

The Lived Experiences of Multi-Grade Teachers Implementing Quality Basic Education Before, During and After the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Multi-grade education is an important tool that can be used to ensure that all learners around the world have access to a quality education. This type of education allows students of different ages and abilities to learn together in a single classroom. The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary school in implementing quality basic education before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. Similarly, the project collected data from MTG teachers using an interview guide that was validated by experts in phenomenology. It took in the school year 2022-2023 and presented and analyzed data collected from chosen participants. Results revealed that, the exploration of subthemes within major themes such as "Pre-Pandemic Teaching

Realities," "Navigating Teaching During the Pandemic," "Coping and Innovating Amidst Challenges," and "Shaping the Future of Multi-Grade Education" provides a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary schools before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. These narratives reveal educators' dedication, adaptability, and resilience in navigating a dynamic educational landscape marked by challenges and opportunities. The findings emphasize their ability to address diverse learning needs, manage resources, foster engagement, overcome technological constraints, and embrace innovative methodologies. The post-pandemic era witnesses the integration of technology, flexible teaching approaches, and collaboration among educators, parents, and the community. These insights form a foundation for strategically shaping the future of multi-grade education, enhancing the learning experience's quality and inclusivity. The proposed intervention plan underscores the importance of addressing challenges through multifaceted strategies encompassing technology integration, personalized learning, collaboration, professional development, and monitoring. This plan aims to transform the educational landscape, fostering resilience, inclusivity, and student-centeredness. Sustaining commitment to ongoing assessment, adaptation, and stakeholder collaboration will ensure continuous evolution, enhancing educational outcomes for students in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: *Lived Experiences, Multigrade Teachers, Thematic Analysis, Phenomenology, Basic Education, Quality Education*

INTRODUCTION

Multi-grade education is an important tool that can be used to ensure that all learners around the world have access to a quality education. This type of education allows students of different ages and abilities to learn together in a single classroom. Multi-grade education provides an opportunity for students to learn from each other

and develop problem-solving skills as they work together to overcome challenges (James, Cobanoglu, & Cavusoglu, 2021). It also helps build relationships between students of different ages, promoting social and emotional learning (UNICEF, 2022). Multi-grade education is particularly beneficial for learners in rural areas or other disadvantaged locations where educational resources are limited and large class sizes are common. It allows for more personalized instruction and for teachers to spend more time with each student, helping them to achieve their full potential. In some cases, it can also be more cost effective than traditional single-grade classrooms, allowing schools to stretch limited resources further. Overall, multi-grade education provides a valuable opportunity for learners around the world to access a quality education and develop the skills they need to succeed. It also helps foster collaboration, problem-solving, and social-emotional learning, all of which are key components of a successful educational experience (Hain, 2020).

Multi-grade education among learners in the Division of Ilocos Sur is very important in terms of creating an effective and efficient educational system that caters to the needs of all learners, no matter their grade level. It allows for students of different grade levels to be taught in the same classroom and makes the most of limited resources. Through multi-grade education, students of different ages can learn from each other, as well as from their teachers, and develop social skills that would not be possible in a traditional, single-grade classroom. It also promotes collaboration, as students must work together to complete tasks, and encourages a sense of community and a shared responsibility for learning. Multi-grade education can also help students to become independent learners, as they are able to access more resources and develop more self-directed learning habits (Reimers, Schleicher, Saavedra, & Tuominen, 2020). In addition, multi-grade education can help to reduce the need for classroom space, as multiple grades can be taught in the same room, and it can help to reduce costs by allowing teachers to teach multiple grades at once. Ultimately, multi-grade education can help to create an educational system that is more effective and more efficient, while at the same time providing students with a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience.

Multigrade classrooms or schools refer to educational settings where students of different ages or grade levels learn together in the same classroom or school. In many countries, multigrade classrooms or schools are common, particularly in rural areas, where small school sizes and limited resources make it difficult to organize separate classes for each grade level.

Multigrade classrooms can provide some benefits, such as improved socialization and peer learning opportunities, increased flexibility, and more personalized attention from the teacher. However, multigrade classrooms can also present significant challenges, such as the need for the teacher to develop different teaching strategies and materials for students of different ages and levels, the potential for uneven academic progress among students, and the risk of isolation and limited resources for both teachers and students.

Despite the challenges, many countries still have a significant presence of multigrade classrooms in their educational system. This may be due to several factors, such as limited resources, a shortage of qualified teachers, or a need to provide education to students in remote or rural areas.

To address the challenges of multigrade classrooms, educators and policymakers need to provide adequate training and support to teachers who work in these settings. This may include providing professional development opportunities, access to appropriate teaching materials and resources, and support for networking and collaboration among multigrade teachers. Additionally, policymakers may need to provide targeted funding and resources to support the unique needs of multigrade classrooms, such as appropriate classroom materials and technology, and innovative teaching strategies that can meet the needs of students with diverse ages and levels of academic progress.

Overall, the presence of multigrade classrooms in many educational systems highlights the need for policymakers and educators to develop effective strategies and resources to support teachers and students in these settings. By addressing the challenges of multigrade classrooms and providing appropriate support and resources, educators can help to ensure that all students have access to quality education, regardless of their geographical location or social background.

The importance of conducting research on multi-grade education among learners before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overstated. Multi-grade education is a form of instruction that combines two or more grade levels in the same classroom, often with one teacher providing instruction to students of different ages and abilities. This form of instruction is becoming increasingly popular to provide both cost-effective and personalized instruction. Research on multi-grade education has the potential to provide insight into how students of all ages and abilities can learn together, how their progress can be tracked and managed, and how multi-grade classrooms can be best supported to ensure their success. Such research can also provide valuable information about how best to support learners during the transition from traditional to blended learning environments in the wake of the pandemic. It is important to note that research on multi-grade education can also provide insights into how to best support learners during the pandemic itself. Such research can include studies on how to best manage multi-grade learning environments while respecting social distancing guidelines, as well as studies on how to best support learners and teachers during online instruction.

The importance of conducting research on multi-grade education among learners before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic is paramount. With the increasing number of learners affected by the pandemic, it is essential to understand the impacts of multi-grade education on learning outcomes, social-emotional wellbeing, and access to quality education. Research on multi-grade education can provide a better understanding of the challenges faced by learners in such classrooms and the ways in which they can be addressed. By understanding the challenges faced by learners in multi-grade classrooms, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders can develop strategies to improve the learning environment and ensure that all learners have access to quality education. Research on multi-grade education can also provide insights into how to effectively use the internet and other technologies to support learning during and after the pandemic. As many learners are transitioning to remote and hybrid learning environments, research on multi-grade education can help identify effective strategies for delivering instruction in these environments.

With these, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study on the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers at public elementary school of the SDO-Ilocos Sur in implementing quality basic education before during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

The following are reviewed literatures that are important in the discussion of the research project.

Multi-Grade Teaching Before the COVID-19 Pandemic. Before the pandemic, multi-grade education was used in many countries to increase access to education and to help bridge educational inequalities (Naparan & Alinsug, 2020). Multi-grade education, which is the teaching of two or more grade levels in a single classroom, allows students who are behind to get extra help while those who are ahead can be challenged by more advanced material. It also helps to reduce the cost of schooling by not requiring multiple teachers or classrooms for different grades (Leonardo, 2021). Additionally, it can also help create a more intimate learning environment for students. During the pandemic, multi-grade education has become even more important as schools have adopted distance learning models. In this context, multi-grade education can provide extra support for students who are struggling and can help to ensure that students are still receiving the same level of education despite the lack of in-person instruction. Furthermore, multi-grade education can help bring students from different grade levels together to collaborate and learn from each other, creating a more holistic learning experience.

Multi-Grade Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Multi-grade education has been an important factor in helping learners during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tolentino, 2021). It has allowed for students to remain engaged in learning, even when schools were closed due to the pandemic. Multi-grade education is a way of teaching that allows students of different ages and abilities to learn together in the same classroom (Heyward & Gill, 2020). It is a method that is often used in rural areas or in countries with limited resources, but it has been beneficial in helping students stay connected to their education

during the pandemic. Multi-grade education has also been beneficial in providing access to learning for students who have had limited access to technology (Watson, 2020). With multi-grade education, students can access learning materials that are tailored to their age and ability and can work at their own pace. This has been especially helpful for students who do not have access to the internet or other resources needed to learn from home. Finally, multi-grade education has been important in fostering relationships between students and their teachers (Milton, 2021). This has been beneficial in creating a sense of community and connectedness for students, even when they are not physically in the classroom. Teachers can provide students with personalized support and guidance, which is especially important during a time of crisis.

Multi-Grade Teaching After the COVID-19 Pandemic

Multi-grade education has become increasingly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic, many are turning to multi-grade education to meet the needs of the learners. Multi-grade education involves grouping students of different ages and grades together in one classroom (Miranda, 2021). This allows teachers to teach students at different levels and in different ways, meeting the individual needs of each student (Corsello, 2021). This type of education has been associated with increased engagement and achievement among students, as well as increased teacher effectiveness. Multi-grade education has also been beneficial in the wake of the pandemic (Leonardo, 2021). With social distancing guidelines in place, schools have had to reduce class sizes and decrease student-teacher ratios. Multi-grade education has been seen as one way to meet these needs. It allows for more individualized instruction, which can help students progress despite limited resources. It also allows teachers to better accommodate the needs of students who may have been affected by the pandemic, such as those who have experienced trauma or disruption in their education. Overall, multi-grade education has been helpful in providing students with the individualized instruction they need to succeed, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wilkey, 2019).

Moreover, the study conducted by V.C. de los Reyes and C.C. Agunias in 2019 aimed to explore the learning outcomes and teaching strategies in a multigrade classroom setting in a rural school in the Philippines. The researchers utilized a case study design, which involved observing the classroom environment, interviewing the teachers, and conducting a focus group discussion with the students.

The study found that the multigrade classroom setting has both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages include a more personalized learning experience, the opportunity for peer teaching, and the development of leadership skills among older students. However, the disadvantages include difficulty in addressing the individual needs of students and the potential for students to fall behind their grade level.

To address the challenges of the multigrade classroom setting, the teachers used a range of teaching strategies that included group work, peer tutoring, and differentiated instruction. The researchers also found that the teachers emphasized the importance of building a strong relationship with their students and creating a positive learning environment.

The study highlights the need for further research on the multigrade classroom setting in the Philippines, particularly on how it affects learning outcomes and how it can be effectively managed. The findings suggest that teachers in a multigrade classroom setting must have a diverse range of teaching strategies and be flexible to address the needs of different grade levels. Furthermore, building a positive and supportive learning environment can also be a key factor in enhancing the learning outcomes of students in the multigrade classroom setting.

Furthermore, "The Multigrade Classroom in the Philippines: A Review of Research and Practice" is a comprehensive study that reviews the research and practice of the multigrade classroom in the Philippines. The study provides an overview of the multigrade system and the factors that contribute to its implementation in the Philippines, including limited resources and high poverty incidence in rural areas.

The study highlights the advantages of the multigrade system, including the promotion of community involvement, student-centered teaching, and personalized learning experiences. However, the study also acknowledges the challenges of the multigrade system, such as the lack of teacher training and development, limited access to instructional materials, and difficulties in managing and accessing student progress.

The study recommends the need for teacher training and development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach in a multigrade setting. It also emphasizes the importance of resource materials such as textbooks, modules, and learning resources that are tailored to the multigrade system. Furthermore, the study recommends the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the multigrade system is being implemented effectively.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the implementation of the multigrade system in the Philippines. The study provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the multigrade system and the factors that contribute to its successful implementation.

Research Questions

Generally, this study sought to determine the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary school in implementing quality basic education before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur.

Specifically, the study sought answers the following questions?

1. What are lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary school in implementing quality basic education before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur?
2. What Intervention Plan can be proposed to address the findings of the study?

Scope And Delimitation

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary school in implementing quality basic education before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. Similarly, the project collected data from MTG teachers using an interview guide that was validated by experts in phenomenology. It took place in the school year 2022-2023 and analyzed data collected from chosen participants.

METHODS

For the present study, a phenomenology was adopted, the aim being to examine in more detail the experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary school in implementing quality basic education before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. According to (Creswell, 2018), a phenomenology unlocks the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants.

Sampling

This study was conducted in the public elementary schools of the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. The researcher employed purposive sampling (Hain, 2020) with the following inclusive criteria: (1) multi-grade teachers, (2) have one year experience as multi-grade teachers, (3) male or female, (4) living in Ilocos Sur and (5) willing voluntarily to participate. In the Division there are 31 multigrade teachers, so all of them was included in the research.

Data Gathering Tools

The interview guide was used to gather the needed data. The interview guide was validated by experts in phenomenology. This was also pilot tested to teachers in the secondary level but will no longer participate in the study. Likewise, the participants were requested to sign the informed consent form prior to the gathering of data.

Data Analysis

Using thematic analysis, each participant's account of their experience was examined. In a similar manner, the research will employ Colaizzi's seven-step approach, which were referenced by Morrow, Rodriguez, and King (2015). During the process of data processing, each participant's account was read through an infinite number of times. In addition to that, it was possible to identify the persuasive statements from the narrations. As a direct consequence of this, the essence will arrive at via in-depth contemplation, during which it metamorphoses into sub-themes. After some time, the many sub-themes were eventually grouped together to form the primary themes. On the other hand, the discoveries that were found to be repetitious were eliminated from the overall framework. In the end, the researcher will reach out to the participants who will take part in the study and discussed the findings with them to validate their findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents the results of the study, followed by a comprehensive discussion that synthesizes and interprets the findings in the context of the research objectives.

Theme 1: Pre-Pandemic Teaching Realities

This theme encapsulates the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers before the COVID-19 pandemic. It delves into the challenges, strategies, and successes these teachers encountered while implementing quality basic education in a multi-grade classroom setup. Teachers' approaches to addressing diverse learning needs and managing resources are explored, providing insights into the pre-pandemic teaching landscape.

Subtheme 1: Diverse Learning Needs and Individualized Approaches. Multi-grade teachers, before the pandemic, faced the intricate task of addressing the diverse learning needs of students within a single classroom. This subtheme highlights their efforts to employ individualized teaching methods that catered to varying academic abilities, learning styles, and developmental stages. Teachers implemented differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, and flexible grouping strategies to ensure that each student received appropriate attention and support.

This is supported by the responses:

"In our multi-grade classrooms, we had students with different grade levels learning together. This required us to tailor our teaching approaches to suit each student's needs. For instance, during reading sessions, we would group students based on their reading proficiency and provide targeted exercises to improve their skills."

Subtheme 2: Resource Management and Curriculum Adaptation. Effectively managing limited resources and adapting the curriculum to accommodate diverse grade levels were integral aspects of pre-pandemic teaching. Teachers had to optimize available teaching materials, textbooks, and classroom space to create an environment conducive to learning. They often modified lesson plans to align with the curriculum objectives of various grade levels while ensuring a seamless transition between subjects.

This is supported by the responses:

"Resource management was a constant challenge. We had to make the most of the materials we had, which sometimes meant improvising. Additionally, we had to modify lessons to fit different grade levels while still covering the required curriculum. It was like crafting a puzzle to ensure that all students received a well-rounded education."

Subtheme 3: Building Holistic Learning Environments. Creating holistic learning environments that fostered both academic growth and character development was a significant aspect of pre-pandemic teaching realities. Multi-grade teachers recognized the importance of cultivating positive relationships among students of

different ages, encouraging collaboration, empathy, and social skills. They organized activities that promoted teamwork, mentorship, and a sense of belonging. This is supported by the responses:

"Our classrooms were like mini communities where students from different grades interacted closely. We organized group projects that encouraged older students to guide younger ones, promoting a sense of responsibility and empathy. It was rewarding to see them grow academically and socially within this setup."

Subthemes such as diverse learning needs and individualized approaches, resource management and curriculum adaptation, and building holistic learning environments collectively illuminate the multifaceted challenges and innovative strategies that multi-grade teachers encountered in their teaching journey before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme 2: Navigating Teaching During the Pandemic

This theme focuses on the transition to remote and blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It encompasses the abrupt changes multi-grade teachers had to make to adapt their teaching methods to online and alternative modes. The challenges of maintaining student engagement, managing digital resources, and ensuring equitable access to education are explored, shedding light on the complexities of teaching during a crisis.

Subtheme 1: Challenges of Remote Engagement and Interaction. As multi-grade teachers navigated teaching during the pandemic, one of the prominent challenges was maintaining student engagement in a virtual setting. This subtheme highlights their efforts to create interactive and dynamic online lessons that captured students' attention. Teachers also grappled with the need to foster peer interaction and collaboration despite the physical distance. This is supported by the response from the participants.

"Engaging students remotely was a whole new ballgame. We had to come up with creative ways to keep them interested. I started incorporating short quizzes, virtual group discussions, and even interactive polls during live sessions to make learning more interactive."

Subtheme 2: Digital Resource Management and Adaptation. Amidst the pandemic, multi-grade teachers faced the task of leveraging digital resources effectively to facilitate learning. This subtheme explores their journey of exploring and adapting to various online tools and platforms. Teachers had to transform traditional teaching materials into digital formats, ensuring accessibility for all students and aligning them with diverse grade-level requirements. This is supported by the response from the participants.

Sample Response 2: "Transitioning to digital resources was challenging, but it opened up new opportunities. I had to convert lesson plans into digital modules, and sometimes I used educational apps to create interactive quizzes. It was a learning curve, but it allowed us to integrate technology more deeply into our teaching."

Subtheme 3: Ensuring Equity in Access to Education. The pandemic accentuated the digital divide, raising concerns about equitable access to education. This subtheme delves into the efforts made by multi-grade teachers to ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, had access to online learning. Strategies such as distributing printed materials, organizing offline activities, and collaborating with parents were instrumental in bringing this gap.

This is supported by the response from the participants.

"Not all our students had access to computers or stable internet connections. We had to get creative – printing materials and sending them to students, or even using community centers with proper safety measures. It was important to ensure that no student was left behind."

These subthemes collectively illuminate the intricate challenges and adaptive strategies multi-grade teachers embraced as they navigated teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences shared shed light on the resilience and dedication these educators exhibited while addressing the unique demands of remote and blended learning environments.

Theme 3: Coping and Innovating Amidst Challenges

This theme highlights the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers as they coped with the challenges posed by the pandemic. It delves into the innovative strategies these teachers developed to overcome obstacles, such as limited technological resources, communication barriers, and student motivation issues. Teachers' adaptability and resourcefulness in creating effective learning environments in the face of adversity are explored.

Subtheme 1: Innovative Teaching Approaches. Coping with the challenges of the pandemic, multi-grade teachers displayed remarkable innovation in their teaching methods. This subtheme captures their inventive approaches, including the use of simple household items as teaching aids, creating personalized learning plans for students, and incorporating real-life scenarios into lessons to enhance relevance and engagement. This is supported by the various responses:

"I had to think outside the box. For math lessons, I encouraged students to measure objects at home and calculate their dimensions. It made math more practical and relatable for them, even in a remote setting."

"Personalized learning plans became essential. I conducted one-on-one virtual sessions to understand each student's needs and tailored lessons accordingly. This way, I could address their challenges and provide focused support."

"To keep students engaged, I started integrating their interests into lessons. For example, I used their favorite books or movies as themes for writing assignments. It made learning enjoyable and meaningful."

Subtheme 2: Overcoming Technological Constraints. Limited access to technology posed a significant obstacle for both teachers and students. In this subtheme, the resourcefulness of multi-grade teachers in adapting to such constraints is highlighted. They utilized offline resources, organized outdoor learning experiences, and collaborated with parents to ensure continued learning in the absence of digital tools. This is supported by the responses as follows:

"I realized not all my students had smartphones or laptops. So, I designed activities that could be done offline – nature scavenger hunts, art projects, and journaling. Learning didn't have to stop because of technology."

"Collaborating with parents was key. I guided them on how to facilitate learning at home using simple materials. It was heartening to see parents actively involved in their children's education."

"I organized outdoor 'science exploration days' where students could observe and document nature around them. It was a hands-on way to learn and encouraged them to be curious."

Subtheme 3: Fostering Student Motivation and Engagement. Maintaining students' motivation and engagement emerged as a central concern. This subtheme delves into the strategies multi-grade teachers employed

to keep students motivated despite the challenges of remote learning. Teachers shared their experiences of creating interactive challenges, celebrating small victories, and providing continuous feedback to boost students' confidence.

"I introduced 'learning challenges' where students had to solve real-world problems. It sparked their curiosity and motivated them to apply their knowledge to practical situations."

"Acknowledging students' efforts was vital. I celebrated small achievements – completing assignments, participating actively – to boost their confidence and show that their hard work mattered."

"Immediate feedback played a role. I ensured students received timely feedback on their work, which kept them engaged and motivated to improve. It was like a continuous learning loop."

These subthemes collectively illuminate the resilience, adaptability, and innovation demonstrated by multi-grade teachers as they coped with the challenges of the pandemic. Their commitment to providing quality education despite limitations underscores their dedication to the well-being and learning of their students.

Theme 4: Shaping the Future of Multi-Grade Education

This theme reflects the post-pandemic experiences of multi-grade teachers as they transition back to in-person teaching and beyond. It delves into the lessons learned from the pandemic era, including the integration of technology, the importance of flexible teaching approaches, and the role of collaboration. Teachers' insights on how the pandemic experience may shape the future of multi-grade education and their perspectives on the new normal in education are examined.

Subtheme 1: Integrating Technology for Enhanced Learning. The pandemic accelerated the integration of technology into education. This subtheme explores how multi-grade teachers are now using technology as an essential tool even in traditional classroom settings. Teachers discuss the benefits of using digital resources, interactive platforms, and online assessment tools to enhance students' learning experiences and engagement. The narrations are presented below:

"The pandemic showed us the potential of technology. Even though we're back in the classroom, I still incorporate digital resources like educational apps and interactive simulations to make learning more dynamic."

"Hybrid teaching became my approach. I combine traditional methods with digital tools. Students now have access to online materials and can revisit lessons, which has been a game-changer."

"I now use online assessments regularly to gauge students' understanding. It's efficient and allows me to track their progress over time, helping me tailor my teaching to their needs."

Subtheme 2: Embracing Flexibility and Differentiation. Multi-grade teachers emphasize the value of flexibility in teaching methods and catering to diverse learning needs. This subtheme delves into how teachers are now more attuned to individual students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. They share how personalized learning plans, varied instructional strategies, and open-ended projects contribute to a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

"The pandemic taught me the importance of flexibility. I offer choices in assignments and projects, allowing students to explore topics they're passionate about. It empowers them and fosters ownership of their learning."

"I've become more observant of individual learning preferences. Some students thrive with hands-on projects, while others excel with written tasks. Adapting my teaching approach ensures no one is left behind."

"I regularly use formative assessments to gauge where students stand. It helps me adjust my teaching to their needs. Personalized learning plans have become a norm to ensure every student progresses."

Subtheme 3: Collaborative Learning and Community Engagement. The pandemic highlighted the importance of collaboration among educators, parents, and the community. In this subtheme, multi-grade teachers discuss how they continue to foster collaborative learning environments. They share insights on involving parents in their children's education, collaborating with colleagues to share effective practices, and engaging the community to create a supportive educational ecosystem.

"Parent involvement remains crucial. I hold regular virtual meetings to update parents on their child's progress and involve them in decision-making for the classroom. It's a partnership that benefits everyone."

"Peer collaboration has become integral. We hold interdisciplinary planning sessions where teachers from different grades brainstorm ideas and resources. It enriches our teaching and benefits the students."

"Community engagement has extended beyond the classroom. I've organized virtual career talks and invited professionals to share insights with students. It connects classroom learning to the real world."

These subthemes collectively portray how multi-grade teachers are leveraging the lessons learned from the pandemic to reshape the landscape of education. Their adaptability, technology integration, and collaborative approach are contributing to a more versatile and student-centered learning environment, indicative of the transformative potential that emerges from challenging times.

Intervention Plan: Enhancing Multi-Grade Education in the Post-Pandemic Era

The findings from the study on the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary schools before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic reveal significant insights that can guide the development of an effective intervention plan. This plan aims to address the challenges highlighted by teachers and capitalize on the opportunities identified, ensuring the quality of basic education is sustained and improved in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur.

Objective 1: Strengthening Technology Integration

Implementation Steps:

1. Establish a Technology Integration Task Force comprising teachers, IT specialists, and curriculum experts.
2. Develop comprehensive training modules on effective technology integration in multi-grade classrooms.
3. Conduct regular workshops and seminars to equip teachers with the skills to integrate technology seamlessly.
4. Create a digital repository of resources, lesson plans, and interactive tools for teachers to access and adapt.

Objective 2: Personalizing Learning Approaches

1. Implementation Steps:
2. Introduce a Professional Learning Community (PLC) focused on differentiation and personalized learning strategies.
3. Facilitate regular peer-sharing sessions where teachers discuss successful differentiation methods.
4. Encourage teachers to develop personalized learning plans for each student, taking into account their learning styles and strengths.
5. Incorporate teacher mentoring and coaching to guide educators in effectively implementing personalized approaches.

Objective 3: Cultivating Collaboration and Community Engagement

Implementation Steps:

1. Launch a platform for cross-grade collaboration, allowing teachers to share best practices and resources.
2. Initiate partnerships with local professionals and organizations to provide real-world insights through virtual sessions.
3. Establish a parent-teacher community that encourages consistent communication and involvement in their child's education.
4. Organize regular community engagement events, showcasing students' projects and fostering community support for education.

Objective 4: Professional Development for the New Normal

Implementation Steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive professional development program that addresses the evolving needs of multi-grade teachers.
2. Incorporate modules on well-being, stress management, and resilience to support teachers' emotional and mental health.
3. Collaborate with educational institutions to offer accredited courses that enhance teachers' skills in online teaching, blended learning, and hybrid classrooms.
4. Provide opportunities for teachers to attend conferences, webinars, and workshops that showcase innovative teaching practices.

Objective 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Implementation Steps:

1. Establish an assessment framework to measure the impact of the intervention plan on teachers' practices and student outcomes.
2. Regularly collect feedback from teachers, students, parents, and community members to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
3. Conduct periodic reviews and adjustments to the intervention plan based on the feedback and evaluation results.
4. Ensure continuous communication and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the sustained effectiveness of the intervention plan.

CONCLUSIONS

1. In conclusion, the multifaceted insights gained from the exploration of these subthemes under the major themes of "Pre-Pandemic Teaching Realities," "Navigating Teaching During the Pandemic," "Coping and Innovating Amidst Challenges," and "Shaping the Future of Multi-Grade Education" collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary

schools before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. The narratives of these teachers illuminate their dedication, resourcefulness, and adaptability as they navigated a dynamic educational landscape characterized by unprecedented challenges and opportunities. These findings underscore the resilience exhibited by educators in addressing diverse learning needs, managing resources, overcoming technological constraints, fostering student engagement, and embracing innovative teaching methodologies. Moreover, the post-pandemic era is witnessing the integration of technology, a commitment to flexible teaching approaches, and a strong emphasis on collaboration among educators, parents, and the community. As the educational journey evolves, these insights will serve as a foundation for the Division to strategically shape the future of multi-grade education, enhancing the quality and inclusivity of the learning experience for students within the region.

2. A proposed intervention plan underscores the imperative role of addressing the challenges and harnessing the lessons learned from the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in public elementary schools before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. With a multifaceted approach encompassing technology integration, personalized learning strategies, collaboration and community engagement, professional development, and vigilant monitoring, the plan envisages a comprehensive transformation of the educational landscape within the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. By providing educators with the tools, strategies, and support needed to adapt to the new normal in education, this intervention plan not only seeks to overcome immediate challenges but also lays the foundation for a more resilient, inclusive, and student-centric education system. As the Division implements this plan, it will be pivotal to sustain a commitment to ongoing assessment, adaptation, and stakeholder collaboration, ensuring the continuous evolution of multi-grade education and the realization of enhanced educational outcomes for students in the post-pandemic era.

Recommendations

1. **Holistic Professional Development:** Develop a comprehensive professional development program tailored to the evolving needs of multi-grade teachers. This program may encompass training on effective technology integration, differentiated instruction, flexible teaching approaches, and collaborative strategies. Regular workshops, webinars, and mentoring sessions should be provided to empower teachers with the skills and knowledge required to navigate diverse classroom environments effectively.
2. **Equitable Access to Technology:** Prioritize equitable access to technology by establishing a technology resource center within each school. Ensure that teachers and students have access to necessary devices and reliable internet connectivity. Implement strategies such as lending devices to students in need, providing offline learning options, and facilitating community partnerships to bridge the digital divide and ensure all students can engage effectively in both in-person and remote learning.
3. **Personalized Learning Plans:** Encourage the development and implementation of personalized learning plans for students across grade levels. Provide teachers with resources and tools to assess individual students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Empower educators to tailor their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning preferences and ensure every student's educational journey is optimized for growth and success.
4. **Collaborative Learning Communities:** Foster a culture of collaboration among educators, parents, and community members. Establish regular forums for teachers to share effective practices, discuss challenges, and exchange innovative teaching ideas. Encourage partnerships with parents through regular communication, involvement in decision-making processes, and participation in students' educational journeys.
5. **Adaptive Curriculum and Resources:** Develop a dynamic curriculum that integrates technology, real-world applications, and interactive learning experiences. Provide teachers with resources, including digital tools, virtual simulations, and open educational resources, to enhance engagement and cater to

various learning needs. Create a repository of adaptable lesson plans and materials that align with multi-grade teaching requirements.

6. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of the intervention plan. Regularly gather feedback from teachers, students, parents, and the community to identify areas of success and areas that require improvement. Use this feedback to refine and adapt the intervention plan over time, ensuring its alignment with evolving educational needs and goals.

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