



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Multigrade teaching and its effect to the performance of the pupils in selected island schools of Bacacay

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored multigrade teaching in Bacacay's island schools, highlighting its impact on pupil performance and instructional challenges. Through a phenomenological approach, insights from school heads and teachers revealed key struggles in classroom management, resource limitations, and diverse learner needs. Findings underscore the importance of innovative lesson plans to enhance multigrade education.

Findings: This study explored multigrade teaching in Bacacay's island schools, revealing its influence on pupil performance and instructional challenges. While it promotes literacy, numeracy, and independence, resource shortages, classroom management difficulties, and diverse student needs remain. Implementing innovative lesson plans can strengthen teaching strategies and improve learning outcomes in multigrade settings.

Conclusions: The study concludes that multigrade teaching introduces new instructional approaches, relies on learning resources, and benefits from stakeholder support. While it enhances literacy and independent learning, challenges such as diverse student needs, classroom management, and resource limitations persist. Innovative lesson plans can address these issues, improving multigrade education effectiveness.

Areas for Further Study: Future research may explore parents' perceptions of multigrade education in Bacacay, the extent of community support for multigrade teachers, and the availability of learning resources in Albay's schools. These studies can provide valuable insights into stakeholder engagement and instructional challenges. Findings may guide policy improvements and instructional strategies for multigrade education.

Keywords: Multigrade teaching; Pure multigrade school; Mix multigrade school; Differentiated instruction; Experiences; Innovative

1. Introduction

Education is recognized as a basic human right that transcends national, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries. It is a fundamental right and a powerful tool for personal and societal growth. It provides individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their lives and contribute to the development of their communities. However, access to education is not universal, and various factors can impede individuals from fully benefiting from educational opportunities. These factors include geographical barriers, such as distance and lack of infrastructure, socio-economic challenges like poverty and discrimination, cultural norms that may limit certain groups from attending school, and political instability or conflict that disrupts educational systems. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring that education is accessible to all.

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Achieving universal education is a complex challenge. Despite the global recognition of education's importance, significant disparities remain, with millions of children still lacking the opportunity to attend school or receive a quality education. Addressing these barriers and promoting education as a universal right is crucial for ensuring a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

In a global context, education is seen as not only a means of personal empowerment but also a key driver for sustainable development, as it fosters social cohesion, economic growth, and the promotion of peace. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations aim to achieve decent lives for all by 2030. This includes quality education indicated by Goal 4 which ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.¹ This goal supports the reduction of disparities and inequities in education, both in terms of access and quality. It recognizes the need to provide quality education for all, and most especially vulnerable populations, including poor children, children living in rural areas, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and refugee children. Goal No. 4 is of critical importance because of its transformative effects on the other SDGs. Sustainable development hinges on every child receiving a quality education. When children are offered the tools to develop to their full potential, they become productive adults ready to give back to their communities and break the cycle of poverty. When they receive the necessary education, they are better equipped to contribute to their communities, fostering economic growth, social cohesion, and peace. A quality education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge to break the cycle of poverty, thereby empowering them to build sustainable futures. Consequently, providing equitable access to quality education is not just an ethical imperative—it is essential for sustainable development and the realization of broader global goals.

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines guarantees the right to education of every Filipino. It provides that:

*The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all.*²

Pursuant to the above provisions of the Constitution, the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE) was implemented in 1993 through the then Department of Education Culture and Sports Department Order No. 83 series of 1993 and four (4) years after the issuance of Department Order No. 96 series of 1997 that declared a policy to build a school in school-less barangays where enrolment and population growth trends warrant the establishment of new schools and to organize multigrade classes to offer complete six (6) grade levels to children in the remote barangays.³

The right to education of every Filipino is further emphasized in Section 2 of Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2011. This law reaffirms the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all Filipinos to free and compulsory basic education with the skills and knowledge as well as the values they need to become caring, self-reliant, productive and patriotic citizens.⁴

With the implementation of Republic Act 10533 known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the State likewise upheld its commitment that every graduate of basic education shall be an empowered individual who has learned, through a program that is rooted on sound educational principles and geared towards excellence.⁵ In addition, an individual who is competent to engage in work and be productive with the ability to coexist in fruitful harmony with his local and global communities and capable to engage in autonomous, creative and critical thinking with willingness to transform one self and others.

Multigrade education is an innovative approach implemented by the Department of Education to provide accessible schooling in far flung areas. Globally, multigrade teaching methods are prioritized, and they hold particular relevance in the Philippines due to socio-economic and political challenges that impact the education of Filipino children. While access to education is generally not an issue in the country, far flung areas often lack schools with complete grade levels. And by implementing the multigrade education parents can conveniently have their children complete their elementary education without the need to send them to urban schools with complete grade levels, thereby addressing the concern of completion rates for elementary grade levels, particularly in islands.

The distance between barangays, shortages of teachers, budget, and school facilities were among the factors that led to the formation of multigrade classes in numerous parts of the Philippines. Multigrade teaching is a prevalent practice in rural areas where student populations are smaller, typically ranging from 1 to a maximum of 20 students per class. Multigrade types were established because the number of students enrolled in each grade level was insufficient to form a single grade class. Teaching in multigrade is when one teacher is simultaneously responsible for multiple grade levels.

Multigrade teaching is widely adopted as a cost-effective strategy to promote student participation and academic achievement in island schools. It emphasizes active student engagement, the design of performance-based tasks and activities, and collaborative learning. Effective implementation of multigrade classes hinges on employing appropriate teaching techniques that recognize diverse learner profiles as a means for enhanced learning experiences.

The multigrade education program plays an essential role in achieving the State's goal and commitment to providing access to high-quality education, particularly for children from low-income families and ethnic minorities. Thus, multigrade teachers play a crucial role in educating the youth, providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to nation building as citizens of the State.

Due to the multiple functions, they have, such as handling different grade levels in a single classroom, multigrade teachers are also the most challenged. For teachers to be able to handle such classes, the Department of Education has provided various trainings, seminars, and workshops to equip them in providing the needs of every learner. Regular monitoring is conducted to sustain training gains and to provide technical assistance as well as instructional support.

Multigrade teachers should be armed with a variety of strategies through training and seminars to address the needs of their learners with the understanding of the difference between each learner and encourage them to learn. Multigrade teachers' role is not only in handling classroom instruction but also a facilitator, community liaisons or resource persons, a planner, an evaluator, and material designer.

The policies and guidelines in the operation of multigrade classes may have attracted some teachers to accept multigrade teaching. However, there is still a lot of areas that need to be explored to provide the current state of multigrade teaching in the country. This thesis aims to provide narratives of experiences of selected multigrade teachers in Bacacay, Albay to identify these areas that will support and improve multigrade teaching in the locality.

2. Conclusion

Education is a fundamental human right and a catalyst for personal and societal progress, yet barriers like geography, poverty, and cultural norms still exclude millions from learning. In the Philippines, the Multigrade Program addresses these challenges by delivering complete elementary education in remote barangays through a single-teacher, multi-level classroom model. Although this approach enhances access and equity, it places heavy demands on educators, highlighting the necessity for ongoing training, resources, and technical support. This thesis explores the lived experiences of multigrade teachers in Bacacay, Albay, uncovering insights to bolster program implementation and ensure quality learning for all.

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