

Multigrade teaching strategies and teacher performance in rural elementary schools in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur

Cabotage, Desiree M. ✉

Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Philippines (desiree.cabotage@deped.gov.ph)



ISSN: 2243-7703

Online ISSN: 2243-7711

Received: 2 August 2026

Available Online: 16 August 2026

Revised: 13 August 2026

DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2026.26381

Accepted: 15 August 2026

OPEN ACCESS

Abstract

Multigrade teaching still plays an important role in elementary institution in rural and isolated geographically areas of the Philippines, especially in the Division of Ilocos Sur, because of the scarcity of educational materials and facilities, lack of teachers, decreasing enrollment, and spread-out communities that impact the provision of quality basic education. In the majority of the public elementary school, one teacher conducts instruction to two or more classroom at once. It means that there is need to adopt flexible teaching strategies as well as good classroom management skills. The current literature review provides a summary of twenty (20) papers published between 2015-2023, using thematic analysis of academic journals, educational policies and government documents, and Philippine-based research. Multigrade teaching strategies and the effect they have on teacher effectiveness are the topics of the review. The significant themes were identified from the findings: (a) instructional approaches in multigrade classes, (b) teacher pedagogical competence and performance, and (c) constraints and instructional support system. The findings show that differentiated instruction, peer-tutoring, collaborative and cooperative instructions, grouping methods, contextualized instruction, and classroom management are among the factors that enhance instruction and promote learner participation in multigrade classes. Based on the findings presented from the reviewed literature, teacher with pedagogical competence, adaptability, instructional planning abilities, and assessment knowledge exhibit greater performance in multigrade classes even under difficult teaching circumstances. However, teacher pedagogical performance is inhibited by excessive workload, additional assignment, insufficient preparation of teachers in terms of pre-service and in-service education for multigrade instruction, lack of instructional resources, poor classroom facilities, and limited opportunities for professional development. The review further underscores the significance of school leadership, mentoring, Learning Action Cell or LAC, stakeholders engagement, and institution-based strategies in promoting effective teaching and ensuring quality instruction in multigrade schools. Even as numerous pieces of research have been conducted in relation to multigrade school or in multigrade teaching and learning, there is

still a considerable gap in localized and longitudinal research in regards to multigrade elementary school within the Division of Ilocos Sur and other parts of rural are of the Philippines. It is thus recommended that there should be continued efforts in professional development, allocation of resources, instructional supervision, and educational policy-making that will take into account the challenge faced by multigrade teacher.

Keywords: multigrade teaching, teacher performance, rural education, instructional strategies, elementary schools, Schools division of Ilocos Sur

Multigrade teaching strategies and teacher performance in rural elementary schools in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur

1. Introduction

Multigrade teaching is an instructional arrangement in which one teacher simultaneously teaches learners from two or more grade levels in the same classroom. The arrangement is especially relevant in rural and geographically isolated communities where student populations are small, schools are widely dispersed, and staffing or infrastructure may be insufficient to maintain a separate class for every grade level. In such settings, multigrade education is not merely an organizational alternative; it is often an important means of sustaining access to basic education.

The instructional demands of a multigrade classroom differ substantially from those of a conventional single-grade class. Teachers must coordinate more than one curriculum, plan tasks at different levels of complexity, manage transitions among groups, monitor independent and peer-assisted learning, and assess learners who differ in age, grade placement, prior knowledge, and learning needs. These demands make instructional organization and classroom management central to teacher effectiveness. Flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, self-paced activities, and well-designed learning materials have therefore been emphasized as potentially useful strategies in multigrade classrooms (Brown & Park, 2020; Jimenez & Cruz, 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Pridmore, 2017).

The effectiveness of multigrade teaching, however, cannot be attributed to instructional strategy alone. Teachers operate within organizational and material conditions that may either enable or constrain good practice. Research cited in the existing manuscript associates multigrade teacher performance with pedagogical competence, professional preparation, experience, workload, access to instructional resources, and institutional support (Flores, 2022; Lopez, 2023; Perez & Villanueva, 2022; Reyes, 2021; Singh, 2018). These conditions are particularly salient in remote schools, where teachers may face additional responsibilities and limited opportunities for professional development.

In the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur, multigrade classes are found across a number of rural and geographically dispersed communities. Although the broader literature describes common strategies and challenges, localized evidence is needed to determine which practices are most frequently used and which are most closely associated with teacher performance in this specific context. A context-sensitive analysis is important because the usefulness of a strategy may depend on class composition, available materials, school leadership, community support, and teachers' experience with multigrade instruction.

Accordingly, the present study is designed to examine multigrade teaching strategies and teacher performance among public elementary school teachers in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. It seeks to document current practices, describe teachers' performance, and test whether the frequency or extent of strategy use is significantly related to teacher performance. By focusing on an underexamined local setting, the study aims to provide evidence that can support professional development, instructional supervision, resource planning, and policy decisions for multigrade schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Instructional Strategies in Multigrade Classrooms

Research on multigrade instruction consistently emphasizes the need for flexible teaching arrangements. Differentiated instruction is particularly relevant because a single class may include learners working toward

different grade-level competencies. Rather than delivering identical tasks to all learners, teachers may vary content, process, learning materials, pacing, and expected products according to learner readiness and curriculum requirements. Brown and Park (2020) associated differentiated instruction with stronger teacher effectiveness, while Pridmore (2017) emphasized pedagogical adaptation as a central feature of multigrade teaching.

Flexible grouping is another frequently identified strategy. Learners may be grouped by grade level for selected competencies, by skill level for targeted practice, or across grade levels for cooperative activities. Such grouping can allow the teacher to provide direct instruction to one group while other learners engage in structured independent or collaborative work. Peer tutoring extends this principle by allowing more advanced learners to support classmates who require additional assistance. Jimenez and Cruz (2020) reported that peer tutoring can help maximize instructional time and support classroom management in multigrade settings.

Active and cooperative learning can also reduce excessive dependence on whole-class teacher talk. Nguyen (2021) emphasized active learning as a means of increasing student participation. In a multigrade classroom, collaborative routines, learning stations, activity sheets, and peer-directed tasks can create productive learning time while the teacher attends to another group. The effectiveness of these approaches nevertheless depends on careful planning, explicit routines, and instructional materials that learners can use with an appropriate degree of independence.

Time management is therefore inseparable from instructional strategy. Teachers must sequence direct teaching, independent work, peer-assisted activities, assessment, and transitions in ways that minimize idle time. Rotational teaching can help distribute teacher attention across grade groups, while self-paced tasks allow learners to continue working when direct teacher support is temporarily focused elsewhere. These strategies require strong classroom organization and clear expectations for learner behavior.

2.2 Teacher Competence and Performance

Teacher competence is a major condition for successful multigrade instruction. In the literature included in the original paper, competence encompasses pedagogical knowledge, lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, adaptability, and the capacity to use available resources effectively. Flores (2022) linked stronger pedagogical and classroom management competence with higher instructional performance, and Reyes (2021) highlighted the role of professional development in strengthening multigrade teaching competencies.

Experience may also shape how teachers respond to the complexity of multigrade classrooms. Teachers with greater familiarity with multigrade settings may be better able to anticipate transition problems, prepare tiered learning activities, and allocate instructional time across groups. Lopez (2023) similarly identified training, experience, and resource availability as important influences on teacher effectiveness. These findings suggest that teacher performance should be interpreted as the product of both individual competence and the conditions under which teaching occurs.

The present study conceptualizes teacher performance as the overall effectiveness demonstrated in delivering instruction, managing the classroom, assessing learners, and fulfilling professional responsibilities. Where permitted and available, official performance evaluation records may provide a complementary indicator to teachers' self-reported practices. This combination can strengthen the interpretation of relationships between instructional strategies and performance.

2.3 Challenges and Institutional Support

Multigrade teachers often work under conditions that intensify ordinary teaching demands. Limited instructional materials, inadequate preparation specifically for multigrade teaching, overlapping responsibilities, and heavy workload are recurring concerns in the literature (Collingwood, 2019; Perez & Villanueva, 2022; Singh, 2018). When teachers must prepare multiple sets of lessons and assessments while also carrying administrative or

community responsibilities, even well-designed strategies may be difficult to sustain.

Institutional support can moderate these constraints. School leadership, mentoring, school-based professional learning, and access to relevant instructional resources can help teachers refine classroom routines and share workable practices. Policy support is also important because multigrade education requires staffing, training, supervision, and material provision that recognize the distinct demands of the setting (Kabita & Ji, 2018; UNESCO, 2015).

The literature therefore points to a systemic interpretation of multigrade teacher performance. Instructional strategies matter, but their effectiveness is likely to depend on competence, workload, resources, and organizational support. This reinforces the need for localized research that considers not only which strategies teachers report using, but also how those strategies relate to observed or formally evaluated performance within a specific school division.

2.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study is informed by complementary perspectives on classroom management, constructivist learning, and differentiated instruction. Together, these perspectives explain why instructional organization, learner engagement, task design, and adaptation to learner differences are especially important in multigrade classrooms. Classroom management theory emphasizes the teacher's capacity to maintain the flow of instruction, monitor classroom activity, prevent unnecessary disruption, and sustain learner engagement. In multigrade classrooms, these functions are particularly important because learners frequently shift among direct instruction, independent work, and peer-supported activities. Effective management is therefore understood not merely as discipline, but as the organization of time, space, routines, grouping, and instructional transitions in ways that maximize learning opportunities.

Constructivist perspectives emphasize that learners actively develop understanding through engagement with tasks, prior knowledge, social interaction, and reflection. This supports the use of learner-centered activities, peer learning, cooperative tasks, and contextualized instruction. Such approaches can be especially useful when the teacher cannot provide continuous direct instruction to every grade group at the same time.

Differentiated instruction provides a practical bridge between these theoretical perspectives and multigrade teaching. Because learners in a multigrade classroom differ by grade level, readiness, and learning need, teachers must adapt materials, tasks, pacing, and assessment. Flexible grouping, varied worksheets, tiered activities, peer tutoring, rotational teaching, and self-paced learning can be understood as operational expressions of differentiation within a managed classroom environment.

Conceptually, the study treats multigrade teaching strategies as the principal predictor and teacher performance as the principal outcome. Teacher characteristics such as age, sex, educational attainment, and years of experience teaching multigrade classes will be described and may be considered in the interpretation of findings. The study also recognizes that contextual factors such as available resources, workload, and institutional support may influence the extent to which teaching strategies can be implemented effectively.

2.5 Research Questions

- What is the profile of multigrade teachers in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, and years of experience teaching multigrade classes?
- To what extent do multigrade teachers report using practices related to (a) classroom instructional preparation and management, (b) evaluation of instruction, (c) preparation and utilization of instructional materials, (d) school-community relations, (e) time management, (f) homeroom guidance, and (g) school-ground improvement?

- What is the level of teacher performance among multigrade teachers in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur?
- Which multigrade teaching practices are most strongly associated with teacher performance?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of using multigrade teaching strategies and teacher performance?

3. Method

Research Design - The study will use a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component will summarize teacher characteristics, the reported use of multigrade teaching strategies, and the level of teacher performance. The correlational component will examine the direction and strength of relationships between teaching strategies and teacher performance. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to examine naturally occurring variation in instructional practices without manipulating teachers' classroom conditions.

Setting and Participants - Participants will be public elementary school teachers who handle multigrade classes in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. The source document identifies multigrade settings across several districts and municipalities, including Alilem, Banayoyo-Lidlidda, Bantay, Burgos-San Esteban, Cabugao, Caoayan, Cervantes, Galimuyod-Sigay-Del Pilar, Magsingal, Nagbukel, Narvacan North, Narvacan South, Quirino, Salcedo, San Emilio, San Juan, San Vicente, Santa, Santiago, Sinait, Sta. Catalina, Sta. Cruz, Sta. Maria, Sto. Domingo-San Ildefonso, Sugpon, and Tagudin. The final manuscript should report the exact sampling frame, eligibility criteria, sampling procedure, number invited, and achieved sample after data collection.

Variables and Measures - The principal predictor is the use of multigrade teaching strategies. The planned survey will assess practices in classroom instructional preparation and management, evaluation of instruction, preparation and utilization of instructional materials, school-community relations, time management, homeroom guidance, and school-ground improvement. The instrument should specify the response scale, scoring procedure, source or development of items, and evidence of content validity and reliability before journal submission. Teacher performance is the principal outcome. The source document indicates that performance may be assessed through a structured questionnaire and may be supplemented, where available and institutionally permitted, by official Department of Education performance records such as the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF). If multiple indicators are used, the final manuscript should explain whether they are analyzed separately or combined and should describe the scoring and interpretation of each indicator. Teacher profile variables will include age, sex, highest educational attainment, and years of experience teaching multigrade classes. These variables will be used to describe the sample and may be examined as covariates or grouping variables where analytically appropriate.

Data Sources and Data Collection - Primary data will be collected from teachers handling multigrade classes through a structured survey questionnaire. Subject to permission and data-access requirements, additional information may be obtained from school heads or official school records to validate teacher performance indicators. Secondary sources may include school profile documents and relevant Department of Education policies pertaining to multigrade education. Prior to full administration, the questionnaire should undergo expert review and pilot testing to examine clarity, relevance, and internal consistency. Data collection procedures should minimize pressure on participants and protect the confidentiality of responses. The final report should document the dates of data collection, mode of administration, response rate, handling of incomplete responses, and any procedures used to link survey data with official performance records.

Data Analysis - Data analysis will begin with screening for missing, invalid, or out-of-range responses. Frequencies and percentages will be used to summarize categorical teacher characteristics, while means, standard deviations, or other appropriate descriptive statistics will summarize strategy-use and performance scores. Internal consistency estimates should be reported for multi-item scales. Bivariate associations between multigrade teaching strategy scores and teacher performance will be examined using an appropriate correlation coefficient based on the scale properties and distribution of the variables. If the assumptions for Pearson's correlation are met, Pearson's r may be used; otherwise, a rank-based alternative may be more appropriate. To identify the strategies most strongly associated with performance while accounting for teacher characteristics, the final analysis may use multiple regression or another model suitable for the measurement level of the performance outcome. Statistical assumptions, effect sizes, confidence intervals, and exact p values should be reported in addition to significance tests.

Ethical Considerations - Before data collection, the study should obtain the permissions and ethical review required by the researcher's institution and the relevant education authorities. Participation should be voluntary, and teachers should receive clear information about the study purpose, procedures, confidentiality protections, potential risks, and their right to decline or withdraw without penalty. If official performance records are accessed, data-linkage procedures should use only the minimum identifying information necessary and should separate identifiers from the analytic dataset as early as possible.

Anticipated Contributions and Implications - The study is expected to contribute localized evidence about the instructional practices of multigrade teachers in Ilocos Sur. At the classroom level, identifying strategies associated with stronger teacher performance may help teachers prioritize approaches that support instructional delivery, classroom organization, learner participation, and assessment across multiple grade levels. At the school level, the findings may help school heads design more targeted professional development and instructional supervision. Rather than treating multigrade teaching as a smaller version of single-grade instruction, capacity-building activities can focus on the specific competencies required for flexible grouping, differentiated materials, rotational teaching, assessment across grade levels, and management of independent or peer-assisted learning.

At the policy level, the study may inform decisions concerning teacher deployment, professional development, instructional materials, and support mechanisms for rural multigrade schools. If performance is strongly associated with resource or support-related conditions, the findings may also indicate that improvement efforts should address organizational constraints rather than placing responsibility solely on individual teachers. The study may additionally provide a baseline for subsequent longitudinal or intervention research. Because the present design is correlational, it will not establish that a particular strategy causes higher performance. Future research could examine changes in teacher practice and learner outcomes following professional development or school-based interventions and could compare multigrade contexts across districts or provinces.

4. Conclusion

Multigrade education remains essential in rural and geographically dispersed communities where conventional single-grade organization is not always feasible. Effective multigrade teaching requires more than additional effort from teachers; it requires deliberate instructional strategies, strong classroom organization, appropriate materials, professional competence, and institutional support. The proposed study will examine how multigrade teaching strategies relate to teacher performance in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur and will provide context-specific evidence for practice, supervision, professional development, and policy. By documenting both the strategies teachers use and their relationship with performance, the study can help clarify where support for multigrade education should be concentrated.

5. References

Berry, C., & Little, A. W. (2018). Multigrade teaching in primary schools: A global perspective. *International*

- Review of Education*, 64(2), 123–140.
- Brown, B. A., & Park, M. (2020). Instructional strategies in multigrade classrooms and teacher effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Research*, 113(4), 245–259.
- Collingwood, I. (2019). Teaching in multigrade classrooms: Challenges and solutions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 85, 101–110.
- de la Cruz, R. M., & Santos, J. P. (2021). Multigrade teaching practices in Philippine elementary schools. *Philippine Journal of Education*, 98(1), 45–60.
- Flores, M. T. (2022). Teacher performance in multigrade settings: A competency-based analysis. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 42(3), 312–328.
- Hargreaves, E. (2017). Multigrade teaching and student achievement in rural schools. *Comparative Education Review*, 61(3), 455–478.
- Jimenez, A. L., & Cruz, M. F. (2020). Instructional strategies of multigrade teachers in public elementary schools. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(2), 189–204.
- Kabita, D., & Ji, L. (2018). Multigrade teaching: Improving quality education in rural areas. *Education Development Journal*, 29(1), 33–49.
- Lopez, S. R. (2023). Teacher effectiveness in multigrade classrooms in the Philippines. *Educational Practice and Theory*, 45(2), 201–218.
- Mason, D., & Burns, R. B. (2019). Multigrade classrooms: Organizational and instructional strategies. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 55(1), 67–90.
- Nguyen, T. H. (2021). Multigrade teaching strategies and learner outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 79, Article 102115.
- Perez, J. R., & Villanueva, C. A. (2022). Challenges faced by multigrade teachers in elementary schools. *Journal of Teacher Education and Development*, 15(3), 89–103.
- Pridmore, P. (2017). Adapting pedagogy for multigrade classrooms. *Journal of Educational Change*, 18(2), 145–162.
- Quimbo, M. A., & Torres, L. (2020). Multigrade instruction and teacher performance in rural Philippine schools. *Southeast Asian Education Review*, 12(4), 215–230.
- Reyes, M. C. (2021). Competency and performance of multigrade teachers. *Philippine Educational Measurement Journal*, 8(2), 55–72.
- Sharma, U., & Chen, D. (2019). Teaching strategies in multigrade classrooms: A systematic review. *Review of Education*, 7(3), 410–430.
- Singh, P. (2018). Teacher workload and performance in multigrade schools. *International Journal of Rural Education*, 34(1), 90–108.
- Torres, R. M. (2023). Enhancing teacher performance in multigrade elementary education. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 9(1), 22–38.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Multigrade teaching in primary education: Policy and practice*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Wenglinsky, H. (2017). Instructional practices and student achievement in multigrade settings. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(4), 512–530.