduct of the In- depth- interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) (Thompson,1997).

Data Sources

The data were taken from the experiences of the multi-grade public elementary teachers of San Isidro North and South District of Davao Oriental, Division of Mati City. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide questions as protocol in extracting each of the participant's responses. Semi-structured interviews were used extensively in research, scant attention was given to their diversity, underlying assumptions, constructions, and broad applications to qualitative research (McIntosh et al., 2015) The interview guide was submitted and was checked by the experts for its content validity and reliability, before it was used during focus group discussion and in-depth- interview.

Data Analysis

After collection, the data were summarized, transcribed, translated, and analyzed which were gathered during focused group discussion and in-depth interviews.

This study used thematic analysis. This was used to analyze classifications and present themes related to the data for it illustrated great detail and deal with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis was considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretations. It provides a systematic element to data analysis. It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole contents. This would confer accuracy and intricacy and enhance the researcher's whole meaning. Qualitative research requires understanding and collecting diverse aspects and data. Thematic analysis gave an opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely (Marks & Yardley, 2004).

Creswell (2009) also stated that there are steps in the process of data analysis. First, is to organize and prepare the data for analysis. This step involves transcribing of interviews, typing up field notes, categorizing and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information. Second, is to read through all the data. In this step the researcher can gain a general sense of the information and reflect on the overall meaning of participants' responses. Third, is to conduct analysis based on the specific theoretical approach and method. This often involves coding or organizing related segments of data into categories. Fourth, is to generate a description of the setting or people and identify themes from the coding. The researcher has to search for theme connections. Fifth, is to represent the data within a research report. And lastly, interpret the larger meaning of the data.

After the conduct of the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the researcher transcribed the data from the audio recordings. The researcher also read all the participants' responses and analyzed the responses through thematic analysis.

5. Results

Table 1: Major Themes and Core Ideas on Teaching Strategies of the Multi-grade Public Elementary Teachers

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Lecture Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy in my grades 3 and 4, I find it easy. • I use this strategy because I have attended a seminar and this is the effective approach in multi-grade. • I use this strategy because even though it is traditional, I still find it effective. • I use this strategy because I find it helpful that the students learn more from you.
Collaborative Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy in giving activities to my grade 5 and 6. • I use this strategy in choosing properly their group mates for an activity. • I use this strategy because it is helpful in having group activities wherein the bright ones are grouped with the slow ones.

Experiential Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy to incorporate local information. • I use this strategy to teach important knowledge that students can easily relate.
Deductive Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy to explain my lesson from big to smaller ideas. • I use this strategy to teach my students important concepts
Diagnostic Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy to assess my students' strengths and weaknesses. • I use this strategy to assess learners' previous learning, to know where to start.
Explicit Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy because it is helpful in maximizing my limited time. • I use this strategy every time I am observed by my principal. • I use this strategy in giving information that touches different subjects. • I use this strategy because it is helpful, it's like spoon-feeding the information to students.
Integrative Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use this strategy in my class to maximize my limited time in teaching two grade levels. • I use this strategy because it is effective, it is teaching within a shared time between the two grade levels.

Table 2: Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Implementation of Multi-grade Teaching Strategies

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Through the Use of varied Classroom Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers provide activities before the class starts. • Teachers provide activities to learners so that they will not be left behind. • Teachers implement the activity called "I do, we do and you do". • Teachers used activities in teaching two grade levels
Through Classroom Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are being observed by the principal on the way they deliver their strategies to the students. • Teachers were given comments on the delivery of the strategies by the principals.
Through the Use of Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are given book that they really need. • Teachers have books from private schools which are very useful. • Teachers use books for stories from IPED. • Teachers use books from DepEd which content are very useful and are appreciated by the learners.

Table 3: Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Teachers to Incoming Multi-grade Classroom Teacher.

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Possess Positive Disposition in Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incoming teachers should have love and passion in teaching. • Incoming teachers should be patient in teaching different types of learners. • Incoming teachers must be flexible, if not you'll go crazy • Incoming teachers should be open-minded to the nature of their work. • Incoming teachers should not surrender since you will have many things to do.
Be Prepared at all Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incoming teachers should be well-prepared with their materials since you will have many things to attend to. • Incoming teachers must prepare their IMs in advance; they will be ready to teach their multi-grade learners.
Be Well-equipped with Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incoming teachers must have more trainings, to be updated with the new strategies in teaching. • Incoming teachers should have an equal opportunity and chance to attend to seminars regarding multi-grade teaching. • Incoming teachers should be allocated with enough budget for them to attend to all workshops.
Need to Know the Learners' Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incoming teachers must know the culture of their learners to be able to manage them well. • Incoming teachers must check the family background of their learners to avoid conflict with their parents.

6. Discussions

The purpose of this study was to explore and discover the teaching pedagogies of the multi-grade public teachers of San Isidro North and South District, Division of Mati City. All the questions formulated for the purpose of this study have been answered by the participants who gave significant data for analysis and discussion.

Teaching Strategies of the Multi-Grade Public Teachers of San Isidro North and South District, Division of Mati City

The participants shared that they have variety of teaching strategies used in teaching multi-grade classes which helped them save time during classes, elicit good performance from the pupils, have a good flow of teaching and learning, and understand fully the needs of every learner. In this study the following themes emerged namely: 1) lecture method, 2) collaborative learning, 3) experiential strategy, 4) deductive approach, 5) diagnostic approach, 6) explicit teaching and 7) integrative approach are teaching strategies used in multi-grade classes.

Lecture Method

As for the participants, they find lecture method as an effective strategy in teaching multi-grade classes. They mentioned that despite of being traditional, lecture method was very helpful especially in teaching multi-grade classes in higher grade levels where pupils easily understand the lesson because on the information given by the teacher. They exclaimed that

during their seminars and trainings conducted by the department of education; lecture method was introduced as an effective strategy in teaching multi-grade.

According to Sampath and Sivaraman (1987) as cited by Kaur (2011), with the use of lecture method, proper perspective and orientation of a subject can be presented and the general outline of scope of the subject can be brought out. In this way, many facts can be explained in a short time of period in an impressive way. The attention of the students however can be secured and maintained, as interest leads to attention of the students. Lecture method can present a number of facts belonging to subjects which can also facilitate inter-disciplinary approach to topics.

However, Howe (1980) as cited by Kaur (2011) emphasized, that since lecture method of teaching was frequently criticized, this only proves that lecture method managed to survive for so long in pace of many technological advancements. Mc Leish (1976) also stressed that the lecture-explanation approach can inspire enthusiasm and captures the student imagination when used properly.

Collaborative Learning

Secondly, this theme arises when participants emphasized the use of collaborative learning in teaching multi-grade classes. Most of the participants used collaborative learning to help those developing learners cope up with the lesson with the help of the ideas shared by the proficient learners during group activities.

In collaborative learning, there is instructional use of small groups so that students will work together to maximize their own learning (Johnson, 1990). The goals and processes of collaborative activities also vary widely which teachers designed small groups by following steps in the structured tasks. In some collaborative learning setting, the students' task is to create a product, participate in the process, exercise of responding each of the learners' work or engaging in analysis and meaning making (Smith & MacGregor, 1992).

Moreover, Amory (2017) also stated that, learners who engaged collaboratively in complex tasks together with the group will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their work with their groups as a whole class.

Experiential Strategy

The participants shared the use of experiential teaching strategy in teaching multi-grade classes. In this way, teachers are able to incorporate during discussion local information and important events observed in the community. Incorporating the essential local information to learners helped develop appreciation of their culture. Learning will also easily take place when the examples given to learners are all part of their daily endeavor.

In experiential learning, students decide themselves to be personally engaged in the learning process. This is where students are actively participating in their own learning, considering their role in the direction of learning. The students will self-evaluate their own progression or success, while openly adapting to possible change. This change includes the less reliance on the teacher and more on fellow peers, development of skills through authentic experience, and objectively self-evaluate one's performance (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010).

Experiential learning is effective because students in experiential learning situations cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi-structured approach. Instruction is designed to engage students in direct experiences which are tied to real world problems and situations in which the instructor facilitates rather than directs student progress (UC Davis, 2011). Experiential learning involves a number of steps that offer student a hands-on, collaborative and reflective learning experience which helps them to fully learn new skills and knowledge (Haynes, 2007).

Deductive Approach

As for the participants, deductive approach was used in teaching multi-grade classes to easily attain the objective in every learning area. They use this strategy to deliver important concepts to pupils in a step-by-step manner where teachers introduced the lesson from general to more specific so that learners easily understand the lesson.

Deductive approach in consonance with Widodo (2006), he noted that this approach derived from the notion of reasoning from general to specific. This means that rules, principles, concepts and theories are presented first and their application is treated. This approach goes straight forwardly and therefore time-saving for the teacher. This respects the intelligence and maturity of many adult learners in particular. This also confirms many learners' expectation about classroom learning, particularly for those students who have analytical style in learning.

According to Shoaib (2010), as cited by Atta (2015), the deductive method is an effective method used in large classrooms. The deductive method is structured and predictable therefore the verification of information comes from a source who is the teachers. With this, learners easily grasp the idea and concept of the lesson.

However, Trochim (2006), as cited by Soiferman (2010), emphasized that arguments based on experience or observation are best expressed inductively however, arguments based on laws, rules, or other widely accepted principles are best expressed deductively. Atta et al. (2015), added that in a deductive method of teaching the teacher gives the students a new concept, explains it, and then have the students practice using the concept. This method is effective since learners will undergo in a process of reasoning from one or more statements to reach a logically certain conclusion.

Diagnostic Approach

The participants highlighted the use of diagnostic approach to ensure mastery of the lesson. With this approach, teachers were able to assess the learners' strengths and weaknesses, and planned for the reinforcement needed by learners.

Standardized tests which include diagnostic tests aimed to examine the learners' mastery of the basic skills and competencies which reflect certain educational outcomes, first is to diagnose the difficulties encountered by learners during the learning process, and to identify the sources of errors related to skills and competencies. Thus, diagnostic tests assist the teacher in designing a suitable corrective plan, which assist the learner in correcting his errors in order to achieve the desired skills and competencies (Al-Thubaiti, 2014).

In the research conducted by Al-Tarawneh (2003), as cited by Abaidat, Hamadneh, Yaghmour et al. (2016) which aimed to explore the impact of using Arabic Grammar in diagnostic method, compared to the ordinary method, on the learning of Grammar, the results showed that the scores of the students who studied through the diagnostic method, were higher than the scores of the students who studied through the use of the ordinary method. This implies that diagnostic tests have a positive impact on increasing the achievement of learners. Abaidat, Hamadneh, Yaghmour et al. (2016), also added that diagnostic tests were useful in improving the knowledge of students among both teachers and students, as this method emphasizes the importance of individualized instruction, which keeps up with the developments of modern age.

Explicit Teaching

As for the participants, explicit teaching was an effective strategy used by multi-grade teachers especially during classroom observation for it is not time consuming. Pupils will easily understand the lesson since the nature of this teaching strategy was spoon feeding. Teachers feed all the information needed by the learners.

Explicit teaching as stressed by Archer (2011) systematizes the instruction which focuses on the critical content. This student grouping strategy for multi-grade teaching practices is anchored to parallel curriculum method which students share the same themes or subjects.

Thus, the teacher must prepare separate material for both all grades (Cornish, 2006). However, this method requires a great deal of work on the part of teachers, and they experience this practice as rushed and difficult (Kalaoja, 2006). For the students, it may mean that time is wasted because the teacher works with one group, the other group will be waiting for its turn.

Integrative Approach

The participants shared that integrative approach in teaching multi-grade classes is of great help to maximize the limited time in teaching two grade levels. With this strategy, time was also shared for the two grade levels where the other grade levels were reviewed and the other grade level were advanced of the lesson.

According to Anderson (2011), teachers should use the integrative approach to promote critical-thinking skills, which involve thinking at the higher cognitive process levels of the revised Bloom's taxonomy. This would also be an effective way to refresh and supplement students' existing knowledge about the lesson.

Shutterstock (2013), added that integrative approach supports the student's development of critical understanding of content. It also promotes development of critical-thinking skills, supports awareness of relationships between concepts, and develops students' ability to synthesize information from various resources. It can be used with any grade level, but primary-grade teachers need to provide considerable scaffolding through guided questioning, collection and analysis of data, and categorization of information.

Moreover, Kauchak and Eggen (2012), integrative approach is a model of teaching that is well suited for guiding students as they learn to organize knowledge, combine and integrate facts, concepts, generalizations, principles and rules.

Implementation of Multi-grade Public Elementary Teachers' Teaching Strategies

Multi-grade public elementary teachers shared their various ways of implementing their teaching strategies. In this study the following are the themes that emerged namely: 1) through the use of varied classroom activities, 2) through classroom observation, and 3) through the use of books. These ways of implementation of multi-grade teaching strategies helped the teachers to identify the appropriateness of their teaching strategies.

Through the Use of Varied Classroom Activities

As for the participants they emphasized that through activities students learned the difficulties of the subjects presented especially in reading and writing. At the start of the class, teachers had to assess the ability of the students in terms of their preparedness of learning the topic. The activities include the "I Do, We Do and You Do" process of teaching or the explicit teaching, where the teacher had to explain first the topic, followed by a group activity done together with the whole class, and last the learners do the activity themselves or individual. The process of this activity is implemented in a cycle until mastery is achieved.

In the article of Ashman (2018), explicit teaching is a system that follows of fully explaining the concepts first. It acknowledges that novice learners need more support from the teachers. Rosenshine (2012), reiterates that the success of the students in learning the topic depends on the number of activities given. This means that it is better to give the students small amounts of new activities at a time to achieve mastery of the subject matter.

In the same way, Goeke (2008) supports that teachers have the responsibility to monitor the students' needs and provide appropriate guidance throughout the learning process to perform specific tasks.

Through Classroom Observation

Another way of implementing their teaching strategies is through classroom observations where school heads and principals conducted regular classroom observations to assess the performance of the multi-grade teachers. In the process of observation, the principal provided comments or feedbacks to improve the delivery of the lesson.

This circumstance is in connection with Hora (2013), who said that classroom observations often used for coaching and mentoring. A similar claim from the University of Washington Center for Instructional Development and Research (2012), emphasizes that coaching and mentoring can provide teachers a neutral, non-threatening perspective on teaching performance and help them reflect whether, where and how to make changes.

According to Calvin College (2012), classroom observation aid teachers to improve their quality of teaching. School heads identify what the teachers are doing instead of what they should be doing inside the classroom.

Through the Use of Books

Another theme revealed that in the implementation of the teaching strategies in the multi-grade setting, teachers also utilize resource materials such as books. Teachers shared that their books are provided by the Department of Education. Apart from that, there are also books that are donated from the private schools. These resources are very much important to the learners because the contents of the books are simplified and contextualized.

In the DepEd Order series of 2018, the Guidelines on the Utilization of the 2018 Financial Support for Multi-grade Schools, the Multi-grade Programs in the Philippine Education (MPPE) addresses the serious concerns and issues on the provision of the customized teaching and learning materials for multi-grade classes and professional development of the teachers. The support entails the stipulation and procedures on fund release to provide the necessary resources for multi-grade classroom.

According to Nkosi (2012), as cited by Jacob (2016), multi-grade schools need resources to improve learner performance but many schools doesn't have any libraries in fact they lack supply of books to facilitate learning.

Insights that can be Shared to Incoming Teachers Teaching in a Multi-Grade Classroom

Multi-grade public elementary teachers shared their insights for incoming teachers who will teach multi-grade classroom settings. Several major themes were collated namely: 1) possess positive disposition in teaching, 2) be prepared at all times, 3) be well-equipped with trainings, and 4) need to know the learners' background.

Possess Positive Disposition in Teaching

Teachers shared that a multi-grade teacher must possess the virtue of patience, passion in teaching, be open-minded and never surrender in times of difficulties and pressure. These are actually the positive disposition of a multi-grade teacher should possess in the multi-grade environment.

According to Katz & Rath (1985) as cited in the Professional Dispositions and Requirements Handbook (2018) dispositions emphasize not just having a particular skill or behavior but the likelihood to be repeated of using that skill or behavior to reinforce student learning. In addition, same requirement open-mindedness of a teacher that it allows the individual to be willing to be flexible and to consider new ideas (Williams, 2010). It is a component of showcasing the willingness to admit constructive feedback from superiors. In fact, this would serve as essential component of high level of thinking in the teaching profession (Peterson, 2016).

Becoming a better teacher requires the ability to understand the relationship between two constructs of thought and knowledge. It is about thinking in ways to use knowledge to create new knowledge (Halpern, 2014). They have a sense of enduring purpose which includes a commitment to become a better teacher, high expectations of themselves and others.

Be Prepared at All Times

Teachers also shared that preparation of instructional materials matters since a lot of things need to be done in the multi-grade environment. Teachers must consider time of preparation before teaching the learners.

Jenkins & Cornish (2015) believed that pre-service teachers need to be prepared to teach in both rural and urban contexts. Preparation to teach multi-grade classes in rural schools is excellent preparation for teaching any class, including urban single-grade classes. As Amadioha (2009) contends that it is vital that we become familiar with the type of instructional materials, which can be employed in any teaching learning situations.

Thus, the Department of Education issued a regional memorandum which highlights the policy in the implementation of the multi-grade program in the Philippine education that there is a customized multi-grade teaching and learning materials developed to guide effectively and efficiently the teaching-learning activities in a class of two-grade combinations. The validation process is done by the district offices for consolidation and adjustments of lesson to better improve the learning package of the region (Regional Memorandum 52, s.2017).

Be Well-equipped with Trainings

Another theme revealed that would give multi-grade teachers a room for trainings and seminars to update their teaching strategies in the multi-grade context. Further, the participants stressed out that they should be given equal opportunity to attend workshops and consideration of allotment of budget to suffice the training.

Ensuring the right of education is the heart of UNESCO's mission. UNESCO has a special mandate to assist countries and guide them towards achieving education for all. Part of its mission addresses issues in curriculum, teacher training and the development of teaching and learning materials, quality teaching in difficult situations and contextualization to local conditions (UNESCO, 2015).

Further, the Department of Education issued an order addressed to School Division Superintendents and Public Elementary School Heads in support to multi-grade schools mandating to strengthen the implementation of multi-grade classroom towards professional development of teachers in the field (DO 08, s. 2018).

Need to Know the Learners' Background

The participants also shared that it is important to know the learner's background. This includes checking the culture of each learner or their facility background to avoid conflict among students, teachers, and parents.

According to Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999) as cited by Durden (2014), culturally relevant teachers consciously understand the cultural, historical, social, and political situation of teaching and student learning. For effective implementation of learners' background especially of knowing their culture, schools and teachers, therefore must first believe that all students can be successful, sustain a sound student-teacher connection and perceive distinction as a multifaceted paradigm that accounts for student diversity and individual difference (Paris 2012).

Durden (2014) added that the literacy that kids carry to the classroom is essential such as their home literacies, the means they speak to their parents or family, or to their friends. Teachers still have to confront the challenges in preparing learners who can be high-quality and responsive educational experiences in the multi-grade set up.

Implications for Teaching Practice

Generally, teaching multi-grade classroom environment considered as difficult on the part of the teachers. The whole process entails hard work. The teachers in this field of teaching must be given enough training and workshop so that they would catch up the current level of learner's understanding against their individual differences inside the one class, two or three grade levels. This only implies that teachers need to know pedagogies to cater the needs of each learner. The activities are tailored to provide the best and quality learning for the students. However, when teachers lack skills, it may appear that teaching multi-grade is really difficult.

The professional knowledge and pedagogies are necessary to effectively teach multi-grade classroom. This needs a tedious preparation so teachers would not be able to compromise the content of the subject taught. This also requires planning on how to realize the objectives set, considering the availability of the resources at school. Thus, in the context of equal education for all, teachers have to be resourceful and creative by offering possible alternative pedagogy of learning including collaborative process and individual performances. Teachers have to exert more extra milestone to achieve the desired objectives and educational goals.

Moreover, understanding the multi-grade pedagogy is needed to help universalize access to primary education. However, not having teachers specially trained to teach multi-grade classes was a problem which has no immediate solution due to lack of financial budget in their districts. This also explains why the only curriculum available for multi-grade teachers to work with is the national primary school curriculum, designed for mono-grade teaching. This lack of congruence between policy and implementation of multi-grade affects the efficiency of the implementation of the teaching pedagogies of multi-grade teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

With the results of this study, other researchers may study further about the effects of teaching pedagogies of multi-grade public elementary teachers. I would like to recommend that future studies involve another set of participants in the investigation of the teaching pedagogies of multi-grade teachers. Greater scope like the inclusion of the teaching pedagogies of the public elementary teachers' teaching in rural and urban areas has to be investigated for future studies. With this, we will be able to compare the teaching pedagogies from different perspectives, not just for the multi-grade teachers.

Additionally, in this study, the researcher utilized phenomenological qualitative study. However, future researchers may conduct a quantitative study about the phenomenon which will identify the effects of the teaching pedagogies on the performance of the learners.

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