

Traversing Mission Odyssey in Multi-grade World

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Abstract— This study aimed to delve the lived experiences of multigrade teachers in Laak District, Division of Compostela Valley. This multi-case study sought to determine the teaching and lives' remarkable challenges of multigrade teachers, their coping mechanism, strategies and aspirations as multigrade teachers to address critical issues and concerns. The data were gathered through in-depth interview, focus-group discussion and observation from 15 multigrade teachers in Laak District, Division of Compostela Valley. The instrument was carefully reviewed by the panel of experts to evaluate the content and validity. This panel of experts was teachers and experts in the multigrade teaching, performing as an instructional head, and supervisory officer. There are salient themes that were generated out from the gathering procedures employed to collect responses. The themes which have come up from the different challenges traversed by the multigrade teachers were the strategies employed to address needs and challenges, and aspirations to improve the multigrade teaching. This study had come up with the need to revisit the realities of multigrade teaching and to address the needs of multigrade teachers. There must be a need to conduct assessment and evaluation of the situations of multigrade schools. The components must be educational logistics, technology, learning materials, compensation or allowance of multigrade teachers, formatting class size, teachers' training need analysis, relocation of school sites to safer areas, provision of infrastructure, providing short courses or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for multigrade teachers, and conduct of further research to improve the quality of education in multigrade schools.

Keywords — *Monograde class; multigrade class; style; multigrade teaching; multigrade teacher; multigrade school*

I. Introduction

The 21st Century brings a bigger picture of education, the universal primary education. The universal viewpoint for education brings teachers to perform roles in various ways (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015). But, these teachers are assigned to political boundaries with the rival schools, transportation worries, with inadequate background and experiences of teaching multi-grade classes and having schools prone to flooding and landslides. Challenges of teachers in these situations may affect the instructional performance and even their own motivation.

In South African rural multi-grade schools, Taole (2014) confirms that the negative situations experienced by the teachers bring negative impact into their teaching perspective. The

Department of Basic Education of South Africa hardly finds for solutions to these widespread challenges. However, this characterizes possible attention to address such.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education addresses the needs and crafts plans for improving multigrade programs through policies aligned with Education for All (EFA) goal. In one side, a recent survey has confirmed that there is a global perspective to relieve challenges of teachers in multigrade schools. The challenges which are planned to be answered such as, the inadequate source of funds, lack of or without pre-service orientations in multi-grade teaching, and inappropriate educational technologies including classrooms and facilities (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 2008).

In most corners of multigrade schools in different regions of entire Philippines, teachers are not left behind or unattended because the Department of Education (2009) has issued to provide a strict implementation of Special Hardship Allowance (SHA) to compensate the teachers' additional functions under the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE). The program of the government is to promote the access to education, but the quality is also at stake.

Therefore, the scenarios being presented have led the researcher to examine the current situations and challenges of teachers in the multigrade schools who are assigned over the political-geographical boundaries, with armed conflicts, natural calamities like flooding, and the rivalry between or among schools, curricular congestion, and distance of the school. However, the researcher may employ interventions but consider the research findings. The intervention will focus on the policy enhancement programs, retooling and other legal, eligible modifications to carry out the answer on challenges in multigrade schools. This does not limit on information dissemination of the research finding all throughout the concerned locale and crafting of solutions to the pressing problem in the 21st Philippine educational arena.

a. Review of Related Literature

The related literature of the study is presented by the researcher such as:

Teachers in the multigrade schools have observed uniqueness in terms of curriculum, administrative support, mode of delivery of the lessons, and learning resources. With this, Thomas and Shaw (1992) suggested that teachers must have possessed uniqueness in dealing that kind of environment such as multigrade schools. In this type of setting, it requires teachers who are trained and motivated.

Particularly, Taole (2014) has found out that teachers in the multigrade schools who are, in the same way, assigned in remote areas feel a sense of being isolated. Teachers interpreted the situation of being not heard with their clamor for improvement in teacher development and learning facilities and infrastructure.

However, the importance of access to the primary education becomes widespread. Mathot (2001) has designed a handbook that can help teachers in overcoming one of the most pressing problems in the teaching profession especially in the multigrade schools. This may help the teachers improve in the professional aspect as a teacher in the multigrade setting.

Teacher support in the multigrade schools is undeniably needed. According to Brown (2010), there are a lot more to be re-oriented and examined in the situations of multigrade schools. There must be actions towards the examination of teachers' attitudes and behaviors in education. Interrogative approaches and processes are needed in order to know better about human and social contexts in the multigrade schools where the teachers are assigned.

In Philippine education, the school performance in the multigrade schools is quite lower than that of regular schools based on National Achievement Test (NAT) last School Year 2008 to 2009. Moreover, there are several issues why, such as the location of the school, limited resources, and inexperienced teachers. Also, teachers in the multigrade schools may perceive of being not a priority in funding and resource allocation, few skills taught in the institutions for multigrade teaching, and high turnover rate of teachers (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 2012).

This status quo of multigrade teaching is also experienced by the teachers in Fiji primary school. Their idea of multigrade teaching is termed differently such as multi-class teaching but there is no difference in the meaning itself. Particularly, the teachers have devised means to improve the quality of instruction. It is inevitable to experience problems along with the current situation such as lack of professional preparation for the field, and limited teaching-learning resources. On one side, these common problems that exist on the field of multigrade or multi-class teaching can be deterrent to the teaching-learning process (Lingam, 2007).

Teachers' experiences in the multigrade school education system are prevalent in the world. As Vithanapathirana (2005) expounds about the situation of teachers in the multigrade schools, it is remarkable that there must be policy adjustments of the national curricula to facilitate the process of lesson planning, capacity building, and the inclusion of multigrade teaching as a part of the teacher education curriculum. These are the actions prevailed and recommended from the multigrade context of Sri Lanka.

Behind the challenges experienced by the teachers in the multi-grade schools, there are advantages also which can be observed. In this context, teachers can find easy in teaching due to a small number of class size. On the contrary of the advantage, there is also a growing decline of enrolment in the school which can make teachers question themselves what are the reasons behind this situation. Since there is a need to maintain the school performance in the multi-grade, multi-age school, the teachers need for more professional development in order to improve student assessment in such type of class setting (Proehl, Douglas, Elias, Johnson & Westsmith, 2013).

In the multi-grade schools, teachers may find learners who have difficulty in the transportation. They tend to concern with the learners' situations too aside from their own. According to Sampson and Condy (2016), it can affect the punctuality and attendance of the learners though low-income parents are wise to prepare the traveling fees for the learners going to school. But the transportation in the rural area is another challenge for the parent and has its impact to teachers as well.

Nevertheless, pre-service and in-service teacher background and preparation have given impact to teachers in the multi-grade schools. On the contrary, Thompson (2008) presented that though there are a lot of teachers who experience teaching in a multi-grade class, none of them in such context fully grasped the clear understanding about multi-grade teaching. As a result, teacher-applicants knowing that they would be assigned to a multi-grade school refuse the offer of a teaching job.

In teaching writing, multi-grade teachers have different experiences. Blease and Condy (2014) explained that in the multi-grade schools, teachers teach writing four times a week, and there are topics intended in every grade level inside the multi-grade classroom. Correcting spelling, sentence construction, line spacing, and the like are the roles performed inside the classroom. Teachers are marked up in this situation with several factors along with the writing process. Generally, the factors that challenge teachers in the process are: emotional, physical, social, and cognitive. In effect, teachers need for curriculum training to enable them to effectively teach (writing) in multi-grade schools.

There are bold statements that come to the conclusion of what multi-grade setting is, particularly in the pursuit of reading. Due to the challenges encountered by the education officials in South Africa, they tend to dismiss this system of education – multi-grade teaching. The reasons are difficult to address, as such are: inappropriate teaching materials, lack of organization in the classroom management, and insufficient leadership practices are not practiced enhancing teaching to maximize the learners' abilities in reading (Sampson & Condy, 2016).

Thus, the situations of teachers in the multi-grade schools vary from place to place and across time. School curricula, the location of the school, teachers' educational background and among other factors shape the multi-grade scenario. The different scenarios must be worth finding and examining due to its impact on the totality of quality education especially for the good benefits of Philippine basic education to sustain multigrade school performance.

b. Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the following salient points:

1. What are the teaching and life experiences and remarkable challenges of multigrade teachers that they traversed, played, crossed and endured?

2. What are the coping mechanisms against challenges that they traversed, played, crossed and endured as a multigrade teacher?
3. What are the aspirations and insights of multigrade teachers?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what enhancement programs, policies and projects may be recommended for Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE) particular in Laak District?

c. Scope and Limitations

This section presents the scope and limitations of the study. This is the following details:

The study will be conducted in 6 elementary schools of Laak District, Division of Compostela Valley, Davao, Philippines. However, the characteristics of the schools are categorized according to political boundaries of other school/s or rivalry between schools, armed conflicts occur that result remarkably the unwanted and abrupt decrease or increase in enrolment throughout school years, frequent flooding occurrence resulting unprecedented loss of school facilities and instructional materials, lack of multigrade instructional materials and distance of the schools from teachers' residences.

The participants in this study possessed the following characteristics, these teachers are teaching in multigrade or combination classes; occupying multiple functions like coordinators and ancillary services other than advisories. More so, the participants who have experienced the following scenarios in the field where they are assigned, such as: first, armed conflicts or rivalry on enrolment among schools that result to rising and fall of enrolment, and other detrimental factors contributing teaching experience per se.

Presented in the table below from the international survey is the actual distribution number of multigrade schools in the country and subject schools according to the recent survey conducted in the country. It shows the actual number of multigrade schools wherein the teachers who will be the participants of the study (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 2008). The data is presented below in Table 1.1 shows the number of schools purposefully selected as participants.

NUMBER OF MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WITH CASES		
<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of MG Schools</i>	<i>MG Schools Served</i>
11	235	6

Showing the number of multigrade schools with several cases

II. Methodology

This chapter presents methods used in the undertaking which includes the following: research design, sampling, data collection, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

A. *Research Design*

This study will engage with a multi-case study analysis based on the situations presented above. This approach to the study focuses primarily on qualitative processes such as in-depth interview (IDI), focus group discussion (FGD) and observation to extract qualitative data (Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V., 2011).

If there are various situations, multi-case study analyzed these situations across cases with different opinions. The differences and similarities of perspectives are gauged from one group to the other (Gustafsson, J., 2017).

B. *Participants*

The major participants of the study will be the 15 multigrade teachers from Laak District, Schools Division of Compostela Valley, Davao Region. These teachers are handling two or more classes in a school. Thus, the final number of participants who participated during the research process is 15.

C. *Sampling*

This research will utilize purposive sampling. The identified participants through the sampling technique are those who have experience and knowledge about the subject matter (Teddie, C., & Yu, F., 2007). This sampling technique will be used to determine the data to gathered and analyzed.

D. *Research Instrument*

This study will utilize a researcher-made interview guide as the main instrument in gathering the data. It will be prepared after the comprehensive information is acquired through the intensive and extensive reading and research of appropriate literature and studies which are relevant to this present investigation.

The researcher-made interview guide has undergone validity test after the collection of data was established. The interview guide last four (4) research questions.

The content validity test had undergone after the transcription process on collected data was employed. Suggestions from the experts were utilized too for the correction of grammar, sentence construction and semantics, and among other considerations.

E. Data Collection

The data collection involved the gathering of qualitative data. The data to be collected will be coming from the interviews, focus group discussions and observations. In this section, the researcher will employ the following procedures:

1. *Send a letter of request to conduct a study:* The researcher sent a letter to the Officer-In-Charge (OIC), Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Compostela Valley. This letter will be used to ask permission and recommendation for the conduct of the study in the respective elementary schools in the division. In addition, this letter will be used also for endorsement in the district office.
2. *Subject for approval from the schools' division offices:* When the superintendents furnished the approved letters, the letter of approval will be attached to the letter to be sent to the public schools' district supervisors (PSDSs) or district coordinating principals (DCPs) requesting to conduct the study in the respective schools in the districts.
3. *Endorse letter to conduct a study:* The endorsement of the PSDS or DCP will be given to school heads concerned. The researcher personally conducted qualitative processes such as: interviews, discussions, documentation, recording and safe-keeping of data that were gathered.

The qualitative data were retrieved, collected, coded and interpreted in proper and careful procedures. The data will be subjected to evaluation and review to further ensure correctness, completeness, validity, and reliability of results.

F. Ethical Considerations

In this section, the researcher will be considering the participants rights particular to the conduct of the research:

1. *Freedom to Choose:* This freedom is appropriate to be considered in the context of research procedures. All the participants or respondents must be deemed rightful on their choice of action whether they will participate or not in the process. This freedom is highly regarded through the research process.
2. *Confidentiality of Information:* The researcher aims to gather the information and data needed to undertake success of the research. However, it is an utmost consideration that all data to be gathered must be well-organized and safe-kept among the team of researchers and the participants or respondents.
3. *Veracity of Data and Information:* Truthfulness and honesty are main ingredients in the reliability of results. The veracity of data and information must be at stake to achieve better results on the study being pursued. This consideration must be widely observed.

4. *Legality of the Study:* Most important aspect in research is the legal grounds of consideration. When it is legal, it will also be ethical. The legal aspects of entering the locale of the study must be under standard operating procedures. Smooth, safe and successful research has in-depth measures with legal concerns as well.
5. *Opinions:* These things are abundant in the process of research. These must be properly handled. Different kinds of opinions can be helpful or destructing or distracting. These must be treated well and good for the betterment of the study to be carried out by the researcher.

G. Data Analysis Procedure

In this study, the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interview, focus group discussion and observation had undergone descriptive and content analyses. This descriptive analysis will be done to present the gathered data in proofread and meaningful means. By means of thematic presentation from the participants' statements to present the challenges faced in multigrade schools.

The data were summarized and interpreted through the procedure of content analysis. Content analysis is a process of organization and interpretation of qualitative data to obtain codes and themes (Ocak, G. & Yildiz, S. S., 2011).

III. Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the findings of the study is discussed about the different actual scenarios being observed, interviewed and discussed with the multigrade teachers during the process of gathering the data from the participants of the study:

A. Multigrade Education

The multigrade education in the Philippines becomes prevalent in the rural areas to cater the needs of culturally diverse learners. This type of education creates an avenue for the stakeholders to avail education even in the remote areas. The aim of the Department of Education is to alleviate the shortage of existing schools and even to put up new schools for the young learners around the country. The access to education for learners opens the opportunities for them to grasp the formal education through the implementation of Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE).

B. Experiences and Challenges of Multigrade Teachers

Teachers in multigrade classes often find it more difficult for them to teach in this type of class settings. The presence of real and various learning styles, personalities, behaviors and emotional

control of learners becomes their professional challenges as multigrade teachers. Teaching in a combination class exhausts them to manage the class especially when the learners are in their most active state in the classroom.

1. Adjusting Teaching Efforts Due to Curriculum Demand

Teaching classes particularly with Kindergarten and Grade 1 under the K-12 Curriculum, teachers have hard times to integrate competencies into these two levels. Since these levels have different competencies, each competency has its appropriate quarter to be taught. Integration and efficiency in the teaching-learning processes become considerably at stake to be adjusted. Teacher CM states that:

“The setting of Kinder and Grade is difficult to handle due to the uniqueness of competencies. Blending the competencies for two levels is such difficult for me to do as far as efficiency and effectiveness of the teaching-learning process are concerned.”

Each subject area demands ample time to balance lessons for the two different levels. Class programs must be prepared, adjusted and evaluated to provide all teaching loads intended for the two levels. These appeared to be different from the class program of mono-grade classes. The preparation of these class programs is arranged based on level and day with corresponding actual time allocation for each learning area. Although the two levels handled were different in competencies, there are some points and chances along with the teaching schedule that competencies meet, then, integration and/or blending of competencies are set.

2. Teaching Reading

It is one of the most challenging activities inside the classroom. Multigrade teachers find learners' strengths and weakness, learning styles, age gaps, maturity level, and interests as factors in learning outcomes and furlong towards overall school performance particularly in reading. They do not have all the chances to experience non-readers considering also that the class size in this class is small. However, in some other multigrade schools, reading performance is the most problematic issue wherein reading remediation and reinforcement are few times exercised due also to intervening factors in classrooms, community and school as a whole. Teacher EP confirms that:

“There are learners who can't able to write based on paper lines and in another way, reading performance depicts lower. But, mono-grade classes do not differ largely at all compared to the reading performance of multigrade classes.”

To improve the reading performance of the multigrade learners, teachers commonly used traditional reading strategies like Marungko Approach and some other district reading programs. They have tested the programs still effective nowadays for the new generation of culturally diverse learners in rural schools. Preference of strategies and techniques to overcome reading problems of learners plays a crucial part for learners in the multigrade schools.

3. *Mainstreaming in Multigrade Teaching*

Multi-grade teachers have great challenges from the learners they handle. There are learners who are non-readers and much more challenging because of the mainstreaming of special children who need special attention in the classes. Special attention to these learners also focuses on reading needs. These schoolchildren have no learning materials available for them to use. The absence of learning materials and even capacity to teach on the part of teachers is alarming. These teachers spend their own finances to support the learning materials including their Special Hardship Allowance (SHA). This SHA is a DepEd's additional compensation to the teachers who have handled multigrade classes. The allowance is also spent for the educational needs of the learners. Teacher MS explained that:

“I, personally, spend my own allowance in providing my needs of learning materials. Aside from this, I even spend my salary. However, this allowance helps me to aid teaching because the materials need to teach my special schoolchildren.”

4. *Travelling from Home to School*

MG teachers are most not residents on the area wherein they teach. They travel a long distance from their home to school. They frequently do this because of their families who are residing far away from the school. Weather condition can also dictate their health status from time to time. Going home late happened every Friday. The log out time in the afternoon to complete the teaching loads in each day is at 4:30 in the afternoon, not mentioning the time to prepare themselves and their classroom before leaving.

“I can hardly concentrate during Monday morning during my teaching because of the very wearisome travel early morning. I can be sick in a few times due to undesirable weather during travel.”

It is difficult to manage the class when MG teachers experience serious, tiresome transportation time, commonly long-distance travel. The health status of teachers can exhaust their physical capacity to teach and the learning performance of teachers.

5. *Experiencing Calamities*

Calamities like super typhoon that caused flooding, damaged teaching, and learning materials, wrecked school facilities, and equipment become the primary problems of the multigrade school in Laak District. Due to flash floods, there are pertinent documents which have been wasted and damaged. These documents are the historical and learners records of learners. It is difficult for the school head, teachers, learners and parents to manage the aftermath of floods in the area. There are efforts exerted by the local government unit to address the needs of the school especially on the transfer of school site. Teacher RC stated that:

“Suspensions of classes were declared during flash floods. A lot of learning materials were lost and damaged. These are not usable by then.”

Most learners are reluctant to return to school after the flooding occurred and damaged properties. Wet and muddy floors of these multigrade classrooms seemed to discourage learners in going back. This is one of the reasons why there were students who liked to transfer out into the other vicinity school.

6. Accepting Transferee of the Vicinity School

Not so far from school location, there is another complete elementary school, similarly multigrade school, which where learners tend to transfer because of the situation of flooding from the school where they come from. Extreme weather conditions like heavy rain, storms, and flooding in the area diminish the number of enrolment in one multigrade school. In effect, the decrease of enrolment would result shrinking in the amount of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), a school budget from the government, for the next school year. There are reasons how to do these happened. Teacher RC added that:

“The vicinity school had a unique strategy to entice parents to enroll their children. This rival school initiates fun programs and activities to encourage parents to enroll children for the next school year.”

7. Outdoing Schools to Enrolment

However, the impact of rivalry between schools can dramatically contribute to decrease or increase enrolment from each of the multigrade school. These schools are located in the boundaries and this thing might not be avoided due to political reasons. These boundary schools tend to attract learners to enroll school year after school year. The influence of community leaders helps the schools to gain advantage on the enrolment rate in each school year. Programs and projects of the government have caused parents and teachers agree during enrolment of their children.

8. Being in Armed Conflict

This man-made conflict between the government and the other becomes one of the fearsome and traumatic events in the school history. MG teachers have experienced the exchange of fires between each group. The armed conflict happened in the school had marked memorable scenario during the graduation day of the school. Teachers formally decide the stoppage of classes in schools due to exchange fires. They sent learners with their parents at home during this time lest be the learners would be the subject of the other armed group to be snatched or kidnapped. This fear of teachers in the multigrade schools can never be erased as part of their life experience. Learners hesitated to go to school.

9. Using Educational Technology

Technology is an important aspect of teaching-learning processes. To improve learning outcomes, these can contribute to the achievement of learning competencies. Particularly, the advent of technology can be in an image of DepEd Computerization Program (DCP) or computers in the school. The contribution of new technology in the classroom and in the school as a whole plays a significant impact on learning outcomes for the learners. Computer-aided instruction can be a source to achieve a motivating environment for learning. Not just computers, the textbooks, and other learner materials contribute to the ability of the schoolchildren to participate actively in classes. Since these schools are located far from the municipality, teachers adjust with the absence of internet in the area. Other than this, there are schools which have no electricity to energize classrooms and the technology. Though somehow, there are personal laptops used by the teachers to enhance learning and motivate learners to learn in different means, the availability of electricity and classroom facilities used for learners did not warrant the sustainability of technology use inside the multigrade classrooms.

10. Teaching Background in Multigrade Classes

Multigrade teachers did not graduate as multigrade teachers. Multigrade teaching is somehow just one of the electives or courses during college. They appreciated the availability of intensive course or training in college for them to be trained as multigrade teachers. During their college times, teachers often had courses on multigrade. Their difficulty of teaching multigrade classes becomes a real deal for them to cope with its demand and standards. Teachers who are well-trained in multigrade teaching can contribute to the teachers' needs and training indicators. Their practices in teaching were superficial only. They gained only the knowledge but not in skills. This is the scenario of teachers who graduated and were teaching multigrade classes.

C. Coping with the Challenges

The problems on curricular materials and development, rivalry of schools that contribute the school population and operations, armed conflicts in the area that induce fear, traumatic and shocking experiences for both teachers and learners, long distance travel from home to school, problems on reading performance due to time constraint in teaching combined classes, irregular additional compensation to teachers, the absence of technology and among other logistics to achieve safe and motivating environment for the learners and among other challenges were coped through adjustment to curricular demands and standards, without losing hopes and aspirations by means of positive collegial leadership and management in the school and exercising tolerance to shock and conflict around the community like conducting stress debriefing, open forum and discussion about the challenges in the school. Moreover, the challenges of multigrade school performance on reading were helped and alleviated through the partnership and linkage to the non-government organizations like Good Neighbors, and accepting support from the government like provision of computers for the unenergized multigrade school. Nevertheless, multigrade teachers

did not answer the absence of communication signal and the access of internet but teachers became resourceful in downloading electronic materials during weekends to supply their needs for video presentations and lessons.

D. Giving of Aspirations and Insights to Shape Better Multigrade Education

1. *Fostering Linkage and Partnerships.* For multigrade teachers, the impact of teaching and learning support from the other stakeholders has played dramatic roles in the attainment higher level of school performance in terms of school budget allocation. The difficulty of teachers to provide learning resource has been facilitated by other organizations which aimed to address the needs of multigrade teachers. Attracting parents and community representatives contributes to the development initiatives of schools. Their presence in the school boosts teachers to achieve desirable teaching results and learning outcomes. Community help in terms of financial aid and local government unit supports other means to multigrade schools.
2. *Introducing Lesson Plan.* Lesson plans for multigrade schools are rare to find and difficult to make. The learning support from the government through instructional making has contributed a lot for the teachers to produce school-based initiated materials. There are supplementary materials distributed from the Central Office in a form of Budget of Works (BOW). These materials are appropriated for the multigrade teachers with comparison of competencies and/or alignment to facilitate the lesson for two or more grade levels combined. Ready-made lesson plans can be of more advantages than disadvantages. The lessons are prepared with the consideration of time to be utilized during the teaching-learning processes. Efficiency and effectiveness of teaching can be affected if without careful planning. Planning the lesson on what strategies to be employed can benefit learning outcomes.
3. *Creating a Reading Culture.* Learners in multigrade schools often experience disruption of classes due to other natural factors and some are man-made and even curricular activities. These learners who have experienced flooding often felt reluctance to back to school. In effect, among other learning and school indicators of performance, reading abilities of the schoolchildren are highly affected. Because of these challenges, teachers initiated reading programs that might impact the enhancement of reading performance. The culture of reading remediation, enhancement and monitoring slowly shape the adjustment of teachers against such unprecedented challenges as multigrade teachers. Aside from it, they tend to assign reading materials at home. Assignments in every lesson are designed to advance and to remediate reading difficulty of these learners.
4. *Mainstreaming Efforts and Attention.* Teachers do not just teach two or more grade levels in one classroom but this include serving the special needs of special children. This is mainstreaming program wherein it's unavoidable part of teaching in rural school handling multigrade classes. They managed the class through an individualized teaching technique but quite sacrificing for the part of other group of students. The approaches to mainstreaming give

extra effort and time for teachers to manage well the needs and demands of every type of learners. Seat works are impressive to use especially for the regular classes every time they are teaching different types of learners.

5. *Travelling and Adjusting Personal Judgment.* Travels for teachers are fun. But getting engaged in bad weather can cause teachers to become demotivated. However, throughout the school year, teachers tend to adjust their personal adjustment with the situations in teaching in the rural areas. Rough roads can result body aches and sickness. Teachers provide extra medication against cough and cold, fever with them while they are in the stations or schools. Instead of refusing the offer to work in multigrade schools with long travels, they opted to stay a week long in the schools where they are assigned to minimize health issues and financial expenses.
6. *Accepting the Reality of School Setting.* Enrolment may rise or fall. Each school year's population is a puzzle to solve and a reality to admit. When teachers experience decrease in student population, they just do what they ought to do as a teachers. They do not compromise means and ways just to gain advantage in the enrolment. Every Brigada Eskwela, the teachers conduct activities and practices to sustain the school population by any good means. Being friendly and peaceful with community and the parents, learners tend to stay for the next school year.
7. *Rivaling Other Schools.* Teachers in multigrade schools experience the rivalry between schools but it is one of the challenges that teachers overcome. The overcoming of rivalry on enrolment and parents' decision to support schools is through their community involvement. Through this, teachers can spontaneously contribute for the benefit of the local government and the community. Their contribution to the community influences parents and students to attract the school programs. Hence, multigrade teachers miss the chance to lose learners may be on the next school year. But, this factor is not just a pressing element to school population. Some other factors of decreasing learner population include pupil and parent transfer of residence and other personal causes.
8. *Experiencing Crossfires.* Fears and traumas are the aftermath of armed conflict in multigrade schools. The existence of armed men can produce nervousness to teachers. In other way, these teachers in one of the multigrade schools help themselves by way of stress debriefing among teachers. Exchange of feelings after the events can release worries and anxieties of things that may come on the next school days on the area where they are assigned and live temporarily. They admit that armed conflict disturbs their professional and personal pursuits. This stops classes anytime if this type of activity occurs nearby schools. Armed conflict in multigrade schools is usual because of the school location which is in remote mountainous, or plain but flooded areas.
9. *Using the New Technology.* The use of computers is not a hindrance for the multigrade teachers. They spend time carrying bulky bags with laptops inside and flash drives with

downloaded files, videos and images to share with the learners. The integration of 21st Century learning skill in Information Communication Technology (ICT) has not been impossible for these multigrade teachers. They personally bring their personal gadgets to make learners experience the use and learning out form the new technology.

10. Teaching Background in Multigrade. Most teachers teaching multigrade classes have no separate degree/s they have to qualify in multigrade setup. During their application as Teacher I, they just passed the Qualification Standards and Procedures for hiring Teacher I positions. No interview like specifying the advantage of multigrade teaching strategies, techniques and skills they possessed. In college times, these teachers can hardly recall any learning from multigrade teaching. So, they have to manage their own means and ways to teach in this setting.

IV. Conclusion

This study has come up with the conclusion about the teachers' perspectives on multigrade teaching and their experiences while teaching multigrade classes and recommendation for further researches is stipulated to supplement the need to clarify findings and results of this qualitative research method, a multi-case study approach.

However, these are the following salient points that conclude the findings and discussion about the phenomenon:

A. *Curriculum, Curriculum Development and Reading Enhancement Support.* The major findings that come up from the opinions, ideas, and challenges of teachers are the following:

- the insufficiency of learning resources appropriate for combined grades, like lesson plans, standardized class program, reading and writing materials as early as Kindergarten and Grade 1-3;
- Need to support teachers in the additional instructional materials;
- Lack of infrastructure to cater learners with special needs;
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation to alleviate other problems from existing;
- Implementation of reading program to address learners' difficulty in reading;
- There is a serious need to provide materials for the multigrade teachers; and
- The lack of knowledge and skills to cater special children by multigrade teachers.

B. *Mainstreaming Realities of Special Children in Multigrade Schools.* These are the other conclusion based from the problems, coping mechanisms and aspirations of teachers in the multigrade:

- Teachers in the multi-grade schools have no background, educational qualification, training and seminars how to handle special children in the multi-grade, multi-age classrooms;

- There are no proper and sustainable reading programs for the non-readers, slow readers and readers for the multigrade schools. Teaching reading strategies are not well-emphasized. There must be a need to revisit the educational programs and practices to develop wide-range reading performance for multi-grade schools;
- Special children enrolled in the multigrade schools must be given attention particularly on their needs.
- Use of appropriate instructional materials should be prioritized.

C. School Learning Environment

- Learner-centered classrooms are not holistically experienced by the learners;
- Teachers have limited resources to supplement instructional materials for multi-grade classes;
- Parents, teachers and learners often experience man-made conflict and natural calamities which are difficult to address by any programs;
- The fluctuation in enrolment from one school year to the next is not heeded and attended;
- Also, it needs more attention for modification particularly on the number of class size or to teacher-pupil ratio guidelines;
- The need for constructive monitoring and evaluation of multi-grade is desired.

D. Teacher Development and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Multi-grade Teachers

- Multigrade teacher are not specialized and a graduate in a separate degree of multigrade education;
- There is rare opportunity for the teachers to participate in any platforms of new learning as multigrade teachers;
- There is no existing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Multi-grade Teachers;
- Lack of Practice on Training Need Analysis and Team-building Practices of Multi-grade teachers in Laak District.

V. Recommendations

These recommendations are offered for the related researches in the field of multi-grade teaching, development of teacher performance and school performance in multi-grade:

- There must a related researches as to what impact of school learning environment, class size and settings to teacher and school performance;
- Conduct of training needs analysis in all multigrade schools for further development to address teachers' weakness and strengths to be sustained;

- Lobby deduction of tax for Special Hardship Allowance to augment teachers' clamor for more instructional materials appropriate to the multigrade teachers' assessment on learning outcomes;
- Devise reading programs to address schoolchildren's poor reading performance and teachers' difficulty in teaching reading;
- Urgent actions to the neediest multi-grade schools which are affected by the flooding and extreme damage of school facilities and materials.

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