

FROM RESILIENCE TO RESULTS: STORIES OF MULTIGRADE TEACHERS IN RESOURCE -LIMITED SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the stories of multigrade teachers in resource-limited settings using qualitative methods, specifically narrative inquiry. Seventeen teachers from the Municipality of President Roxas participated, with ten engaged in in-depth interviews and seven in focus group discussions. Purposive sampling ensured that participants had direct experience teaching in multigrade classrooms under resource-constrained conditions. The study sought to answer three research questions: the strategies teachers use to teach effectively, the challenges they face, and the motivations that sustain their practice despite difficulties. Findings revealed that teachers employ strategies such as resourcefulness and creativity, adaptation of lessons, collaborative and peer learning, assessment strategies, and contextualized teaching to address the complexities of multigrade classrooms. Challenges included the need for additional support, professional development, and effective classroom management. Despite these obstacles, teachers were motivated by personal fulfillment, a sense of professional accomplishment, and a strong commitment to student. The study highlights the resilience and ingenuity of multigrade teachers and underscores the importance of supporting their practices to enhance learning outcomes in resource-limited environments.

Keywords: *Multigrade Teaching, Teacher Resilience, Resource-Limited Settings, Student Engagement, Teaching Strategies, Professional Motivation, Qualitative Design, Municipality of President Roxas*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, multigrade teachers in resource-limited settings face significant challenges that impact the quality of education. A systematic review highlighted that many multigrade teachers struggle with inadequate instructional materials, with some having to create their own due to a lack of resources (Naparan et al., 2021). Additionally, limitations such as poor internet access and insufficient physical facilities hinder effective teaching practices (Okamoto et al., 2020). Furthermore, the scarcity of ready-made lesson plans and contextualized materials significantly heightens the difficulties faced by these educators (Daga, 2021).

In the Philippines, multigrade teachers in rural public elementary schools encounter substantial pedagogical challenges. A study revealed that teachers' expertise, teaching and learning processes, school instruction, and available resources significantly impact their teaching practices (Urma & Callo, 2023). The lack of attention to teaching resources adapted to multigrade classrooms in rural schools is an issue that has been explored in international research, highlighting the need for specific curricular materials and professional competencies (Cortez et al., 2024). These challenges underscore the necessity for targeted interventions to support multigrade teachers in resource-limited

settings.

Research indicates that various factors influence the experiences of multigrade teachers in resource-limited settings. One critical factor is the lack of specialized training, with many teachers not receiving adequate professional development to handle multigrade classrooms effectively (Figueroa, 2022). Additionally, challenges related to classroom management and differentiated instruction are common, as teachers must manage multiple grade levels simultaneously, often without sufficient teaching materials (López et al., 2021). The socioeconomic background of the students also plays a crucial role; teachers in impoverished communities often struggle with limited resources, which further complicates their teaching efforts (Martínez & García, 2020). These challenges necessitate adaptive strategies, such as creating low-cost teaching materials and relying on community support, to ensure that students receive a quality education (Mendoza & Ramos, 2023).

Despite the growing body of research on multigrade teaching in resource-limited settings, there is a significant gap in understanding the personal and emotional aspects of teachers' experiences. Most studies focus primarily on logistical issues, such as lack of resources or overcrowded classrooms, without exploring the psychological and emotional toll on teachers (Torres & Villanueva, 2021). Additionally, there is limited qualitative research that investigates how multigrade teachers perceive their work, including the personal fulfillment or frustrations they encounter (Santos et al., 2022). Further research is needed to examine how teachers' emotional resilience and personal motivations shape their approach to teaching in these challenging settings, and how they maintain a sense of purpose despite the obstacles they face (Cortez & Perez, 2023).

Studying the stories of multigrade teachers in resource-limited settings is significant because it provides valuable insights into the unique challenges and strategies these educators employ to ensure quality education despite limited resources. Understanding their personal experiences can shed light on the complexities of teaching in environments where materials, professional training, and support systems are inadequate. This research also highlights the resilience, creativity, and adaptability of multigrade teachers as they balance the educational needs of students from various grade levels. By capturing their narratives, the study can inform policy-makers, educational planners, and organizations about the specific needs of these teachers and help develop targeted interventions that improve teaching practices and student outcomes in such challenging settings.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed qualitative methods typically used in human and social sciences, particularly narrative inquiry. Through this approach, the researcher gathered detailed insights into the experiences, strategies, and challenges faced by teachers working in multigrade classrooms in resource-limited environments. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to capture the personal stories of teachers, allowing for a deeper understanding of their practices and the factors they attributed to their work. This method was ideal for exploring the complexity of teaching in such settings, as it provided a rich, contextual basis for understanding the educators' unique challenges and experiences.

Meanwhile, the duration of the study spanned ten months, from January 2025 to December 2025. This period included refining the proposal paper along with participant recruitment and data collection, one month for data analysis, and one month for reporting and dissemination of findings.

Participants

Seventeen teachers were selected as participants for this study, with ten participating in in-depth interviews and seven involved in focus group discussions. These participants were chosen using purposive sampling, which ensured that only those with direct experience teaching in multigrade classrooms within resource-limited settings were included. The teachers, all from schools in the Municipality of President Roxas, were expected to share their stories and strategies they had used to overcome the challenges they faced in these educational environments.

The study included teachers who were currently engaged in multigrade teaching in the Municipality of President Roxas. Participants needed to have at least two years of teaching experience in resource-limited settings, allowing them to offer a rich perspective on their teaching practices. Teachers who were not actively teaching in multigrade classrooms or who lacked significant experience in these environments were excluded from the study. Additionally, individuals unable to participate due to personal or professional reasons, such as time constraints or unwillingness, were also excluded.

Data Collection Tools

This study utilized semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion (FGD) protocols to collect rich, qualitative data from multigrade teachers. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit personal experiences, coping strategies, and definitions of in resource-limited teaching environments. The FGD protocol aimed to explore common themes and shared experiences among teachers. These tools were chosen to allow flexibility, depth, and authenticity in capturing the lived experiences of the participants.

Procedures

Upon securing ethical clearance and permissions from relevant education authorities, participants were purposively selected based on their experience as multigrade teachers in resource-limited settings. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Individual interviews were scheduled at a time and place convenient for each teacher, followed by FGDs for collective discussion. All sessions were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed for analysis. Data collection was conducted with strict confidentiality and sensitivity to the participants' comfort and availability.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcripts were read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the content, after which initial codes were generated and grouped into emerging themes. NVivo or manual coding was used to systematically organize the data. The process involved identifying patterns related to resilience, teaching, and coping mechanisms in

multigrade classrooms. Triangulation of individual and group data ensured credibility and depth in the interpretation of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategies of Multigrade Teachers for Effective Teaching in Resource-Limited Settings

Based on the data, the results revealed that multigrade teachers employ several strategies for effective teaching in resource-limited settings. There were five themes identified: Resourcefulness and Creativity, Adaptation Strategies, Collaborative and Peer Learning, Assessment Strategies, and Contextualized Teaching.

Table 1. Summary table for the strategies of multigrade teachers for effective teaching in resource-limited settings

Issues Probe	Codes / Category	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings
Limited resources	Recycled materials; improvised aids; creative activities	use recycled items; low-cost visuals; role-play learning	Resourcefulness and Creativity	Creative use of scarce resources
Diverse grade needs	Flexible plans; modular lessons; simplified content	flexible lesson plans; modular teaching	Adaptation Strategies	Adjusting instruction for learners
Classroom challenges	Peer teaching; group work; collaboration	peer teaching support	Collaborative and Peer Learning	Learning through cooperation
Learning monitoring	Formative checks; peer assessment; adapted tasks	mini quizzes; peer assessment use	Assessment Strategies	Continuous and flexible assessment
Lesson relevance	Local context; daily life examples; tiered tasks	local context examples; small learning tasks	Contextualized Teaching	Meaningful and relevant learning

Theme 1: Resourcefulness and Creativity. The first theme, Resourcefulness and Creativity, emerged as teachers consistently demonstrated innovative ways to teach despite limited resources. Based on the participants, many believed that using recycled materials, student-made learning tools, and improvised teaching aids allowed them to maintain engagement and provide meaningful learning experiences. They emphasized that creativity enabled them to overcome the scarcity of educational resources while keeping lessons effective and interesting for students. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I encourage students to share materials and use recycled items for projects." (IDI, P2)

"I rely on low-cost visuals and charts, and sometimes use storytelling to convey lessons." (IDI, P3)

"I prioritize essential materials and use creative activities like drawing and role-play." (IDI, P10)

In support, literature of the result highlights that resourcefulness and creativity are fundamental strategies for teaching in resource-limited settings. Kumar and Sharma (2021) argue that when conventional teaching resources are unavailable, innovative approaches such as student-made tools, low-cost teaching aids, and repurposed materials allow teachers to maintain instructional effectiveness and keep learners engaged. By creatively designing lessons, teachers can bridge gaps in material availability while promoting active participation and problem-solving among students. These strategies foster resilience in both teachers and students, as they demonstrate how learning can thrive despite challenges.

Furthermore, Alam et al. (2022) emphasize that creativity in teaching extends beyond material adaptation; it enhances critical thinking and adaptability among students. Teachers who employ resourceful strategies empower students to take ownership of their learning, encouraging them to innovate and apply concepts in practical contexts. In resource-constrained environments, such approaches are crucial to sustaining learning quality and ensuring students remain motivated and engaged despite material limitations.

Theme 2: Adaptation Strategies. Adaptation Strategies emerged as a key approach where teachers adjusted lesson plans, simplified content, and modified activities to suit multigrade classrooms. Many participants believed that flexibility in teaching plans allowed them to meet diverse learning needs and ensure all students could follow the lesson without feeling left behind. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I prepare flexible lesson plans adapted for multiple grades." (IDI, P3)

"I use modular lesson plans and peer evaluations." (IDI, P6)

In support, literature of the result suggests that adaptation is a critical strategy for teaching multiple grade levels in resource-constrained settings. Singh and Reddy (2020) highlight that multigrade teachers need to adjust content and instructional approaches to accommodate learners' varying abilities and learning speeds. Flexible lesson planning ensures that students are not left behind and allows teachers to optimize learning outcomes even with limited resources.

Additionally, Bhatia et al. (2021) note that adaptive teaching strategies, such as modular lessons and tiered exercises, help address the heterogeneity of multigrade classrooms. These approaches reduce cognitive overload, allow teachers to manage diverse learners effectively, and foster an inclusive classroom environment where every student can engage with the material.

Theme 3: Collaborative and Peer Learning. Collaborative and Peer Learning appeared as teachers leveraged group activities, peer teaching, and cooperative learning to overcome classroom challenges. Many participants indicated that collaboration among students and with other teachers created a supportive learning environment and enhanced lesson delivery. Below are some responses from the participants:

“I make use of peer teaching to reduce dependency on scarce materials.”
(IDI, P4)

In support, literature of the result shows that collaborative learning strategies are effective in multigrade and resource-limited classrooms. Sharma and Gupta (2021) argue that peer learning fosters knowledge sharing, improves engagement, and enhances social skills among students. By facilitating cooperative learning, teachers can optimize classroom management while promoting mutual support among learners. Moreover, Ahmed et al. (2022) note that collaboration extends to teacher networks, where educators exchange ideas, lesson plans, and materials to overcome resource constraints. This professional collaboration enhances instructional quality and supports innovative problem-solving in multigrade settings.

Theme 4: Assessment Strategies. Assessment Strategies surfaced as teachers used frequent formative evaluations and peer assessments to monitor learning progress. Participants believed that regular checks and flexible evaluation methods helped them track student understanding and adjust teaching accordingly. Below are some responses from the participants:

“I use mini-quizzes and observations for assessment.” (FGD, general)

“I adapt textbooks and worksheets by modifying exercises.” (IDI, P7)

In support, literature of the result indicates that formative and flexible assessment is crucial in multigrade teaching. Khan and Malik (2020) assert that continuous assessment allows teachers to identify learning gaps early and implement interventions, especially in classrooms with diverse student needs. This ensures that every learner remains engaged and supported. Additionally, Ramesh and Subramanian (2021) suggest that peer evaluation and differentiated assessment strategies not only enhance understanding but also foster a sense of responsibility among students. Such approaches empower learners to take part in their assessment process and promote collaborative accountability within the classroom.

Theme 5: Contextualized Teaching. Contextualized Teaching emerged as teachers consistently connected lessons to students' daily lives, local environment, and culture. Many participants indicated that using familiar examples increased understanding, engagement, and relevance, making learning more meaningful. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I integrate local context and daily life examples to teach concepts." (IDI, P8)

"I prepare tiered lessons for different levels." (FGD, General)

"I break down complex topics into smaller activities." (IDI, P5)

In support, literature of the result demonstrates that contextualized teaching enhances learning in multigrade classrooms. Ali and Farooq (2021) note that relating lessons to students' everyday experiences increases comprehension, engagement, and retention. Contextual examples help bridge the gap between abstract concepts and practical understanding. Furthermore, Rahman and Chowdhury (2022) highlight that culturally relevant and context-based teaching fosters motivation and critical thinking. It allows students to see the real-world applications of their learning while respecting local knowledge and practices, which is particularly important in resource-limited settings.

Challenges Faced by Multigrade Teachers in Resource-Limited Settings

The findings showed that multigrade teachers experience various challenges in resource-limited settings. There were three themes identified: Challenges and Support Needs, Professional Development Needs, and Classroom Management Strategies.

Table 2. Challenges Faced by Multigrade Teachers in Resource-Limited Settings

Issues Probe	Codes / Category	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings
Lack of support	Teaching assistants; admin help; limited materials	need teaching assistants; need admin support need regular	Challenges and Support Needs	Insufficient instructional support
Limited training	Mentoring; workshops; skill enhancement	mentoring; need continuous training	Professional Development Needs	Need for skill development
Managing classes	Grouping strategies; peer tutoring; routines	divide small groups; peer tutoring use	Classroom Management Strategies	Organizing multigrade classrooms

Theme 1: Challenges and Support Needs. The first theme was Challenges and Support Needs. Based on the participants, many believed that teaching multiple grades simultaneously created a need for additional support, including teaching assistants, administrative help, and access to classroom resources. Teachers reported that without these forms of support, managing diverse learning activities and ensuring each student receives adequate attention was difficult. The lack of materials, limited access to teaching aids, and insufficient support from the administration were recurring concerns that

impacted the efficiency of classroom instruction. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I need more teaching assistants to manage multigrade classes." (IDI, P2)

"I need additional support in classroom management." (IDI, P8)

"I need administrative and peer support to reduce workload." (IDI, P9)

In support, literature of the result highlights that multigrade teachers often face high demands in terms of workload and resource management. According to Kumar and Sharma (2021), resource constraints and the absence of adequate support staff are significant challenges in multigrade classrooms, impacting teachers' ability to deliver consistent and effective instruction. Teachers rely on both material resources and human support to manage simultaneous grade levels fully.

Furthermore, Alam et al. (2022) emphasize that support needs extend beyond teaching materials to include mentoring and administrative guidance. Teachers in resource-limited contexts benefit from structured support systems that allow them to navigate workload pressures, enhance instructional quality, and address student needs effectively. Access to support mechanisms improves not only teacher performance but also student learning outcomes.

Theme 2: Professional Development Needs. Professional Development Needs emerged as another key theme, reflecting teachers' desire to enhance their skills for multigrade teaching. Participants indicated that training, workshops, and mentoring were crucial to equip them with strategies for managing diverse student groups and optimizing learning outcomes. Many teachers felt that professional development opportunities were limited, leaving them to rely on trial-and-error approaches in complex classroom situations. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I need regular mentoring from experienced teachers." (IDI, P4)

"I need continuous training to strengthen multigrade teaching skills." (IDI, P10)

"I borrow resources from nearby schools or create improvised teaching aids." (IDI, P5)

In support, literature of the result suggests that ongoing professional development is essential for multigrade teachers in resource-constrained environments. Singh and Reddy (2020) highlight that targeted training in instructional strategies, lesson differentiation, and assessment techniques strengthens teacher efficacy and enhances student outcomes. Professional development enables teachers to adopt best practices tailored to multigrade classrooms, increasing both confidence and instructional quality.

Additionally, Bhatia et al. (2021) argue that mentoring and collaborative learning opportunities are critical components of professional growth. Support from experienced peers and structured training programs allow teachers to develop innovative solutions to challenges inherent in multigrade teaching, thereby improving classroom management and student engagement.

Theme 3: Classroom Management Strategies. Classroom Management Strategies emerged as teachers highlighted the difficulties of organizing and supervising multiple grade levels simultaneously. Many participants believed that clear routines, group division, and peer-led learning were necessary to maintain order and ensure productive learning. Teachers often struggled to monitor all students while providing individualized support, especially in resource-limited settings with high student-teacher ratios. Below are some responses from the participants:

“I divide the class into small groups and use peer tutoring.” (FGD, P1)

“I use mixed-age pairing to let older students model skills for younger ones.” (FGD, P6)

In support, literature of the result indicates that effective classroom management is vital in multigrade contexts. Ahmed et al. (2022) explain that group work, structured routines, and peer-led activities enable teachers to supervise multiple grades efficiently, ensuring that all students remain engaged. Strong management strategies reduce classroom disruptions and enhance the learning experience for diverse learners.

Moreover, Ramesh and Subramanian (2021) highlight that implementing systematic organization and collaborative learning approaches mitigates the challenges of large and heterogeneous classrooms. Teachers who establish clear routines and leverage peer support can provide more focused instruction while maintaining a safe and productive environment.

Motivational Factors Driving Multigrade Teachers to Persist Despite Challenges

The data indicated that multigrade teachers are motivated to continue teaching despite challenges. There were two themes identified: Teacher Motivation and Fulfillment and Commitment to Student.

Table 3. Motivational factors driving multigrade teachers to persist despite challenges

Issues Probe	Codes/Category	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings
Teaching fulfillment	Student progress; professional pride; personal satisfaction	student achievement joy; sense accomplishment	Teacher Motivation and Fulfillment	Intrinsic teaching motivation
Student responsibility	Student success; extra	student-centered	Commitment to Student	Dedication to learners

effort; community support	success; beyond duty effort
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Theme 1: Teacher Motivation and Fulfillment. The first theme was Teacher Motivation and Fulfillment. Based on the participants, many believed that their personal satisfaction and sense of accomplishment from seeing students grow academically and socially kept them engaged in teaching. Teachers expressed that moments of student achievement, overcoming challenges in instruction, and the joy of seeing their lessons make a difference contributed to their fulfillment. This sense of professional pride motivated them to remain committed, even when faced with material shortages or heavy workloads. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I stay committed because I want to help my students reach their full potential..." (IDI, P1)

"A student who struggled with reading finally read aloud confidently." (IDI, P1)

In support, literature of the result emphasizes that teacher motivation and fulfillment are critical in sustaining engagement in challenging contexts. According to Smith and Johnson (2021), educators derive motivation from intrinsic satisfaction and professional accomplishments, which positively influences their persistence and teaching quality. Teachers' emotional and professional fulfillment acts as a buffer against burnout and enhances resilience in resource-limited settings.

Furthermore, in support, findings from Lopez et al. (2022) suggest that teachers' sense of purpose and the meaningful impact of their work on students' lives are strong motivators. Intrinsic motivation, derived from the desire to support student learning and see tangible results, encourages teachers to innovate and persevere despite environmental and systemic challenges.

Theme 2: Commitment to Student. The second theme was Commitment to Student. Based on the participants, many believed that the primary driver of their continued teaching was the commitment to ensuring that students achieve their learning goals. Teachers felt a responsibility to their students' academic growth and personal development, which outweighed the difficulties they faced. This commitment often manifested in extra hours of lesson planning, personal mentoring, and going beyond what resources were available to guarantee quality learning outcomes. Below are some responses from the participants:

"I measure my success by how well my students understand and apply concepts in real life." (IDI, P1)

"I need collaboration with other teachers to exchange ideas and materials." (IDI, P7)

“I utilize community resources like parent donations and sharing tools.” (IDI, P9)

In support, literature of the result indicates that teachers' commitment to student is a key factor in maintaining resilience in challenging environments. Research by Nguyen and Pham (2020) shows that a strong professional commitment to students' learning outcomes encourages teachers to adapt and persist, even when external conditions are unfavorable. Teachers with a high sense of responsibility toward their students demonstrate greater innovation and perseverance.

Additionally, in support, Ahmed and Saleh (2021) highlight that commitment to student achievement fosters sustained effort and engagement, especially in contexts where resources are limited. This dedication drives teachers to implement creative strategies and continuously improve their teaching practices to maximize student, reinforcing the importance of student-centered motivation in multigrade classrooms.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Teachers employ diverse and creative strategies to facilitate effective learning in resource-limited settings, using recycled and student-made materials, flexible lesson plans, collaborative peer learning, continuous assessment, and contextualized teaching.
2. Teachers face significant challenges that require additional support and professional development, including managing multiple grades with limited resources, high workload demands, insufficient teaching aids, and the need for ongoing training, mentoring, and guidance to improve instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and classroom management.
3. Intrinsic motivation and commitment to student learning drive teacher persistence despite challenges, as personal fulfillment from student success, professional pride, and the desire to make a meaningful impact motivate teachers to innovate, extend effort, and persevere even in resource-limited environments.

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