

## Investigation Of Status Of Multi-Grade Teaching In Rural Punjab

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### Abstract

*Since most Pakistanis reside in rural regions, our education system needs multi-grade instruction like other countries. Development of multi-grade teaching models is urgent. Thus, this study investigate the status of multigrade teaching in Punjab, Pakistan. The study explored public primary school teachers' views on multi-grade teaching. The study may help multi-grade instructors assess their teaching quality and identify strengths and deficiencies. Due to funding and time restrictions, the research focused on District Gujranwala's public sector elementary schools. The descriptive study used opinionnaire to poll District Gujranwala teachers. All 799 primary schools in Gujranwala that employ multi-grade teaching were included in this study, and 379 were randomly selected as 25% of the population. The opinion questionnaire collected data. After reviewing the literature, an opinionnaire was created to analyse sample answers. The opinionnaire included 54 statements. Responses were taken on five-point likert scales. Table statistical analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics, and discussion on multi-grade primary teaching models followed. The final multi-grade teaching model featured methodologies, tactics, resources, and teacher training. Teachers were advised on various tactics, policymakers on improving shady places, prospective researchers on factors, and researchers on study procedures.*

**Keywords:** *Multigrade teaching, rural education, primary education, large classes, Classroom management.*

### Introduction

A region that is physically and demographically disadvantaged is characterised by having a low population density, being secluded, and being difficult to access in terms of transportation, communities, and in<sup>1</sup>frastructure. Multigrade teaching is a characteristic of such an area. The modest number of pupils has resulted in the establishment of classrooms that feature kids from many grade levels. To be more specific, it refers to the combination of two, three, four, or even five grades from the primary cycle with the organisation of the educational process, which is then under the supervision of a single educator.

Educating students of many grade levels is a very difficult task. As a result of not having enough time to handle lessons, teachers have expressed their dissatisfaction (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004). For example, transportation, illiteracy of parents, poor economic backgrounds, excessive effort on the part of the teacher, a lack of time, language problems, and teacher challenges in the actual teaching and learning process are some of the challenges that multigrade teachers face in Africa, Turkey, and the Netherlands (Condy & Blease, 2014; Engin, 2018). Some of the obstacles that prevent effective education from

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occurring include a lack of interest on the part of parents in their children's education, inadequate funding from the government, inadequate resources, instructors who are not adequately trained, and teachers who teach many grades (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). The teaching of English language in multigrade classes in Turkey is becoming increasingly difficult due to the perception that instructors have a poor level of expertise in that topic (Doğan, Çapan, & Ciğerci, 2020). According to Checchi and De Pala (2018), as a consequence of this, the performance of pupils who are enrolled in multigrade classrooms also becomes poor.

Some of the challenges that elementary school teachers face in the majority of poor nations, particularly in rural and distant places, include a lack of training as well as an inadequate amount of resources and findings (Magno, 2014). In addition to this, multigrade schools are typically located in more rural places. The teachers of many grades then look for methods to improve their service to the kids. According to Castigador (2019), they even contributed a portion of their pay to finance the acquisition of educational resources for their pupils. For the sake of the well-being of their students, they are sharing the resources that they have. Although primary teachers receive training to prepare them for the real world of teaching throughout their practice teaching years, this training does not concentrate on teaching several grades (Cadosales, 2017). They are prepared to be ready for the actual world of teaching. According to Cadosales (2011), it is extremely important for teachers to have the capacity to effectively give lessons to their pupils.

A comprehensive analysis of the educational systems in nations all over the world reveals the prevalence of multigrade courses. This is particularly the case in regions that are physically and demographically disadvantaged, places with a low population density, locations that are secluded, and areas that are difficult to reach. It is necessary to organise these kinds of courses because of the limited number of students enrolled in the school; but, at the same time, the goal is to ensure that every kid has the opportunity to engage in educational activities. The vast majority of the time, this particular form of schooling is the only educational opportunity available in these regions (Acatrinei, 2016).

The most common word that is used to represent this style of education, which is organised in separate locations, is the term "multigrade classes." A multigrade class is a classroom setting in which students from two, three, four, or even five different classes are combined into a single class and taught by a single instructor. There is another word for these kinds of groups, and that is multi-age classes. On the other hand, the terms are not interchangeable. In accordance with the causes that led to the establishment of these classifications, they are distinct: In contrast to multigrade courses, which are typically produced out of necessity, multi-age classes are defined as mixed classes that are created at the student's discretion (Ronksley-Pavia, Barton & Pendergast, 2019). Classes in the Jena Plan and the alternative Montessori education systems are characterised by the fact that they are comprised of pupils of varying ages, often three years apart, and are taught by the same instructor.

Through the use of multigrade classes, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has identified acceptable approaches for many countries to accomplish the second Millennium Development Goals, which are Education for All, particularly for poor countries (Little, 2005). There should be no barriers to the growth and development of kids who come from underprivileged regions and have diverse points of view. This should not be a hindrance in their development. And in these areas, we come across kids who have great goals, who are backed by enormous cognitive-affective potentials, and who have the same right to education as their classmates who have the opportunity to live in towns with a higher population density (Opris, Scheau & Mosin, 2014).

This style of education is backed by pedagogical reasons in some nations. Education specialists are aware of the significance that primary school plays in the lives of

the community as well as the advantages that are defined by this institution in each and every community. In other nations, it is fought against by economic considerations, such as the high expenses involved in attending these schools and the preference to transport students to other schools wherever possible. These economic reasons have been demonstrated to be erroneous on occasion by practice, which has revealed that the cost of transferring students to another site is more than the cost of paying for building maintenance. Regrettably, educational motivations are being neglected more and more, and there is a propensity to reorganise school networks by eliminating tiny schools and sending students to schools that are located close.

The multigrade classroom is seen as a natural community of students, with an emphasis not only on teacher-student interaction but also on student-student interaction. This is due to the fact that the most effective method for a student to acquire knowledge is to be actively involved in activities with their classmates and the surrounding environment. Every student is acknowledged for their uniqueness, and the choices they have on how they study are taken into consideration. The needs and interests of each individual student have an impact on the teaching process (Ronksley-Pavia et al, 2019). It has been demonstrated through years of experience in the field of education that such a class is beneficial to the social development of children and promotes collaboration to a larger extent (Opris & Opris, 2012). Individualised learning is supplemented with cooperative learning, which places an emphasis on the social aspect of learning through the framework of interpersonal processes. When it comes to the atmosphere in the classroom, harmony and comprehension are the most prominent characteristics. Students engage with one another in a variety of ways, which builds in sentiments of acceptance and sympathy. Additionally, students' self-esteem grows as a consequence of the positive praise they receive for the outcomes achieved from the work that they have done (Opris, 2014). Cooperation and rivalry should be intentionally alternated with one another for the purpose of achieving multiple benefits. As a result of the rivalry, students will acquire a drive for self-improvement. This will be accomplished by the use of certain instructional methodologies that will, to a certain degree, replace the competition between students with the competition between themselves, which will include students trying to better their skills (Molan, 2014). Therefore, the study in hand explores the status of multigrade teaching in Punjab, Pakistan.

### **Purpose and Significance**

The current study aimed to explore the status of multigrade teaching in rural areas of Punjab, Pakistan. The majority of Pakistanis live in rural regions, however their distribution varies. Population density varies nationwide. Baluchistan, the largest province by geography, has the fewest people. Such schools typically include multi-grade classrooms. To quickly meet primary education universalization objectives, this barrier must be solved. As in other countries, Pakistan's education system needs a multi-grade teaching format. Thus, establishing a primary school teaching method across grade levels is the difficulty.

Multi-grade instruction in Pakistan, especially for basic kids, has to be examined because it is a global issue. The findings may give multi-grade teachers a broader viewpoint and knowledge base. The research suggests ways to improve for teachers who work with kids across grades. Its concepts may assist multi-grade teachers enhance their abilities and fulfill student needs. This technique might help educators and policymakers improve kids' performance in multi-grade classes. It may also suggest grade-level instruction improvements.

### **Methodology**

Survey research methodologies were employed for this investigation. All primary schools of Gujranwala Division in which multi-grade teaching are conducted (799 scholols) were

the population of the study. The sample was divided into five strata, which are Tehsil Gujranwala City, Tehsil Gujranwala Sadar, Tehsil Kamoke, Tehsil Noshera Virkan and Tehsil Wazirabad. Total of 379 teachers were selected as a sample of the study from these tehsils. Opinionnaire was used as a tool for the collection of data. The opinionnaire was developed in the light of extensive literature review conducted on the concept of Multi-grade Teaching and other models found regarding this type of teaching. The opinionnaire consisted of 60 statements. A five-point likert scale was used to take the responses of respondents. Before actual administration, opinionnaire was validated and tried out.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Demographic Analysis**

Out of the total sample, 197 participants (52%) identified as male and 182 participants (48%) identified as female. 40 teacher (10.6%) earned a BA/BSc degree, 254 teachers (67%) earned an MA/MSc degree, and 81 teachers (21.4%) earned an MS/M.Phil degree. Only 4 teachers (1.1%) earned a PhD degree. the majority of teacher, i.e., 162 (42.7%) have more than 15 years of experience, followed by 104 teachers (27.4%) with 10 to 15 years of experience. Furthermore, 72 teachers (19%) have 5 to 10 years of experience, 25 teachers (6.6%) have 1 to 5 years of experience, and only 16 teachers (4.2%) have less than 1 year of experience.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

#### **Classroom Management:**

The overall perception ranged from mostly (45.9%) to sometimes (17.7%). As per primary teachers' opinions the most used classroom strategy (M= 4.93, SD=0.269) was that seats are arranged according to the needs of the students. The second most used strategy (M= 4.82, SD= 0.522) was that timetable is flexible as per the needs of the students. The third most used strategy (M= 4.79, S.D= 0.555) was that seats are arranged according to the needs of the subjects. The strategies like the teacher is responsible for organizing a well-managed classroom (M=4.56, SD=0.681), the teacher teaches one grade while other grades work independently (M=4.27, SD=1.030), seating arrangement in column is useful for students (M=4.47, SD=0.804), the conventional School Curriculum is taught in Multi-grade classrooms (M=4.33, SD=0.828), seating arrangement in a multi-grade teaching is permanent (M=4.29, SD=1.00), the teacher uses white board in multi-grade teaching most of the time (M=4.21, SD=0.930), the Curriculum is up to the level of the students (M=4.08,SD= 0.919), brilliant students cooperate with the dull students in their work (M=4.02, SD= 0.727), seating arrangement in rows is useful for students work (M= 4.01, SD=1.159), timetable is followed (M=4.01, SD=0.892), seating arrangement in a circle shape is suitable for students (M= 3.88, SD=0.966), peer tutoring is an effective strategy in multi-grade teaching (M=3.88, SD=0.793), the older students cooperate with the younger ones in their work (M=3.71, SD= 1.138) were also had high agreement that these are used generally in multi-grade classrooms. The primary teachers opinioned that a few strategies were those that were used sometimes in their multi-grade classrooms such as Monitor is engaged for different tasks by teacher for students (M=3.43, SD=1.147), Cluster design is suitable for the primary level students' classroom (M=3.27, SD=1.003).The strategy that was used rarely by the teachers was Multimedia is available for teaching in multi-grade setting (M=2.55, SD=1.397).

#### **Alternative Teaching Methods:**

The alternative teaching method that was used mostly (M=4.15, SD=0.877) was the teacher teaches Islamiyat with lecture method. The alternative teaching method that was used at second most (M=4.13, S. D= 0.840) places was the teacher teaches English with grammar

translation method. The method used at the third most place ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=0.738$ ) was the teacher teaches mathematics with inductive method. Other methods included the teacher teaches English with direct method ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=0.951$ ), the teacher teaches mathematics with activity based method ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=0.878$ ), the teacher teaches Science with lecture method ( $M=3.66$ ,  $SD=1.055$ ), the teacher teaches Urdu with inductive method ( $M=3.66$ ,  $SD=0.889$ ), the teacher teaches Science with discovery method ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=0.992$ ), and the teacher teaches mathematics with deductive method was also used mostly ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=0.820$ ) by primary teachers.

As per primary teachers' opinions, the alternative teaching methods that were used sometimes were the teacher teaches Urdu with deductive method ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SD=0.996$ ), the teacher teaches Islamiyat with demonstration method ( $M=3.34$ ,  $SD=1.080$ ), the teacher teaches Islamiyat with activity method most of the time ( $M=3.17$ ,  $SD=1.113$ ), the teacher teaches mathematics with Play way method ( $M=3.13$ ,  $SD=0.997$ ).

### **Instructional Strategies:**

The overall range of their opinions ranged from always (34.33%) to sometimes (37.88%). The instructional strategy that was used mostly ( $M=4.53$ ,  $SD=0.614$ ) was the teacher uses the national language as medium of instruction. The second most strategy used by primary teacher in their multi-grade classrooms was active participation of students in multi-grade classroom is encouraged ( $M=4.32$ ,  $SD=0.785$ ). The strategy that was used at third most place was the teacher provides opportunity to students' collaborative learning ( $M=4.28$ ,  $SD=0.724$ ). Other strategies included teacher plans activities before teaching the lesson as per curriculum ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=0.974$ ), the teacher gives extra attention to children with special education needs while teaching in multi-grade classroom ( $M=4.07$ ,  $SD=0.854$ ), and the teacher provides opportunity to students for individual learning ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=0.913$ ).

### **Instructional Material:**

The overall range of their opinions ranged from always (25.46%) to sometimes (26.03%). The instructional material that was used mostly ( $M=3.95$ ,  $SD=0.883$ ) was the teacher prepares flexible learning materials for multi-grade teaching. The second most strategy used by primary teacher in their multi-grade classrooms was the teacher considers learners' individual differences while planning for instructional material ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=.012$ ). The strategy that was used at third most place was Teaching and learning material is developed using locally available affordable materials ( $M=3.87$ ,  $SD=0.965$ ). Other instructional materials used were appropriate teaching and learning materials are available for Multi-grade teaching ( $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=1.003$ ), the teacher develops self-instructional materials for students learning at their own pace ( $M=3.80$ ,  $SD=0.861$ ), the teacher develops students' worksheet on different concepts as per the level of students in the curriculum ( $M=3.77$ ,  $SD=0.942$ ), teachers have practical guidebooks for teaching in multi-grade setting at their classroom ( $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=1.195$ ), and the teacher develops activities for non-taught groups ( $M=3.51$ ,  $SD=0.868$ ).

**Training of Teachers:** The overall range of their opinions ranged from always (31.67%) to sometimes (17.23%). The training of teacher that was used mostly ( $M=4.49$ ,  $SD=0.688$ ) was Multi-grade Teaching needs more preparation and planning than mono-grade teaching. The second most used training was the teacher is trained for Primary School Teaching (PST) ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=0.869$ ). Third used training was the teacher is trained for Multi-grade Teaching (MGT) ( $M=3.87$ ,  $SD=1.050$ ). Other trainings were the teachers also make arrangement for individual learning ( $M=3.81$ ,  $SD=0.859$ ), the teachers arrange group learning for students ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=0.829$ ), and government provides support and facilitation for Multi-grade teaching ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=1.232$ ).

## **Conclusion**

During the process of answering the research questions that were presented, the study uncovered important insights. The perspectives of instructors offered insight on practical factors such as seating arrangements and the usage of traditional teaching resources like chalkboards, despite the fact that certain classroom management practices that were proposed by teachers did not display statistical significance. These findings highlight the difficulty of managing classes that contain students of many grade levels, particularly in rural areas that are limited in resources. During the course of the research, a variety of instructional strategies were found for the purpose of teaching topics such as Islamiyat, mathematics, Urdu, and science. These strategies included lectures, demonstrations, and activity-based approaches. The results of this study are consistent with those of other studies and highlight the need of employing a variety of instructional approaches in order to meet the varied educational requirements of students in multi-grade classes. In addition, the research identified a variety of instructional tactics that are supported by primary school instructors. These strategies and approaches include language of teaching, collaborative methods, and individualised attention to the requirements of pupils. Personalised instruction and diversified learning experiences are extremely important in multi-grade settings, and these tactics are consistent with the statistically determined model, which emphasises the significance of these aspects. When it comes to successfully navigating multi-grade teaching contexts, the study highlighted the necessity of teacher training as an essential component. Although they acknowledged the training that primary school teachers had received, participants emphasised the necessity for specialised training that is targeted to the specific requirements of classrooms that contain students from many grade levels. This lends credence to previous studies that have highlighted the significance of continuous professional development for teachers who are responsible for teaching students from several grade levels.

## **Future Research Implications**

1. **Anecdotal Evidence:** Gaining valuable insights into the instructional methodologies employed, classroom dynamics, and teacher-student interactions can be accomplished through the observation of multi-grade classrooms. Observations may be performed in an organized or unorganized fashion.
2. **Surveys and questionnaires:** An expanded array of survey and questionnaire formats can be employed to gather data pertaining to student outcomes, curriculum development, and teacher preparation and training. It is possible to conduct surveys and questionnaires with parents, students, and educators.
3. **Interviews:** Further comprehensive data regarding teacher preparation and training, curriculum design, and classroom dynamics can be obtained through the utilization of interviews. It is possible to conduct interviews with parents, students, and instructors.
4. **Case studies:** In multi-grade classrooms, the experiences of students and instructors can be investigated in depth through the use of case studies. Case studies have the capacity to furnish comprehensive insights into curriculum development, classroom dynamics, and instructional methodologies.
5. **Standardized assessments:** Academic achievement can be gauged and compared between students enrolled in multi-grade classrooms and those in traditional classrooms through the use of standardized assessments.
6. **Utilization of focus groups:** In multi-grade classrooms, information regarding the perspectives and experiences of educators, learners, and guardians can be gathered via focus groups. Participants may have the opportunity to express their opinions and engage in dialogue with one another in focus groups.
7. **Action research:** In multi-grade classrooms, action research can be utilized to evaluate the efficacy of instructional strategies and curriculum development. By

involving educators in the research process, action research empowers them to recognize and resolve problems within their own classrooms.

8. **Standardized assessments:** Academic achievement can be gauged and compared between students enrolled in multi-grade classrooms and those in traditional classrooms through the use of standardized assessments.

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