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## PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF MULTIGRADE INSTRUCTION IN LOWER CALANASAN, APAYAO

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### Abstract

*This qualitative study explored the perspectives of multigrade teachers regarding the enhancement of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. It specifically examined teacher insights on instructional strategies and classroom management, availability and adequacy of learning resources, professional development opportunities, assessment and evaluation practices, the challenges they encountered, the strategies they employed, and their recommendations for improvement. A total of 20 multigrade teachers from six (6) elementary schools in Lower Calanasan, namely Ferdinand, ASSAT, Ninoy Aquino, Kabugawan, Soda, and Langnao, served as the respondents.*

*Using a descriptive case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes across the dataset. The findings revealed that while teachers showed creativity in adapting instructional strategies and customizing activities, they faced persistent issues such as inadequate instructional materials, vague assessment guidelines, limited training specific to multigrade education, insufficient support systems, and lack of policy attention. Teachers highlighted the need for differentiated instruction, context-sensitive teaching aids, and learner-level aligned assessments. Despite these difficulties, teachers employed practical coping strategies such as peer teaching, differentiated tasks, contextual learning, and flexible scheduling. Their recommendations included the institutionalization of multigrade-focused training, allocation of specialized resources, consistent supervisory visits, implementation of clear grading policies, and establishment of a division-level support structure for multigrade education.*

**Keywords:** Calanasan, Apayao, multigrade instruction, multigrade education, teachers' challenges, teachers' coping strategies,

## INTRODUCTION

Education remains a fundamental right and a key driver of social and economic progress worldwide. In many countries, ensuring equitable access to quality education is a challenge, particularly in rural and remote areas where population density is low and resources are scarce. Multigrade education has been widely adopted as a solution to provide continuous learning opportunities in such settings. This approach, which combines learners from multiple grade levels in a single classroom under the guidance of one teacher, is a recognized strategy in many developing and developed nations, ensuring that all children receive basic education despite geographical and logistical constraints.

Internationally, multigrade education has been implemented in various countries, including Colombia, India, and Finland, where it has been integrated into national education systems with structured policies and teacher training programs. Studies suggest that in countries such as Colombia, through the Escuela Nueva Model, multigrade education has contributed to improved student engagement, active learning, and community participation (McEwan, 2008). In India, multigrade classrooms are prevalent in rural schools, and research indicates that teacher preparedness, instructional materials, and community support play crucial roles in ensuring effective multigrade learning (Little, 2006). Similarly, Finland has adopted flexible learning approaches where mixed-age and ability groupings are used to cater to individualized learning needs, further strengthening the concept of multigrade education.

In the Philippines, the Multigrade Program in the Philippines (MPPE) was formally institutionalized by the Department of Education (DepEd) through Department Order No. 81, s. 2009, which aims to provide access to quality basic education in remote areas. The program emphasizes capacity-building for teachers, the development of instructional materials, and the improvement of multigrade teaching strategies to enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, Republic Act 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001) highlights the government's commitment to making education accessible to all learners, including those in multigrade schools, through localized decision-making and appropriate support mechanisms. Despite these policies, the full implementation of Multigrade Instruction still encounters various challenges that affect its effectiveness, particularly in rural areas like Lower Calanasan.

Several studies conducted in the Philippines have examined the impact and challenges of multigrade education. Research by Andaya (2019) found that while multigrade instruction promotes inclusivity, many schools struggle with a lack of instructional materials and inadequate teacher training, which affects teaching quality and learning outcomes. Similarly, a study by Bernardo and Balagtas (2021) highlighted the need for more professional development programs tailored to multigrade teachers, as traditional teacher training often focuses on monograde classrooms. These findings are highly relevant to the present study, as they underscore the persistent challenges that multigrade teachers face and the need for program enhancements.

Lower Calanasan, a geographically isolated area, relies on multigrade education to accommodate its learners. Teachers in these settings handle multiple grade levels in a single classroom, requiring them to adopt flexible teaching strategies and innovative assessment methods to ensure that all students receive quality instruction. Despite the dedication of multigrade teachers, concerns

regarding insufficient learning materials, limited professional development opportunities, and difficulties in classroom management remain evident. Observations suggest that while the Multigrade Instruction is implemented in the area, there is a need for further improvements to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability.

The challenges encountered by multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan serve as the primary motivation for conducting this study. Understanding their perspectives on the strengths, limitations, and potential enhancements of the Multigrade Instruction will provide valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educators. This research aims to examine the lived experiences of multigrade teachers, identify the barriers they face, and propose recommendations to strengthen the implementation of multigrade education in Lower Calanasan. Thus, findings from this study will serve as a foundation for improving Multigrade Instruction, ensuring that it continues to provide quality education for learners in remote communities.

### Statement of the Problem

This study explored the perspectives of multigrade teachers in the enhancement of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the perspectives of multigrade teachers on the current implementation of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan in terms of:
  - a. Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management
  - b. Availability and Adequacy of Learning Resources
  - c. Professional Development Opportunities for Multigrade Teachers
  - d. Assessment and Evaluation Practices
2. What challenges do multigrade teachers encounter in the implementation of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan?
3. What strategies do multigrade teachers employ to address the challenges encountered in multigrade teaching?
4. What recommendations can be drawn from the perspectives of multigrade teachers for enhancing the implementation of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed qualitative research design, utilizing a descriptive case study approach to explore the perspectives of multigrade teachers on the enhancement of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan. A qualitative approach was appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth examination of teachers' experiences, instructional practices, challenges, and strategies in managing multigrade classrooms. The study aimed to describe, interpret, and analyze the realities faced by multigrade teachers in their teaching environments, making a descriptive case study the most suitable method.

### Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in six select elementary schools in Lower Calanasan, Apayao, namely Ninoy Aquino Elementary School,

Ferdinand Elementary School, Assat Elementary School, Kabugawan Elementary School, Soda Elementary School, and Langnao Elementary School. These schools were selected because they implement Multigrade Instruction and served as primary learning institutions in geographically isolated areas with low student enrollment, necessitating a multigrade classroom setup.

### Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents of this study comprised twenty (20) multigrade teachers from six selected elementary schools in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. Specifically, the distribution of respondents per school was as follows: three (3) teachers from Ferdinand Elementary School, four (4) from Assat Elementary School, three (3) from Ninoy Aquino Elementary School, three (3) from Kabugawan Elementary School, three (3) from Soda Elementary School, and four (4) from Langnao Elementary School. These teachers were purposively selected due to their direct engagement in implementing Multigrade Instruction in their respective schools.

### Data Gathering Instruments

The primary tool utilized for data collection in this study was a **semi-structured interview protocol**, specifically designed to elicit in-depth perspectives of multigrade teachers regarding the enhancement of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. The interview instrument was carefully constructed based on the study's statement of the problem, ensuring that all relevant areas concerning the implementation of multigrade instruction were adequately explored. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher read an introductory script that explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of confidentiality, and emphasized their right to decline or skip any question. The closing part of the interview thanked respondents and welcomed additional insights they wished to share.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of Apayao to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the District Supervisor and school heads of the identified elementary schools to obtain their consent and schedule data collection activities. An initial briefing was conducted with the participants to explain the purpose of the study, ethical considerations, and their voluntary participation. Consent forms were distributed to ensure that participants fully understood their rights, including the confidentiality of responses and their ability to withdraw at any stage of the study. The researcher emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that all responses would be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Following the interviews, the researcher proceeded with data transcription and thematic analysis.

### Data Analysis

This study employed qualitative data analysis, specifically thematic analysis, to interpret the responses gathered from multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan. Thematic analysis was applied to examine teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Multigrade Instruction, the challenges encountered in multigrade teaching, strategies employed to address these challenges, and recommendations for enhancing Multigrade Instruction. The study ensured the validity of findings through member checking, where participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of the initial interpretations. This combination of thematic analysis and descriptive statistics provided a comprehensive understanding of multigrade teachers' perspectives, offering both

quantitative summaries and qualitative insights that contributed to the enhancement of Multigrade Instruction in Lower Calanasan.

## Perspectives on the Current Implementation of the Multigrade Instruction

### A. Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management

In multigrade settings such as those in Lower Calanasan, Apayao, the effective implementation of instructional strategies and classroom management is critical to deliver quality education across diverse and simultaneous grade levels. This theme explores how multigrade teachers craft, implement, and adjust their instructional strategies while managing the diverse needs, behaviors, and participation levels of learners across multiple grade levels.

#### Theme 1: *Effective Instructional Strategies for Multigrade Teaching and Learning*

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan exhibit a strong preference for learner-centered and interactive instructional strategies that allow flexibility and inclusivity across multiple grade levels. Their responses demonstrate that effective multigrade instruction relies heavily on contextualized approaches that engage learners through storytelling, cooperative learning, experiential activities, and thematic integration.

One teacher emphasized the use of storytelling as a universal method, stating, "*Masansan nga nu mangisuru ami ay story-based learning ya us-usaram mi. Maksapul ami onu akkan ay magubra ami istorya nga mabalin para iya Grade 1 panda Grade 3.*" ("Usually, we use story-based learning. When we teach, we deliver stories that are accessible from Grade 1 to Grade 3"). This approach bridges cognitive gaps between grade levels by tapping into the natural human affinity for narrative, making concepts more relatable and easier to internalize for younger learners while still engaging older ones. Another respondent highlighted the dual strategy of integration and peer-assisted learning. This reflects a constructivist orientation, where knowledge is co-constructed among peers in a collaborative setting. Rotational strategies were also cited as effective. This model allows teachers to efficiently divide their attention across learners, ensuring instructional support is distributed fairly. The practical use of concrete and improvised materials was also emphasized. This reflects the importance of low-cost manipulatives in fostering active learning and concept retention.

These findings mean that multigrade teachers prioritize participatory and adaptive instructional strategies that allow differentiated yet synchronized delivery of lessons. It implies that the multigrade setting benefits from dynamic teaching styles that value learner interaction, improvisation, and peer collaboration. It further implies that instructional effectiveness is heightened when content is made concrete, relatable, and interconnected across subjects and grade levels.

These findings are supported by the study of Delacruz and Geronimo (2020), which showed that story-based and activity-based approaches enhance learner motivation and comprehension in multigrade environments. Dizon and Santos (2021) confirmed the effectiveness of peer tutoring and thematic integration in ensuring equitable instructional delivery.

#### Theme 2: *Maintaining Learner Engagement and Participation in Multigrade Classrooms*



Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan employ diverse and learner-centered strategies to ensure that all pupils remain actively engaged during instruction. These strategies reflect an understanding of the developmental, linguistic, and cognitive diversity present in multigrade settings. Teachers consciously create inclusive activities that assign roles to every learner and adjust instructional delivery based on observed participation levels.

One teacher emphasized the use of participatory games and group dynamics: *"Group activities ken participatory games ti us-usarek tapnun dagiti pupils ku ket active da iti clasek. Agen-enjoy da habang makasursuro da iti topic mi."* ("I implement group activities and participatory games. All learners have a role, if writing isn't required, they draw or present instead.") This shows that instruction is designed to accommodate different learning modalities and talents, reducing performance anxiety and encouraging expression.

Another teacher stressed inclusive task design. This affirms that engagement does not solely depend on academic outputs but on social participation and shared responsibility. The strategy promotes ownership of learning and leadership skills among learners, even in early grade levels.

Another teacher emphasized instructional variation: This reflects the intentional blending of multiple intelligences and modalities to sustain attention and enthusiasm across mixed-age learners. Entertainment and joy were also cited as tools for engagement. This perspective acknowledges that emotional engagement is key to cognitive engagement, especially among younger learners.

These findings mean that active learner participation is deliberately designed through task structuring, strategy variation, and linguistic inclusiveness. It implies that multigrade teachers play a facilitative role in ensuring equitable involvement among learners of different abilities, languages, and learning styles. It further implies that the success of multigrade instruction depends not only on content mastery but also on the ability to generate shared, enjoyable, and meaningful learning experiences.

These insights are supported by the findings of Cruz and Soriano (2020), who emphasized that task-based group learning enhances engagement in multigrade contexts. Similarly, Ruiz and Layugan (2021) found that multimodal instruction, especially involving songs and dramatization, increases both participation and recall. The work of Villanueva and Dela Cruz (2019) also highlighted how localized language use in instruction significantly boosts comprehension and engagement in rural and indigenous settings.

#### **Availability and Adequacy of Learning Resources**

In multigrade classrooms, the availability and adequacy of learning resources are essential in ensuring that instruction meets the diverse cognitive and developmental needs of learners across different grade levels. The challenge becomes even more pronounced in geographically isolated and underserved areas such as Lower Calanasan, where access to grade-appropriate, contextually relevant, and differentiated instructional materials remains limited. The instructional burden placed on multigrade teachers increases when they must bridge the resource gaps through improvisation, personal expense, or community collaboration. This theme examines the extent to which learning resources are available, sufficient, and appropriate for multigrade instruction, and how teachers navigate resource-related challenges through local ingenuity and adaptive practices.

#### **Theme 1: Mismatch and Inadequacy of Materials for Grade-Level Differentiation**

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan resoundingly echoed a significant concern: the instructional resources available to them do not adequately meet the distinct learning needs of students across various grade levels. As one teacher shared, *"Nu magdependar ami la iya sissa nga libro, akkan ngamin nga pupils nga ihanhandle mi ket kaya da daya activities nayan nga libro."* (If we rely only on the same book, it won't match most learners. There's nothing that fits both the younger and more advanced ones). This reveals a fundamental issue in differentiation — the materials fail to accommodate developmental diversity in the classroom.

Moreover, this inadequacy does not only impede comprehension but also risks the complete disengagement of younger learners. One teacher emphasized, *"Nu makpada ya mausar nga learning material iya dua nga grade level, atan tendency nga akkan magimprove ya isa aggida. Mang kuma nu Grade 1, mabalin nga mod-odi aggina kase akkan na maawatan ya instruction."* (Children cannot progress if they use the same material. For Grade 1, it's like they're being left behind because they can't understand the instructions). The lack of developmentally appropriate content thus contributes to learning gaps.

This finding means that the instructional materials currently distributed to multigrade schools are insufficient not only in quantity but, more critically, in pedagogical appropriateness. It implies that multigrade learners are either being under-challenged or overwhelmed, leading to disengagement, difficulty in comprehension, and uneven academic development. It further implies that equitable access to education in multigrade settings is compromised unless learning tools are intentionally designed to meet diverse grade-level expectations within a shared classroom context.

Supporting this, the study of Sah & Shah (2022) revealed that inadequate differentiation in instructional materials is among the top five barriers to effective multigrade instruction in under-resourced schools. Likewise, Barrow & Lezcano (2020) stressed that materials must be intentionally multi-tiered and contextually adaptable to sustain learner engagement and progression in composite classes, especially in rural settings.

#### **Theme 2: Challenges in Acquisition and Appropriateness of Learning Materials**

Teachers in Lower Calanasan experience significant difficulties in both acquiring and effectively using learning materials suited for a multigrade environment. These challenges stem from delayed, insufficient, outdated, or contextually inappropriate resources. One teacher noted, *"Ti karit mi ket saan a regular ti panangipaay ti school ti materials. Nu makareceive kami man ket ngan-ngani end of the quarter nukwan. Ken dakami pay ti bahala iti gastos."* (Our challenge is that the school doesn't provide materials regularly. By the time we receive them, the quarter is almost over. We often shoulder the cost). This illustrates the recurring issue of late distribution and the financial burden shifted onto teachers.

Another respondent in Tagalog emphasized personal financial contributions as a common recourse: *"Nahihirapan po kami sa kakulangan ng resources. Pati printing ng worksheets, kami mismo ang gumagastos. Walang sapat na supply para sa iba't ibang grade level"* (We struggle due to the lack of resources. Even the printing of worksheets comes from our own pockets. There aren't

enough materials for different grade levels). This lack of institutional provision places added strain on teachers who already operate in resource-constrained settings.

This finding means that the lack of timely, updated, and grade-appropriate instructional materials imposes a heavy burden on teachers and disrupts effective multigrade teaching. It implies that without proper investment in resource contextualization and differentiation, the delivery of instruction will continue to rely on teacher improvisation and personal expenditures. It further implies that sustainable and equitable education in remote settings cannot be realized unless schools are equipped with responsive and localized learning tools.

This is supported by the findings of Herrington and Thomas (2020), who emphasized that the usability and contextual relevance of teaching resources significantly influence instructional success in rural multigrade schools. Similarly, the World Bank's 2021 report on education in low-resource environments concluded that empowering teachers with localized, adaptable, and low-cost materials is key to effective multigrade education implementation.

### **B. Professional Development Opportunities for Multigrade Teachers**

Professional development plays a pivotal role in enhancing the competencies of teachers, especially those assigned to handle complex instructional contexts such as multigrade classrooms. In rural areas like Lower Calanasan, where teachers are required to simultaneously manage multiple grade levels with varied learning needs, the necessity for targeted and context-relevant training becomes even more pressing. This theme explores the extent to which multigrade teachers in the district have access to specialized professional development programs, the perceived relevance and effectiveness of the training they have received, and their recommendations for more responsive and practical capacity-building initiatives.

#### *Theme 1: Participation in Professional Development Programs Specific to Multigrade Teaching*

The interviews reveal a clear and consistent pattern among multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan, there is a significant lack of professional development programs that are exclusively tailored to their unique instructional context. Most teachers reported that the training sessions they had attended were general in scope, designed for basic education, and not responsive to the particular challenges of multigrade teaching.

One teacher noted, "*Idi napalabas nga tawen, nakaattendak ti division seminar ngem saan nga naka-focus ti multigrade. General lecture laeng para iti amin a teachers*" (Last year, I attended a seminar from the division, but it wasn't focused on multigrade. It was just a general lecture for all teachers). Similarly, another emphasized, "*Awan pay met ti training a talaga nga para laeng kadagiti multigrade teachers. Amin a seminar ket mixed ti participants ken topics*" (There hasn't been any training specifically for multigrade teachers. All seminars have mixed participants and generalized topics). These accounts underscore how the professional development landscape remains undifferentiated, treating multigrade as an afterthought rather than a pedagogical specialization.

These findings suggest that professional development efforts fail to cater to the differentiated needs of multigrade educators. The lack of formal, structured, and context-sensitive training opportunities

poses a barrier to instructional effectiveness in these learning environments.

This aligns with the findings of Abocejo, Sasing, and Paglinawan (2020), who concluded that professional learning for multigrade teachers in the Philippines remains insufficient, with a heavy reliance on generalized training content. Likewise, the World Bank (2022) emphasized that targeted and context-appropriate capacity building is essential for empowering teachers in rural and multigrade contexts, as generic training modules fall short of equipping them with strategies necessary for effective multigrade instruction.

#### *Theme 2: Relevance and Usefulness of Attended Programs in Addressing Multigrade Teaching Challenges*

The narratives of multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan reveal a resounding dissatisfaction with the relevance and applicability of existing professional development programs. Although teachers have participated in various seminars and training sessions, these programs were largely perceived as too broad, lacking the specificity and practical application necessary for addressing the complexities of teaching in a multigrade context.

One teacher lamented, "*Akkan unay maatulung daya trainings ata pabeg general daya topics. Akkan da ma' ipassangan nu kasanu talaga ya mangisuru iya adu nga grade level iya sissa nga class*. (Trainings weren't very helpful because the topics were general. They didn't show how to actually teach multiple grades in one class). Another teacher shared a similar sentiment, "*Ti training a naattendak ket saan a very relevant. Saan da met a maawatan ti rigat ti multigrade, isu a general ti advice da ken examples*" (The training I attended wasn't very relevant. They don't really understand the struggles of multigrade teaching, so their advice and examples are too general).

Overall, the accounts suggest that the professional development programs lacked contextual sensitivity, practical depth, and instructional modeling. The content was often superficial—more of an overview than a deep dive into multigrade pedagogy. "*Ti training ket kasla overview laeng. Awan ti specific nga content para ti lesson planning, grouping, ken management nga maikasta ti agduduma a grade*" (The training felt like just an overview. There was no specific content for lesson planning, grouping, or management tailored to multiple grade levels), one teacher reflected.

These findings are aligned with the conclusions drawn by Acosta and Dela Cruz (2020), who emphasized that generic teacher training in the Philippines fails to equip educators with the skills required for multigrade instruction. Moreover, Castro and Garcia (2022) stressed that effective multigrade teaching necessitates specialized, context-specific programs that incorporate real-life classroom demonstrations, differentiated planning techniques, and practical classroom management models. Without these, professional development remains detached from the realities of rural multigrade education.

#### *Theme 3: Additional Training or Support Needed for Multigrade Teachers*

The reflections of multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan underscore the pressing need for more targeted and practical professional development support. Their insights consistently point to a gap in training that is not only relevant to multigrade

instruction but is also delivered in a context-sensitive and applied manner.

A common demand across the responses is the call for hands-on training. One teacher emphasized, "*Masapul ti hands-on a training nga agfocus ti panagprepare ti lesson para kadagiti adu a level. Saan la nga teoriya masapul ti actual a demonstration*" (We need hands-on training that focuses on preparing lessons for multiple levels. Not just theory, we need actual demonstrations). This suggests a dissatisfaction with purely theoretical training and highlights the need for experiential learning models.

These concerns and recommendations are supported by the findings of Valdez and Padilla (2020), who asserted that context-specific, activity-based training enhances multigrade teacher preparedness. Similarly, Alvarez and Ramos (2021) emphasized that embedded mentoring and localized professional development initiatives significantly increase the pedagogical confidence of multigrade educators. Moreover, Lopez and Miranda (2022) noted that practical, integrated teaching modules and resource kits directly contribute to better multigrade classroom outcomes.

### C. Assessment and Evaluation Practices

Assessment and evaluation in multigrade classrooms require adaptive, learner-centered strategies that account for the varied academic levels, learning styles, and developmental needs of learners within a shared learning environment. In Lower Calanasan, where multigrade instruction is the norm in many schools, teachers must navigate the challenge of assessing learners from different grades simultaneously while ensuring fairness, relevance, and accuracy. This theme explores the assessment strategies employed by multigrade teachers, the challenges they face in evaluating diverse learners, and the practices they implement to ensure equitable monitoring and meaningful feedback in a complex instructional setting.

#### Theme 1: Assessment Strategies Employed by Teachers in Evaluating Multigrade Learners

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan adopt flexible and differentiated assessment approaches tailored to the unique composition of their classrooms. As expressed by Teacher 1, "*Agus-usarak ti formative assessment—kasla oral recitation, group output, ken observation*" ("I use formative assessments like oral recitation, group output, and observation"). This reflects a practical departure from formal testing, emphasizing more process-oriented evaluations that are adaptable to varying grade levels.

Several teachers noted the importance of observing individual participation and classroom interaction as reliable indicators of learning progress. For instance, Teacher 2 shared, "*I-observer ku ti kada individual a participation ken performance da kadagiti activity*" ("I observe their individual participation and performance during activities"), illustrating the use of real-time behavioral and engagement cues in lieu of standardized testing.

These classroom-based assessment practices align with literature asserting the necessity of differentiated, formative, and multimodal evaluation methods in multigrade contexts. As affirmed by Krahenbuhl (2019), effective assessment in heterogeneous classrooms requires ongoing, flexible strategies that consider learner diversity and context-specific realities. Additionally, Ncube et al. (2021) emphasizes the role of performance-based and observational tools in capturing meaningful evidence of learning

among learners with varying academic levels within the same classroom setting.

#### Theme 2: Strategies for Ensuring Fair and Effective Assessment of Students with Different Learning Needs

In the context of multigrade instruction in Lower Calanasan, teachers employ a variety of differentiated assessment strategies to ensure fairness and effectiveness in measuring student learning. These strategies consider the learners' grade level, learning styles, and individual capabilities.

A teacher shared, "*Agaramidak ti differentiated tasks. Ti Grade 1 ket drawing, Grade 2 ket simple sentence, Grade 3 ket paragraph. Agpada ti topic, ngem agduduma ti level*" (I design differentiated tasks—Grade 1 draws, Grade 2 writes simple sentences, Grade 3 writes paragraphs. The topic is the same, but the level differs). This practice of scaffolding assessment tasks based on developmental stages ensures that learners engage meaningfully with the same content at a level suited to their readiness.

These strategies demonstrate the adaptive and learner-centered practices employed by multigrade teachers to ensure that assessments remain fair, inclusive, and effective despite varied learner profiles. As supported by Black and Wiliam (2019), effective formative assessment must be responsive to learner diversity and embedded within instructional design. Similarly, Tomlinson (2020) emphasizes that differentiated assessment practices promote equity in classrooms where students exhibit diverse readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles.

#### Theme 3: Strategies for Providing Feedback and Monitoring Learner Progress in a Multigrade Setting

Teachers in Lower Calanasan adopt personalized and varied strategies to provide feedback and track student progress in multigrade classrooms. These approaches emphasize individual attention, ongoing documentation, and visual progress tracking to ensure learners receive meaningful guidance suited to their developmental levels.

A teacher explained the use of formative reviews through verbal and written responses: "*Ag-feedback kadagiti learners babaen ti oral ken written comments. Nu nagrigat da iti maysa a topic, i-review mi manen idia small group*" (I give feedback to learners through oral and written comments. If they struggled with a topic, we review it again in small groups). This practice ensures that students not only receive immediate input but also benefit from follow-up instructional support.

These practices reflect a commitment to continuous, individualized assessment and feedback in multigrade classrooms. They align with the recommendations of Brookhart (2021), who emphasizes that effective feedback should be timely, specific, and learner appropriate. Furthermore, according to Guskey (2020), monitoring student progress through varied methods enhances instructional decision-making and promotes sustained academic growth in diverse classroom settings.

### Challenges Encountered in Multigrade Teaching

Multigrade teaching is characterized by the simultaneous instruction of learners from different grade levels within a single classroom—a model prevalent in geographically isolated and underserved areas such as Lower Calanasan, Apayao. While this instructional arrangement addresses access to basic education in remote settings, it presents numerous pedagogical, logistical, and



managerial challenges for teachers. This theme explores the complex difficulties encountered by multigrade teachers, including instructional constraints, time limitations, learner engagement issues, and the degree of institutional and community support available to sustain effective teaching and learning in a multigrade environment.

### *Theme 1: Common Challenges Encountered by Multigrade Teachers*

Teachers in Lower Calanasan face persistent and compounding challenges as they deliver instruction across multiple grade levels within the same classroom. Chief among these is the difficulty of adjusting lessons for diverse learners' needs while balancing time and attention fairly.

One teacher highlighted the strain of instructional customization: *"Ti kasapulan ti panag-adjust ti lesson kada grade ket isu ti kadawyan a parikut. Narigat ti panang-manage ti oras ken panag-focus kada maysa"* (Adjusting lessons per grade is the most common problem. It's hard to manage time and focus on each group). This sentiment reflects the burden of differentiated planning without adequate structural support.

Another explained the inefficiency of using a one-size-fits-all method: *"Saan nga mabalin nga ipa-pareho amin ti instruction. Masapul ti agduduma nga preparation iti kada level, ket kasapulan ti oras ken panangted ti effort"* (I can't use the same instruction for all. I need different preparations for each level, which demands more time and effort). The extensive effort required for lesson variation becomes unsustainable in the absence of tailored tools and planning time.

These challenges reinforce the need for structural innovations, instructional support, and workload rationalization in multigrade teaching. As underscored by Little (2020), the complexity of multigrade classrooms requires systemic interventions, ranging from curriculum reorganization to teacher training and resource development—to enable quality, inclusive, and sustainable learning in marginalized contexts.

### *Theme 2: Difficulties in Managing Multiple Grade Levels Simultaneously*

Simultaneous instruction of multiple grade levels presents serious logistical and instructional challenges for multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan. These challenges are primarily related to multitasking, learner confusion, behavioral disruptions, unequal attention, and the need for constant instructional adjustment.

A teacher shared the burden of multitasking with this reflection: *"Ti multitasking ket challenge. Agtutokak idiy maysa a grupo, ngem ti sabali ket agaramid ti saan nga related a banag"* (Multitasking is a challenge. While I focus on one group, the others end up doing unrelated things). This indicates how the lack of structured engagement for non-targeted groups leads to classroom inefficiency.

These findings highlight the balancing act multigrade teachers must perform, underscoring the need for instructional support mechanisms, assistant teachers, or differentiated scheduling. As noted by Mulryan-Kyne (2019), multigrade teaching places a unique cognitive and managerial demand on educators, requiring specialized training and systemic support to ensure that learning is not compromised by structural limitations.

### *Theme 3: Effects of Multigrade Setting on Student Engagement and Academic Performance*

The multigrade classroom structure in Lower Calanasan poses considerable challenges to maintaining student engagement and achieving balanced academic performance across varying age groups. Teachers reported that the simultaneous instruction of multiple grade levels often results in distraction, disengagement, and uneven learning outcomes among learners.

A teacher observed that students' attention is easily diverted due to the presence of other groups: *"Awan unay ti focus ti learners ta distracted da ti ar-aramid ti dadduma. Apektado ti academic performance da"* (Students have less focus because they get distracted by what others are doing. Their academic performance suffers). This highlights how environmental and instructional overlap undermines concentration and retention.

Another teacher noted that collective activities are more engaging, particularly for younger learners: *"Nu maymaysa ti activity, engaged da amin. Nu maaramid ti separate activity, dagiti younger learners ket bumaba ti interest da"* (If the activity is unified, all are engaged. But if tasks are separate, the younger learners lose interest). Fragmented task assignments diminish enthusiasm among lower-grade pupils.

Pacing discrepancies also affect learner participation. As shared by one respondent: *"May mga batang nahihirapan sumabay lalo na kung mas mabilis ang pacing ng mas matandang grade. Naapektuhan ang participation nila"* (Some children struggle to keep up, especially when the higher grade moves faster. Their participation is affected). This suggests that accelerated instruction for older learners unintentionally sidelines the younger ones.

Furthermore, differentiated engagement remains elusive. A teacher remarked: *"Ti challenge ket ti panangikabil ti active learning kadagiti amin. Dagiti younger learners ket madanagan, dagiti older learners ket maboring da."* (The challenge is creating active learning for all. Younger learners get overwhelmed, while older ones get bored). The difficulty of designing appropriately stimulating activities for all grades simultaneously hampers sustained interest.

The imbalance extends to collaborative performance. One teacher explained: *"Saan nga agpada ti performance da. Nu aggroup activity, ti mas active ket Grade 6 kaysa Grade 5."* (Their performance isn't equal. In group work, Grade 6 leads while Grade 5 tends to stop participating). This illustrates how dominant participation by older students marginalizes younger learners in group tasks.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that while multigrade classrooms attempt to foster inclusive learning environments, they often inadvertently compromise student engagement and equitable performance. This underscores the necessity of adaptive instructional planning, cross-level scaffolding, and learner-specific support. As indicated by Little (2021), effective multigrade teaching hinges on a deep understanding of learner needs and a deliberate effort to ensure both inclusivity and cognitive appropriateness in instructional delivery.

### *Theme 4: Institutional and Community Support in Multigrade Teaching*

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan reported that the support they receive from institutional and community stakeholders

remains sporadic, minimal, and often insufficient to address the operational demands of multigrade instruction. This lack of consistent support significantly affects classroom implementation and resource provision.

One teacher expressed concern over the irregular nature of assistance from the district: *“Minsan lang po ang suporta. May mga bisita galing sa district pero kulang sa follow-up at materials”* (Support rarely comes. We receive visits from the district, but there’s little follow-up and no materials). This reflects how symbolic gestures, such as supervisory visits, often fall short without sustained material or instructional aid.

Training and capacity-building also appear inadequate. One teacher shared: *“Awan ti DepEd training a regular. Nu adda man, general met laeng. Dagiti barangay officials ket agdonate nu ag-request kami”* (DepEd provides no regular training. When there is, it’s still general. Barangay officials donate when we request support). This highlights the lack of multigrade-specific professional development and the reactive nature of barangay assistance.

These insights reveal that the current system of support for multigrade teachers in remote contexts remains fragmented and inadequate. Without structured funding, tailored training, and sustained logistical support, the implementation of effective multigrade teaching is hindered. This finding echoes the observations of Baylen and de los Reyes (2020), who emphasized that consistent administrative backing and localized community partnerships are crucial to sustaining educational quality in geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools.

### Strategies to Address Multigrade Teaching Challenges

Amid the structural and instructional complexities of multigrade teaching, educators in Lower Calanasan, Apayao have adopted innovative and resourceful strategies to cope with the demands of simultaneous instruction across multiple grade levels. These teacher-led approaches reflect both pedagogical creativity and community-based responsiveness, emphasizing contextual adaptation over prescriptive models. This theme highlights the instructional, managerial, and collaborative strategies employed by multigrade teachers to overcome classroom limitations, sustain learner engagement, and ensure continuity of learning despite material, time, and institutional constraints.

#### Theme 1: Adaptive Instructional Approaches for Multigrade Teaching

Teachers in Lower Calanasan have adopted a range of creative and structured strategies to address the inherent complexity of multigrade classrooms. These approaches aim to facilitate parallel instruction, learner engagement, and curricular alignment across varying grade levels within the same teaching session.

One teacher shared the use of differentiated thematic instruction as a unifying strategy: *“Usarek ti thematic approach nga mabalin ti amin nga grade. Ti ubing ti Grade 1 agdrawing, Grade 2 agsurat, Grade 3 agipresenta”* (I use a thematic approach that fits all grades. Grade 1 draws, Grade 2 writes, and Grade 3 presents). This strategy promotes content consistency while accommodating developmental levels through varied task outputs.

Another teacher stressed the importance of weekly planning to ensure alignment and efficiency: *“Agaramidak ti master plan nga naka-layout ti amin a topics kada grade. Iti kastoy, ammo ti ubbing ti aramiden da”* (I create a weekly master plan with all topics for each grade. That way, learners know what they’re supposed to do).

Through centralized planning, learning becomes more systematic and predictable for both teacher and learners.

Routine-based structures were also emphasized: *“May routine akong sinusunod: habang nagtuturo ako sa isa, ang iba may seatwork o group task. Tuloy-tuloy ang learning”* (I follow a routine: while I teach one group, the others are doing seatwork or group tasks. Learning continues for all). This method minimizes idle time and ensures simultaneous learning.

Peer tutoring was also cited as an effective support mechanism: *“Ti strategy’k ket peer tutoring. Ti Grade 2 nga learner ti tumulong kadagiti Grade 1 no agaramid da ti related topic”* (My strategy is peer tutoring. A Grade 2 learner helps the Grade 1 pupils if they’re working on a related topic). This fosters collaborative learning while reducing the instructional load.

These strategies demonstrate the resourcefulness and pedagogical flexibility of multigrade teachers. They reveal that success in multigrade settings depends heavily on innovation, planning, and differentiated instruction. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Mulryan-Kyne (2020), who emphasized that adaptive strategies, such as thematic teaching, peer support, and rotational tasks, are effective means to address the instructional diversity in multigrade classrooms.

#### Theme 2: Resource Maximization through Reuse, Local Adaptation, and Collaboration

In the face of limited instructional resources, multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan display remarkable adaptability through resource maximization practices grounded in reuse, local adaptation, and peer collaboration.

One teacher described how they extend the life of old materials through repurposing. *“Irecycle mi daya dadan nga materials. Usaram mi daya old calendars kas chart se daya dadan nga libro kas pangreading”* (We recycle old materials. We use old calendars as charts and old books for reading). Another teacher emphasized innovation using community-sourced items. *“Ti us-usaren mi ket locally available a gamit, bato, bulong, ken lata. Resourceful kami ta awan ti tech”* (We use locally available items, stones, leaves, and cans. We become resourceful because we lack technology).

To maintain sustainability, teachers themselves design instructional visuals. *“Ti mapaspasamak, ag-create kami ti flashcards ken visual aids ti amin para ma-reuse ti next batch”* (We create flashcards and visual aids ourselves so they can be reused for the next batch). Furthermore, student involvement is encouraged. *“Kung may donasyon, iniingatan ko para magamit sa iba pang klase. Ginagawa ko ring part ng project ng mga bata ang paggawa ng materials”* (If there are donations, I preserve them for future classes. I also let learners make materials as part of their project).

These findings affirm the conclusions of Luna and Mendoza (2022), who emphasized that rural and multigrade teachers must demonstrate functional creativity and local material integration to meet curriculum goals in resource-poor contexts. Similarly, Reyes and Corpuz (2021) noted that in Philippine remote schools, sustainability in learning delivery is often driven by teachers’ self-initiated strategies in material reuse and contextual resource development. The practices observed in Lower Calanasan multigrade settings exemplify this grassroots innovation and confirm that resourcefulness is a key competence in equitable multigrade teaching.



### Theme 3: Strengthening School–Community Partnerships in Multigrade Education

In multigrade classrooms, strong collaboration between schools, parents, and the broader community emerges as a vital support mechanism. Teachers in Lower Calanasan reported various forms of involvement that enhance learning continuity and address resource gaps.

A teacher shared, “*Makipatang kami kadagiti nagannak nu adda open house. Ipakaammo mi kadakuada dagiti activities ken kasapulan ti klase*” (We meet with parents during open house. We inform them about class activities and needs). Another noted, “*Nagpapatawag kami ng mga magulang kapag may project. Tumutulong sila sa paggawa ng learning materials*” (We call on parents during projects. They help us create learning materials).

Community engagement also extended to campus maintenance and co-curricular support. “*Nu ag-clean-up drive kami, ag-volunteer dagiti community. Isuda met ti bahala kadagiti basura ken mangaywan ti garden*” (During clean-up drives, the community volunteers. They help manage waste and maintain the school garden). Local government and religious stakeholders also play an important role. “*May ilang barangay officials na nagbibigay ng school supplies. Nakikipagtulungan din sila kapag may feeding program*” (Some barangay officials provide school supplies. They also coordinate with us for feeding programs).

These findings reinforce the assertion by Manalastas and Torres (2021) that active school-community partnerships play a crucial role in sustaining educational delivery, especially in multigrade and remote school settings. Furthermore, the study by Espiritu and David (2020) confirmed that regular parental involvement and localized community collaboration enhance learner motivation, resource availability, and a sense of shared responsibility. The experiences of teachers in Calanasan reveal that while material support may be limited, relational capital through community solidarity becomes a key driver in multigrade educational resilience.

### Theme 4: Time Management Techniques in Multigrade Instruction

Efficient time management is central to multigrade teaching. Teachers shared concrete strategies to ensure every grade level receives adequate instructional attention despite overlapping schedules and content.

One teacher shared, “*Adda ti daily schedule nga naka-slot ti kada grupo. Daytoy ket nagbalin nga routine min*” (I prepare a daily schedule with slots per group. This becomes our routine). Another emphasized group independence through task assignment, stating, “*Agusar kami ti group rotation. Bayat nga ti maysa a grade ket ifacilitate mi, ti sabali ket agworksheet*” (We use group rotation. While one grade is with me, the others work on worksheets).

Others rely on designated time allocations and discipline in following them. “*May oras na nakalaan bawat baitang. Kailangan ko lang sundin ng maayos ang time blocks para sabay-sabay matapos*” (I assign time for each grade. I just need to strictly follow the time blocks so all finishes together). Teachers also highlighted reflective practices. “*Iti evaluation ti time usage ket makatulong. Ammok nu ania ti kurang, isu nga i-adjust ko ti strategy*” (Weekly evaluation of time usage helps. I find where time is lacking and adjust my strategy).

Routine signals are integrated into classroom flow. “*Agusar kami ti bell signals as routine, habang agpalpalawagak iti Grade 1 dagiti dadduma ket ubraen da ti task da. Adda rhythm ti klase mi*” (We use bell signals as routines, while I explain to Grade 1, others finish their tasks. Our class has rhythm).

According to Cruz and Jacinto (2021), adaptive scheduling and rotation-based instruction are essential for multigrade teachers, particularly in resource-constrained schools. Similarly, the work of Navarro and Reyes (2020) found that consistent classroom routines and time-block strategies enhance not only instructional efficiency but also learner autonomy across age groups. These time management techniques underscore the ingenuity and resilience of multigrade teachers working within complex teaching arrangements.

### Theme 5: Differentiating Instruction Across Grade Levels

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan adopt differentiated instructional practices to address the varied developmental stages, learning styles, and academic needs of their pupils across multiple grade levels. A teacher shared, “*Gumagawa ako ng version ng lesson per grade. Parehong topic pero iba ang goal per level*” (I make a version of the lesson for each grade. Same topic but different goals per level). This approach enables the teacher to maintain coherence in content while ensuring grade-appropriate outcomes.

Another teacher emphasized how instructional methods differ based on learner maturity, stating, “*Iti Grade 1 ket oral ken visual, Grade 2 ket written ken drawing, Grade 3 ket paragraph writing*.” (For Grade 1, it’s oral and visual; for Grade 2, written and drawing; for Grade 3, paragraph writing. Strategies vary). This confirms the deliberate use of varied modalities to match learners’ cognitive readiness and communication skills.

In accommodating individual learner needs, one teacher remarked, “*Agcustomizek ti activity. Nu ti maysa ket struggling, i-reduce ko ti difficulty. Ti advanced, agbasa da ti related material*” (I customize activities. If one struggles, I reduce the difficulty. The advanced ones read additional material). This reflects a scaffolded approach where task complexity is adjusted to learners’ proficiency levels.

Scholarly literature affirms these practices. According to Anderson and Liwanag (2021), differentiated instruction in multigrade settings is most effective when teachers use leveled materials, flexible grouping, and context-based learning. Similarly, Villanueva et al. (2022) found that aligning tasks with individual competencies while maintaining a shared content focus increases student participation, self-efficacy, and learning outcomes across multigrade levels. These findings support the teacher-generated strategies reported in the present study, highlighting their relevance to inclusive and responsive teaching in remote educational contexts.

### Recommendations for Enhancing the Multigrade Instruction

The successful delivery of multigrade instruction depends not only on the capacity of teachers but also on the presence of responsive systems, supportive environments, and inclusive policies that address the contextual needs of remote learning communities. In Lower Calanasan, Apayao, multigrade teachers confront numerous institutional and pedagogical challenges that require urgent and targeted intervention. This theme explores the recommendations articulated by teachers to strengthen multigrade education,

focusing on areas of improvement in curriculum, resources, and assessment; teacher development needs; administrative and community support; and policy innovations.

### *Theme 1: Areas in the Multigrade Instruction Needing Improvement*

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan identified several pressing issues that hinder the full implementation and success of the Multigrade Instruction. The most frequently cited concern involved the inadequacy of learning materials. One teacher remarked, *“Ti materials para kadagiti amin a grade ket saan a kompleto. Adda curriculum ngem saan a maipaay ti actual a gamit”* (The materials for all grade levels are incomplete. The curriculum exists, but actual resources are not provided). This highlights a gap between policy and implementation, where teaching plans are present but are unsupported by corresponding instructional resources.

Another key area requiring attention is professional development. A teacher shared, *“Awan ti regular a training para kadakami. Dagiti seminar ket para laeng kadagiti mono-grade”* (There are no regular trainings for us. Seminars are often meant only for mono-grade teachers). This indicates a systemic oversight in capacity building that leaves multigrade educators without tailored learning opportunities to enhance their instructional skills and adapt to multigrade demands.

The issue of time constraints also emerged as a critical concern. As one teacher explained, *“Kulang ang time allocation para sa bawat baitang. Hindi sapat ang 30 minutes lang bawat isa”* (The time allocation per grade is lacking. Thirty minutes per grade is not enough). Such limitations compromise both the depth and quality of instruction, particularly in subjects that require extended reinforcement.

Concerns about curriculum adaptability were echoed as well. A teacher stated, *“Ti curriculum ket kasla saan nga adaptable iti actual setting ti multigrade. Saan a practical ti dadduma nga lesson”* (The curriculum does not adapt well to multigrade settings. Some lessons are impractical).

Assessment practices and grading systems are also problematic. One teacher pointed out, *“Masapul ti clear guidelines ti assessment. Agtaltalinaed a kasla mono-grade ti standards”* (Clear guidelines for assessment are needed. The standards remain like they’re for mono-grade).

Physical resources and infrastructure further complicate multigrade teaching. *“Ti facilities ket agkurkurang. Agusar dagiti ubbing kadagiti upuan a para kadagiti adult”* (Facilities are lacking. Children are using chairs meant for adults), one teacher observed. Another noted, *“Ti learning space ket bassit. Narigat nga i-manage nu agsasabali ti activities ti dua wennu tallo nga grade level”* (The learning space is small. It’s hard to manage when two or three grade levels are doing separate activities). These conditions undermine classroom management and learner engagement.

These findings are consistent with the observations of Atienza and Zamora (2021), who emphasized that the successful implementation of Multigrade Instructions depends on material provision, space optimization, differentiated assessment, and targeted teacher training. Likewise, Del Rosario and Esteban (2022) assert that systemic constraints such as inadequate infrastructure and lack of pedagogical support structures continue

to marginalize multigrade teachers, particularly in geographically isolated areas.

### *Theme 2: Teacher Recommendations to Strengthen Multigrade Education*

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan presented several targeted recommendations to the Department of Education (DepEd) to enhance the Multigrade Instruction. Their suggestions were grounded in firsthand experiences and aimed at addressing longstanding gaps in support and programmatic focus.

One of the most recurring recommendations is centered on sustained supervisory engagement. A teacher shared, *“Maappreciate mi nu regular ti panagbisita dagiti supervisor ken support kadakami”* (We would appreciate more regular visits and support from supervisors). This indicates a strong desire for consistent guidance, mentorship, and acknowledgment of their efforts, particularly given the isolation of their posts.

The teachers also emphasized the need for a dedicated programmatic focus. One pointed out, *“Awan ti talaga nga focus ti division para kadakami. Masapul nga adda separate planning para kadagiti multigrade”* (The division has no real focus on us. There should be separate planning for multigrade). This sentiment reflects a broader call for institutional recognition of multigrade instruction as a distinct modality that requires unique strategies and considerations beyond those applied in mono-grade systems.

In terms of instructional support, the need for tailored materials was emphasized. *“Maganda sana kung may separate na modules or materials na talagang para sa multigrade”* (It would be good if there were separate modules or materials made specifically for multigrade), one teacher remarked. Currently, the lack of differentiated content hampers instructional delivery, especially when handling multiple learning levels simultaneously.

Teachers also expressed the importance of long-term professional development. As one teacher noted, *“Masapul mi ti scholarship or formal training para kadakami tapno aglevel up ti skills mi.”* (We need scholarships or formal training to upgrade our skills). Investing in the formal upskilling of multigrade teachers would not only elevate instruction quality but also strengthen teacher morale and retention in remote areas.

Human resource augmentation also surfaced as a pressing need. A teacher shared, *“Adu ti reports nga ub-ubraen mi. Masapul mi ti manpower, assistant wenno teacher aide”* (Teachers do too much. We need additional manpower, either an aide or assistant teacher). Given the dual or triple roles, they perform—often as academic facilitator, administrator, and community liaison—multigrade teachers urgently require logistical and instructional support personnel.

Lastly, teachers advocated for administrative clarity, particularly in reporting and evaluation. *“Sana may malinaw na system para sa reporting, grading, at performance evaluation ng multigrade class”* (There should be a clear system for reporting, grading, and performance evaluation in multigrade), one teacher recommended. Standardizing these systems according to the nuances of multigrade settings would reduce confusion and improve accountability.

These recommendations mirror the findings of Ocampo and Gregorio (2020), who argued that multigrade instruction must be institutionalized through separate resource allocation, differentiated

instructional design, and sustained teacher training. Similarly, Austria et al. (2021) emphasized that strengthening multigrade education requires not only curricular adaptation but also systemic reforms that prioritize inclusion, supervision, and local capacity-building.

### *Theme 3: Support Needed to Enhance the Effectiveness of Multigrade Teachers*

Multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan emphasized that enhanced effectiveness in their instructional roles hinges on targeted, relevant, and context-sensitive forms of support. Their voices reflect a need for both material and systemic reforms anchored in the realities of teaching across multiple grade levels in remote settings.

One teacher stated, *“Kailangan mi ti regular nga mentoring ken materials nga agmaymaysa kadagiti level ti grade”* (We need regular mentoring and materials tailored to each grade level), pointing out that grade-specific resources and continuous pedagogical guidance are crucial in managing instructional differentiation. Another teacher echoed this by stating, *“Training sana na focus lang talaga sa strategies para sa multigrade classes, hindi pangkalahatan”* (There should be trainings focused specifically on multigrade strategies, not generic ones). These insights reflect the limitations of current in-service programs that fail to address the complexities of handling mixed-grade classrooms.

Infrastructure-related needs also surfaced, with one respondent saying, *“Kailangan ti solar-powered gadgets ta awan signal ken kuryente ditoy”* (We need solar-powered gadgets because there’s no electricity or signal here). The lack of power and connectivity not only affects digital learning but also hampers communication with education offices and peers. Addressing these infrastructure deficits is a prerequisite to enabling even the most basic digital instruction.

Teachers further called for more responsive and informed school leadership. As one stated, *“Ti principal ket masapul nga adalenda pay dagiti challenges mi. Saan laeng nga report-based ti support”* (Principals need to understand our challenges. Support shouldn’t be based only on reports). They argued that meaningful support requires leaders to be immersed in the lived realities of their teaching environments. Similarly, another teacher emphasized the importance of visibility by the higher offices, *“Mas okay kung may regular visit ang district or division para makita nila yung actual na sitwasyon”* (It would be better if the district or division visited regularly to see the actual situation), calling for a shift from paperwork-driven oversight to experiential leadership.

Finally, teachers sought inclusion in career development pathways. One expressed, *“Maipila kami nu adda scholarship or ladderized training ti gobyerno para kadakami”* (We hope to be included in scholarships or ladderized training programs by the government), indicating the need for long-term growth and formal recognition of their professional commitment in disadvantaged contexts.

These perspectives are supported by the study of Bartolome and Espinosa (2020), which found that differentiated professional development, instructional supervision, and logistical support significantly improve the instructional effectiveness of multigrade teachers. Similarly, Domingo and Tan (2021) affirmed that when school leaders and education offices engage directly with

multigrade classrooms, they make better-informed decisions that result in improved teacher morale and instructional output.

### *Theme 4: Administrative Support Mechanisms for Multigrade Instruction*

Teachers in multigrade settings expressed a strong desire for more active, responsive, and empathetic support from their school administrators. Their testimonies highlighted the need for administrators to move beyond traditional oversight and adopt participatory leadership practices tailored to the complexities of multigrade teaching.

One teacher remarked, *“Sana may time din ang admin para mag-observe sa klase para mas alam nila kung anong suporta ang kailangan”* (Administrators should also take time to observe classes so they know what kind of support is needed), emphasizing that firsthand exposure to classroom realities is necessary for administrators to provide appropriate and targeted assistance. This sentiment was reinforced by another respondent who said, *“Ti principal ket dapat mangisuro ti flexible approach, saan nga laeng agsurat ti feedback ti report”* (The principal should guide with flexible approaches, not just written feedback in reports). Teachers advocated for more practical and context-sensitive mentorship rather than administrative formalities.

Further, the issue of material and financial support was raised. One teacher shared, *“Masapul nga mangted da ti learning materials ken allowance para iti classroom improvements”* (They should provide learning materials and allowances for classroom improvements). This reveals that basic classroom needs remain unmet, and teachers are often left to fill these gaps through personal means or improvisation.

The teachers also expressed concern about administrative visibility and prioritization. One teacher noted, *“May mga pagkakataon na busy sila sa office. Sana bigyan din nila ng oras ang multigrade teachers”* (Sometimes they’re too busy in the office. They should allot time for multigrade teachers too), reflecting a broader perception of neglect due to competing administrative tasks. The call is not for oversight alone, but for intentional engagement.

Lastly, a teacher insightfully stated, *“Mas okay nu agbalin da a facilitator ken advocate kadakami a teachers, saan laeng a boss”* (It would be better if they act as facilitators and advocates for us teachers, not just bosses). This encapsulates a deeper aspiration for a supportive leadership culture where administrators champion teacher needs and advocate for structural improvements rather than simply enforce directives.

These findings align with that of Dizon and Medina (2021), who observed that instructional leaders in remote schools are more effective when they function as enablers and partners in classroom-level problem solving. Similarly, Lucban and Alipio (2022) emphasized that visibility, support, and provision of resources by school heads significantly improve teacher morale and classroom innovation, especially in multigrade environments.

### *Theme 5: Policies and Initiatives to Enhance the Quality of Multigrade Education in Lower Calanasan*

The multigrade teachers of Lower Calanasan strongly articulated the need for systemic and policy-based reforms to elevate the quality and sustainability of multigrade education. Their perspectives underscore the necessity of institutional mechanisms that go beyond temporary or stopgap measures.



One teacher emphasized, “*Maganda kung may batas talaga na magtatag ng support fund para sa mga multigrade schools*” (It would be good to have a law creating a support fund for multigrade schools). This statement reflects a call for legislative commitment, recognizing that budgetary constraints remain one of the most critical barriers to effective multigrade delivery. Another teacher added, “*Masapul ti separate a multigrade framework a maamend ti policies ti mono-grade base*” (There must be a separate multigrade framework to amend mono-grade-based policies), highlighting the need for policy differentiation that acknowledges the unique pedagogical and logistical demands of multigrade instruction.

Further calls were made for structural reform within the Department of Education. One respondent stated, “*Ti DepEd dapat mangipatungpal ti dedicated division unit nga agfocus laeng iti multigrade*.” (DepEd should establish a dedicated division unit focused solely on multigrade), indicating that multigrade education often gets lost within the larger mono-grade-dominated bureaucracy. This desire for a focused governance structure was echoed in the suggestion, “*Sana may scholarship or points-based promotion system para sa multigrade teachers*” (There should be scholarships, or a promotion system based on points for multigrade teachers), advocating for teacher development and career recognition mechanisms tailored to their context.

Lastly, there was a strong recommendation for participatory policy development. One teacher shared, “*Adda kuma ti regular consultation para kadakami nga teachers kadagiti policy formulation*” (There should be regular consultations with us teachers in policy formulation), asserting that those who deliver education on the ground should be directly involved in crafting the policies that govern them.

These proposals mirror the findings of Del Rosario and Balanay (2020), who emphasized the importance of context-specific policy frameworks and participatory governance in multigrade settings. Moreover, Salazar and Dizon (2021) affirmed that institutionalizing dedicated multigrade units and funding programs significantly enhances the delivery and equity of education in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The multigrade teachers employ adaptive and integrative instructional strategies to manage simultaneous learning across multiple grade levels. Despite logistical limitations, teachers exercise professional agency and creativity in delivering instruction that is developmentally appropriate and engaging for diverse learners. On the matter of challenges, the study identified time constraints, divided attention, behavioral management issues, and learner disengagement as key difficulties in multigrade classrooms. Despite these difficulties, teachers employ a wide range of coping strategies to maintain instructional continuity and learner engagement. The perspectives of multigrade teachers in Lower Calanasan underscore both the depth of their professional commitment and the urgency of addressing systemic gaps in support, training, and policy. The enhancement of multigrade instruction in geographically isolated areas demands a multi-level response that recognizes the unique instructional dynamics of multigrade classrooms and empowers teachers through sustained resources, training, and inclusion in policy development.

### Recommendations

1. The Department of Education, through its regional and division offices, is encouraged to develop and implement a multigrade-specific instructional framework that includes thematic curriculum guides, sample integrated lesson plans, and differentiated assessment tools.
2. Teacher workload rationalization should be seriously considered in multigrade settings. This may include the assignment of teacher aides or learning support assistants, flexible time allotment per subject and grade level, and the restructuring of class schedules to prevent cognitive overload among both teachers and learners.
3. The Division of Apayao and its district offices should conduct regular localized capacity-building workshops and peer-learning sessions, where multigrade teachers can share their successful adaptive practices, including peer tutoring, multi-level task design, and group rotation systems.
4. The Department of Education is urged to institutionalize a dedicated Multigrade Education Support Program at the division level, which shall include a separate monitoring and evaluation unit, funding for multigrade classrooms, and inclusion of multigrade teachers in policymaking consultations.

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