



## Multigrade teaching in primary schools in rural and remote areas of Assin Central District of the Central Region of Ghana: Teachers' perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

The study explored teachers' perspectives on teaching multigrade classes in rural and remote areas. It was a phenomenological study that was guided by the constructivist theory. Teachers who are involved in multigrade teaching in primary schools in the Assin Central District of the Central Region of Ghana constituted the population of the study. All 12 multigrade primary teachers were included (census) in the study and were interviewed. Data were recorded and transcribed and analyzed through the thematic and narrative approaches. The study revealed that multigrade teaching has become an unavoidable option for providing instructions to rural and remote learners. It requires teachers who are well-trained, resourced, innovative, and committed to embracing this practice. However, the majority of the multigrade teachers lacked the requisite knowledge to teach multigrade classes as a result of a lack of training in multigrade pedagogy. Although teachers have not received any formal training on multigrade teaching, they were able to adopt strategies such as collaboration, peer tutoring, and differentiation to effectively meet the diverse needs of pupils. As a recommendation, multigrade teaching calls for much broader regulation and policy measures to address the problems, especially in remote and rural education systems. The implication is that teacher training institutions across the country should officially recognize and accept multigrade teaching as a key pedagogical option and design courses that will help teachers cope with multigrade classes, especially in rural and remote places where teachers are in short supply. Another implication for practice is that teacher training institutions should include in their curriculum the knowledge, skills, and experiences teacher-trainees require to teach multigrade classes. Professional development programs and in-service programs in multigrade teaching should also be developed for all practicing teachers.

**Keywords:** Collaboration, Differentiation, Integration, Monitoring, Monograde, Multigrade, Peer Teaching, Supervision

### I. INTRODUCTION

Primary education in Ghana forms part of Ghana's basic education structure which is the minimum level of formal education every Ghanaian child of school-going age is entitled to. Primary education in Ghana lasts years (ages 6–11). The curriculum is free and compulsory and is defined as "the minimum period of schooling needed to ensure that children acquire basic literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills as well as skills for creativity and healthy living" (Ministry of Education, 2018). It is divided into lower and upper primary. In Ghana, primary education commonly occurs in predominantly monograde classrooms. This is underpinned by the philosophy that children of similar ages are likely to need similar learning opportunities in order to acquire the knowledge, values and skills required for their age. In this context, primary education starts at age 4 and lasts six years. It is structured in four phases: phase 1 consists of two years of KG (ages 4 and 5), phase 2 is made up of 3 years of lower primary education (ages 6 to 8), whilst phase 3 consists of 3 years of upper primary education (ages 9 to 11). This is contrary to the belief that grouping children across different age span is considered to be a less effective in achieving the objectives of primary education in Ghana (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The main objectives of primary education which is offered through the monograde approach are: developing the child's ability to count, use numbers, read, write and communicate effectively; laying the foundation for the development of the child's ability for enquiry and creativity; developing sound moral attitudes and a healthy appreciation for our cultural heritage in children as well as developing in the child ability to adapt constructively to a changing environment. These objectives are attained through the various courses taught at the primary school level of education in Ghana. These courses include English language, Ghanaian languages, science, history, RME, creative arts, computing, mathematics, physical education, and French (not compulsory for all basic schools) There is no certificate of completion at the end of primary school (MoE, 2018). Primary school teachers in Ghana are trained by either the University of Cape Coast or University of Education, Winneba as well as affiliate Colleges of Education in Ghana. These teachers are trained in subject specific perspective but are also trained in general courses. They are provided with

an all-round core courses and adequate content knowledge, skills and experiences to teach effectively at the primary school level (Ghana Education Service [GES], 2022) in mono-grades where learners of the same age, abilities, aptitude, interest and needs were grouped together in classes or grades. In Ghana's monograde primary education system, all teacher education, text books, policies, curricula, as well as assessment are established according to monograde principles. This enables monograde teachers to develop activities for all subjects for a single grade. This promotes effective teaching since teachers concentrate on single grades.

In recent years, access to primary education in Ghana has seen remarkable progress. According to GES (2022), enrolment in primary schools increased from 27% in 2019 to 30% in 2020 and the net primary school enrolment rates in 2022 stands at 84.4%. Despite the significant progress that have been made in primary education in Ghana, there are still barriers that hinder effective implementation of primary education, especially, in rural and remote areas in Ghana. Among the challenges are teacher shortages and absenteeism, particularly in rural areas. Due to the unavailability of amenities in the rural areas, teachers posted to remote and rural areas often do not accept postings (Addy, 2013), where they accept, they sometimes vacate their posts in no time. The GES appeal to teachers posted to remote areas to report to duty, often fall on death ears. According to the Ghana Education Service, as of 2020, 44.8% of schools have teacher vacancies (GES, 2022). This usually results in a situation where one teacher teaches two or more curriculum grade levels, hence, the phenomenon of multigrade teaching.

In multigrade classes, a single teacher teaches pupils from multiple grade levels either in the same classroom or in different classrooms within the same timetabled period. Multigrade classes are often found in rural areas where there are few teachers. This phenomenon becomes the unavoidable choice where teachers are in short supply especially in the remote and hard-to-reach areas and where learning resources are woefully inadequate (Hargreaves, 2001). Multigrade classes are common in Ghana, although not official, and many other developing countries, where they are often seen as the only inevitable option for education. In Nepal, multigrade teaching has been described as the situation in which a teacher teaches more than one class at the same time either in the same classroom or in a different classroom. In Malaysia, multigrade teaching involves the teaching of children from two or more grade levels in one classroom. The combination is usually of grades close to each other; for example, one and two, five and six. In Pakistan and Australia, however, as many as five or six grades may be combined into one class. Such contexts require the employment of particular teaching methodologies and effective classroom administration. In Indonesia, multigrade teaching is commonly found in small to large sized schools in which a teacher teaches more than one grade or class at the same time, either in different classrooms or in the same room divided by a partition (Virgílio, 2007).

In most developing countries, multigrade classes arise out of necessity rather than choice. For instance, in Zambia, multigrade teaching has been introduced in schools which are mostly in rural and sparsely populated areas and have difficult terrain. The main reasons justifying the introduction of multigrade classes include: 1) To increase access to education provision in disadvantaged areas; 2) To increase access to learning in understaffed schools; 3) To maximize use of available teachers and classroom space and; 4) To make use of available resources in the most cost-effective way (Virgílio, 2007). In Mozambique, the government's commitment to provide primary education of seven years is seriously compromised by the existing incomplete primary schools. This incomplete schools in the country have been addressed through the adoption of multigrade as a result of teacher shortage (Virgílio, 2007).

Officially, there are no multigrade schools in Ghana. However, multigrade teaching is not new. A cursory observation in several lower primary schools in the Central Region of Ghana, has revealed the emergence of situations where monograde teachers are required to teach different curriculum grade levels at the same time during school periods. Since teachers are trained in the skills and knowledge in teaching monograde in Ghana, multigrade teachers lack the requisite pedagogical skills, innovative teaching methods and strategies for teaching multigrade classes and that there is a lack of policy guidance for these teachers (Department of Education, 2008a). Besides, little or no attention has been given to phenomenon. This phenomenon therefore deserves scholarly attention as an object of scientific study. Notwithstanding this, there has been little research on teaching and learning in small rural schools over the last two decades especially on multigrade teaching, and information on the incidence of multigrade teaching is difficult to find (Mulryan-Kyne, 2007). Most research on multigrade teaching has focused on its impact on students' learning (Little, 2006). The discussion on multigrade teaching has often focused on comparing students' performance in monogrades and multigrades classes, hence, the need to undertake this study.

## 1.1 Research Questions

- i. What strategies do multigrade teachers use to implement single grade curriculum on multigrade basis?
- ii. What knowledge are needed by multigrade teachers to teach multigrade classes?
- iii. What challenges are encountered by multigrade teachers?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.2 Theoretical Review

#### 2.2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism was the key theory that underpinned this study. Developed by Jean Piaget (1896-1980), constructivism promotes active knowledge construction by learners which tailors learning to meeting the desired learning needs of each student. According to Krahenbuhl (2016), constructivism is an epistemological view of knowledge, arguing that knowledge is derived in a meaning-making process through which learners construct individual interpretations of their experiences and thus, construct meaning in their minds. Tomljenovic and Vorkapic (2020) contrast the "transmissive" or "traditional" approach to learning, which involves students passively receiving facts presented by their teacher, with "transformational" learning built on cognitivist and constructivist theories, which promote the student's active participation through exploratory, problem-based learning. In a multigrade teaching, where one teacher instructs multiple grade levels in one room, the constructivist teacher will encourage student-centered, flexible, and collaborative learning where learners will actively initiate, build and construct knowledge based on their own experiences. In this regard, learners do not passively receive information. By creating conducive constructivist environment with rich learning materials and supportive opportunities for exploration, the teacher observes and supports student thinking.

In this regard, the teacher caters for diversity in multigrade classrooms by fostering self-directed, cooperative and inquiry-based learning which allows students to construction meaning regarding the experiences they encounter at their own pace (Tomljenovic & Vorkapic, 2020). Thus, multigrade teaching requires teachers to act as facilitators by guiding learners towards the attainment of their desired learning needs. The teacher scaffolds learners to the desired level where learners can manage and control their own learning. Rooted in Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and developed by Jerome Bruner, scaffolding aims to foster independent learning by meeting students at their current skill level. According to McIsaac (2019), scaffolding is the way teachers create the conditions that allow children to solve problems and learn new things. It is a crucial aspect of effective teaching, by which the teacher frequently modifies the level of support according to the level of performance of the students. The teacher may promote scaffolding in a multigrade classroom through providing cues, adapting learning activities to learners' ability, and modelling their abilities. To enhance the attainment of instructional objectives in a multigrade instruction, constructivism enables teachers to facilitate the zone of proximal development of every learner. Thus, the teacher encourages learners to work on tasks that are not only beyond their current level of understanding, but still within their reach with optimum support. This enables learners to own their own learning, interactive with peers, develop new skills, experiences and become aware of their own thinking processes. The constructivist teachers should therefore create learning centres which create room for hands-on exploration, technology-enhanced and diverse ways of employing multiple learning styles to meet individual differences in the multigrade classroom.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

#### 2.2.1 Strategies Teachers Employ in Multigrade Classes

Effective multigrade teaching strategies involve creating a flexible, organized environment that support effective teaching. Gray's (2023) study pointed out differentiated learning as a crucial component of multigrade education. According to Gray, differentiated learning helps to ensure that all students are challenged and engaged in the learning process. By using flexible grouping, choice boards, personalized learning plans, project-based learning, and technology integration, teachers can create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment for their students. Providing activities for remediation or extension allows the teacher to gauge a child's level of learning. Activities can be differentiated by varying levels of complexity for several reasons, including the learning outcome, learning process, or complexity of the learning product (Gray, 2023). One their part, Taole and Mncube (2012) study showed that peer tutoring is key instructional practices the support effective teaching in multigrade classes. In peer tutoring, learners from different grade levels are paired together to learn from each other. This method involves assigning older or more experienced learners to assist younger or less-experienced learners in their studies. It requires the use of cooperative learning techniques that create an environment of trust among learners of different levels. The main goal of peer tutoring is to encourage collaboration, communication, and critical-thinking skills among learners while improving their academic performance. In this strategy, the learners act as teachers of other learners. Peer instruction engages students during class through activities that require each student to apply core concepts being presented, and then to explain those concepts to their fellow students. This promotes sharing of knowledge, meaningful engagement among learners in the classroom (Taole & Mncube, 2012).

Authentic cooperative learning opportunities have also been identified and suggested as crucial for multigrade classes. This strategy, according to Gray (2023), engages learners to work together in small groups for the purpose of accomplishing a shared task in small groups. In addition, Hoffman (2002) emphasizes flexible grouping strategies as

significant contributors to students' learning in multi-age classes. One can also assume that successful organization will be linked to the student-related social practices of the teachers and fairly distributed time management between the different groups of learners. Another strategy for promoting multigrade teaching is the split timetable and the common timetable strategies. Proposed by Cornish (2006a), the split timetable strategy enables teachers in one class with two grades study different subjects. According to Cornish, the teacher prepares two different lessons and alternates them between the grades. The common timetable strategy on the other hand enables students in multigrade schools to study the same subject at the same time, but on the basis of different instructions and activities for each grade.

### **2.2.2 Knowledge Needed by Multigrade Teachers**

According to Kucita et al. (2013), most teachers feel incompetent for multigrade teaching because they are inadequately trained in multigrade teaching. They therefore have little to no knowledge in delivering multigrade classes even before they enter the actual classroom. Since teacher training institutions usually train teachers for monograde teaching (Kivunja & Sims, 2015), practicing teachers are more comfortable with monograde teaching than multigrade teaching and have more knowledge in monograde teaching. The nature of multigrade classes requires teachers who have adequately been prepared to effectively handle multigrade classes. This requires teachers to have knowledge in both content selection and knowledge in the choice of suitable and appropriate instructional resources and practices that suit the diverse needs of learners in diverse grades. In this regard, teacher training institutions which prepare teachers for primary schools are expected to train teachers in implementing multigrade instructions. The situation is however different in most developing countries where teachers are trained in specific content areas to implement content-specific curriculum in single grade system. This situation makes teachers deficient in knowledge for effective implementation of multigrade curriculum. Besides, teachers need knowledge in the policy guidelines which ensures and guide teachers in multigrade teaching. However, DoE (2008a) reports of lack of policy guidelines for multigrade teaching as a major challenge hindering effective implementation of multigrade teaching.

### **2.2.3 Challenges Encountered by Multigrade Teachers**

Primary school curriculum in most developing countries is geared towards monograde classrooms. Brown (2010) argues that broadly in the multigrade arrangement, although learners of different grades comprise one class, learners have to pursue grade-appropriate curricula. Lingam (cited by Brown, 2010) identifies this requirement as the greatest challenge of multigrade teaching because it demands that the structure of the curricula, the learning resources and assessment strategies employed in the multigrade teaching, and the learning process take on a new shape and form from that of the monograde situation. Another major challenge confronting effective implementation of multigrade teaching is lack of policy guidelines for multigrade teaching (DoE, 2008a). Taole and Mncube (2012) investigated the experiences of multigrade teachers in rural schools. The result showed that most multigrade teachers encounter difficulties in instructional planning. Teachers indicated that they do not do separated planning for the grades that they are teaching. Instead, they do single planning for single grades. Promoting monograde teaching in multigrade schools therefore consumes time and usually results in effective teaching. Berry (2001) rather asserted that inadequate instructional resources and infrequent supervisions are key challenges confronting multigrade teaching. In relation to the problem of insufficient instructional resources, Kyne (cited by Brown, 2010) points out that the instructional materials also tend to be designed for the monograde classroom. Since such materials are designed for specific grades, their implementation in a multigrade classroom may not be effective.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study used the phenomenological in-depth interviewing method to collect data from the multigrade teachers. It was a qualitative method intended to explore the strategies and challenges in implementing monograde curriculum on multigrade basis. The phenomenological method was chosen because it provided in-depth understanding of the experiences of these teachers who were small in number through one-on-one interview.

### **3.1 Population**

The population used for this study involved 12 primary school teachers in all four schools affected by the incidence of multigrade teaching in the Assin Central District of the Central Region of Ghana. All the 12 teachers were included (census) in the study due to their small size. These participants were also included because they gave their consent to be part of the study.



### 3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument used in gathering the data was interview guide which was guided by the objectives of the study. The interview guide consisted of four sections covering all the three research questions in addition to certain biographic data (section A) of respondents (academic qualification and teaching experience). The second section (Section B) dealt with items on strategies employed by multigrade teachers in teaching multigrade classes. The third section (Section C) covered items on knowledge required to effectively teach multigrade classes, whilst the fourth section (Section D) dealt with challenges encountered by multigrade teachers in teaching multigrade classes.

### 3.3 Credibility of the Instrument

The instrument was reviewed for credibility, transferability, dependability, and objectivity. The researcher clarified unclear items during the interview discourse. Where the participants found it difficult to comprehend some of the questions, the researcher focused more on those questions for proper clarification. The researcher kept records of the participants' ideas, and responses throughout the study. The researcher's biases were separated from the data obtained. Finally, the researchers returned interview transcripts to each of the participants. The participants were asked to read the transcribed data to see if the researchers captured all their responses. Where necessary, the participants were asked to make the required corrections to the data. This helped the researchers to collect data that resonated with the perspectives of the participants involved.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

To ensure effective data collection, the researcher booked appropriate appointments with each of the participants before they were consulted for the interview process. A maximum of 15 to 20 minutes was spent with each participant from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2025. The interview section was audio-recorded after seeking both written and oral informed consent of participants. The participants were informed that the study was voluntary, hence, they were at liberty to exit at any time preferred.

### 3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

After reading the interview scripts, relevant points and ideas shared by the participants were documented. The researcher carefully read the scripts for each research question to identify codes. Similar comments were assembled under their corresponding research questions. The data were analyzed through the thematic and narrative approaches. This strategy was helpful in this study because they were believed to be the most appropriate analytical strategy for the phenomena studied within a naturally occurring setting (Cohen et al., 2018).

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

All relevant ethical considerations by the Department of Business and Social Sciences Education of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana were adhered to. The researcher clearly defined the purpose of the study and assured participants' confidentiality and anonymity. The researchers informed the participants that pseudonyms were used instead of their real names. Hence, there was no way their names or school names were captured in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. The schools were identified with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms included school A, B, C, and D. Participants were also identified with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms included Desmond, Elliot, Michael, George, Ellis, Susana, Emma, Joel, James, Janet, Diana, Joana. The voluntariness of participation was considered to give participants the free will to exit should they become disinterested along the line. Lastly, the researchers issued the participants an informed consent letter before initiating the data collection process.

## IV FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Findings

In all the four schools, the researcher observed that all lower primary teachers were teaching multigrades all the days the researcher visited the schools. The multigrade-teaching situation however, differed from one school to another depending on the number of teachers and pupils enrolled and the strategies adopted by the teachers.

#### 4.1.1 Teaching Strategies Adopted by Multigrade Teachers

Based on the data, there are some common strategies teachers used to promote multigrade teaching. To most teachers, successful teaching of multigrade classes involves putting two or three classes into one class. To such teachers, although multigrade pupils differ in terms of age, learning abilities and interest, putting them together and teaching them does not affect their performance since pupils in monogrades also share same or similar characteristics in terms of differences in age, learning abilities and interest. For instance, in schools B and C, teachers had to teach two different grades in the same class at the same time. Having taught one class, the teacher will have to give exercises and other



activities. While the first class is undertaking the exercise and performing tasks, the teacher then moves to other classes to teach. This poses great challenge especially when teachers have to monitor, supervise and assist pupils in undertaking the exercise. In response to this, Joel asserted that,

*"I usually put all the students together in one class especially different corners of the class before I teach. This enables me to cater for everyone's educational need"* (Joel, Nov. 4, 2025).

This was similar to the view of teachers in school A and D. In schools A and D, one main strategy adopted by multigrade teachers was grouping different classes into different sections of the same classroom. The researcher observed that the school was left with three teachers responsible for six grades. Some grades were, therefore, combined to ensure that teaching and learning take place in all grades (grades 1 to 6). Teaching in these classes becomes a challenge that the teachers in the school had to contend with. For instance, teachers had to teach two different grades in one class at the same time for more than four learning areas across the grades. This is corroborated by the response of Elliot who claimed that,

*"At times I will have to combine two or three classes together in order to be able to teach"*.

When he was asked how he combines them, he responded that,

*"At times, I put them in different sessions of the classroom and provide them with different blackboards and other teaching materials and teach them in turn"* (Elliot, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2025).

It is important to note that the challenge of adopting this strategy is that the rate of distraction among the two groups is always high. This phenomenon is crucial and complex phenomenon that demands skillful teachers. According to Kucita et al. (2013), teachers in this context are faced with the challenge of implementing a curriculum designed for a monograde to a multigrade class. George also mentioned that,

*"You can't try it! You can't complete teaching in one class and move to another class to teach different concepts. You will be fully exhausted. So, what I do is to put all the affected classes together and teach them the same concepts. I create different sections and place the pupils according to their classes in the same classroom, although disturbances are inevitable, one group would disturb whilst you are teaching other groups. Class control and class management will become difficult especially when you happen to be the only teacher around"* (George, Nov., 7, 2026).

In this case, teachers will either focus on a single grade level while other pupils in other grade levels are waiting. This implies that GES policy of placing pupils in different classes based on their age and learning abilities is being defeated. According to the GES (2022), primary education starts from age 4 and ends at age 11. Thus, disregarding the age, interests, needs and learning abilities of pupils and merging them into the same classes possesses threat to educational success and achievement on the part of the learner and national development as well. Participants in all the four schools, apart from either merging all the students into one group/class or teaching them separately in their separate grade levels, also employ peer teaching, small group activities, self-directed learning strategies and at times engages community members who are capable of assisting in teaching. Janet however gave a contrary view regard how she organizes multigrade teaching. She mentioned that,

*"Teaching different classes at the same time within the same instructional period is not an easy task. I move from class to class to teach each class differently. Looking at the differences in abilities, there is no way I can combine them, put them in the same classroom and teach them. It is virtually impossible to do that. Besides, these students have different abilities, aptitudes, IQ levels and absorption rates. I think it is in relation to this that the GES has created different classes for pupils of different age range and learning abilities"* (Janet, Nov. 4, 2025).

Janet rather preferred teaching the separate grades separately.

Participants in schools B and C rather preferred giving pupils the opportunity to teach their own colleagues. Although, not effective strategy, the participants indicated that in this strategy, pupils who are academically good in a particular subject area are selected to assist the academically weak pupils. It must be reiterated that this peer teaching strategy can be two dimensional. First, it can be one-to-one or one-to-several pupils and can take the form where older pupils and pupils in higher grades teach pupils in lower grade. Teachers must therefore be skillful at appointing the peer teachers themselves. This strategy is more helpful in the sense that it eases the workload and burden on the multigrade teacher (in terms of monitoring and supervision) and enhances peer learning. It also provides peer teachers the opportunity for self-evaluation and promotes the development of sense of responsibility and accountability (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015). In the light of promoting 21<sup>st</sup> century skills among learners, peer teaching can help promote effective collaboration and team work among pupils in multigrade schools.

Closely related to peer teaching is small group activities. This was identified by participants in schools B and D. This occurs when teachers break pupils in one grade into groups and assign tasks to each group based on their abilities. One group could consist of 4 to 5 pupils where group leaders are chosen for the task. Grouping of pupils should be flexibly done and should be based on the nature of the activities to be undertaken. Where small grouping strategy is employed, the groupings is done on grade basis where pupils of different grades are grouped together whilst pupils of

the same grade also constitute another group. However, the researcher observed that the group composition varied considerably across the two schools (B and D) depending on the size of the class. According to Aashma and Neeti (2024), small group activities in multigrade classes provide immediate feedback and helps learners to progress at their own pace.

Furthermore, participants in all the four schools explained that they are able to keep pupils of both the same grade and different grades during school hours through the self-directed learning strategy. Through this strategy, learners of different or same grades are given the chance to engage in individual learning for the purpose of taking charge of their learning. In this regard, the learners take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their own learning needs, formulating learning goals, and identifying human and material resources for learning (Aashma & Neeti, 2024). The multigrade teacher only serves as a guide or facilitator and provides supporting hand when the need arises. Besides, the teacher ensures continuous supervision and monitoring in all the multigrade classes. Finally, participants were of the view that involvement of community members in multigrade activities have been very helpful strategy. In this context, responsibility is shared between the teacher and some members of the community where the school is located. Teachers usually rely on the services of retired educated persons, social workers, and literate parents in the community to support the teachers' efforts.

#### 4.1.2 Knowledge Needed to Teach Multigrade Classes

To be able to teach multigrade classes effectively teachers require special knowledge which goes beyond the skills and training they received from their teacher training institutions. This is because, the teacher training institutions only offer training and skills in content, knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, technological knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, technological, pedagogical and content knowledge necessary for monogrades without necessarily training teachers for multigrades teaching. Participants were therefore asked to share their views regarding specific knowledge needed to teach such classes. In school C, teachers indicated that they were not trained to teach different classes at the same time during their pre-service training. They further indicated that they were rather trained to teach all subjects in a specific class during school period. So, if this phenomenon (multigrade) is occurring, then teachers need special training and experiences such as knowledge in teaching students with different abilities at the same time.

On the contrary, teachers in school A and D indicated that, although multigrade teaching occurs, the fact still remains that even in monograde classroom, teachers can still have learners of different age and learning abilities and yet teachers are able to cope with them. In school A, for instance, participants indicated that, what matters most is the knowledge in class control and class management as well as knowledge in creating conducive, welcoming and purposeful learning environment that will accommodate learners with different learning abilities. Teachers in school D on the other hand mentioned skills in classroom organization, classroom management as well as skills in promoting effective discipline in the classroom as key in teaching multigrade classes.

Another knowledge needed to teaching multigrade classes is skills in using differentiated instruction. This was shared by teachers in schools A, B, and D. Differentiated instruction involves proving instructions to meet the different ages, needs, interests and learning abilities of every student using varied course content, activities, and assessments. For instance, Michael shared that,

*“Varying the course content, varying instructions as well as the learning activities to cater for individual differences especially in terms of their age, interest and abilities is one key strategy”* (Michael, Nov. 5, 2026).

This was similar to the views shared by Ellis, who remarked that,

*“Since we are talking about students from different grades but not the same grade, it is believed that they differ in their age, experiences, abilities and interests. Therefore, to me, the best knowledge teacher need is to be able to vary instructions to meet these diverse needs and abilities”* (Ellis, Nov., 3, 2025).

Of utmost importance to the teaching of multigrade classes is knowledge in integrating technology in teaching. Teaching with technology can make lessons more interactive and attractive especially when the teacher possesses the requisites skill of combining technologies in their effective way. Incorporating different kinds of technologies reduces teachers' burden and caters for the diverse needs of learners. According to teachers in school B, although they lack access to technology in their school, they believe that teachers need to be equipped with relevant knowledge in using multimedia technological resources in multigrade schools. Susana remarked that,

*“The effectiveness of technology under such (multigrade systems) situations cannot be ruled out since technology takes greater proportion of teachers' burden and promotes active engagements of learners in all learning activities. Teachers therefore needs to be taught how to use different technological resources in teaching multigrade classes”* (Susana, Nov. 4, 2025).

Knowledge in encouraging collaborative learning among learners was also identified as key in teaching multigrade classes. Teachers shared that collaboration in learning minimizes teachers' engagements and promotes team spirit among learners. Diana remarked that,

*"Promoting collaboration among learners is important because what the teacher needs to do is ensure that division of labor is encouraged in a team such that learners are able to learn more from their colleagues where they fall short"* (Diana, Nov., 4, 2025).

Collaborative learning involves students working together and solving a specific problem, completing a task, and solving a certain problem (Fawcett et al., 2005). Janet, asserted that,

*"Collaboration builds the intellectual ability of learners because through collaboration learners learn a lot from their colleagues. Here, the focus is on the learners collaborating with each other. This shifts much of the attention from the teacher to the learners themselves. Therefore, teachers need to acquire much skills and knowledge in building collaboration among learners"* (Janet, Nov. 6, 2025).

#### 4.1.3 Challenges of Teaching Multigrade Classes

All the four schools in this study raised the issue of lack of knowledge in teaching multigrade classes. It should be re-emphasized that in Ghana, teaching multigrade classes is a new phenomenon for many teachers especially newly posted teacher. They therefore lack the requisite knowledge in teaching these classes. This emanates from lack of in-service training, workshops, seminars, and lack of training on techniques of teaching multigrade classes. Teachers therefore resort to their personal innovative and creative means of handling such classes. Without proper training, the teachers' efforts would be in vain and they would not be able to achieve much (Kucita et al. 2013) in terms of teaching.

Another challenge raised was poor teaching practices. According to teachers, although they were trained in instructional practices required for monograde classes, whilst some of these practices are applicable to multigrades, others are not. Besides, the context of monograde classes is different from that of multigrade classes, hence, the need to adopt suitable teaching practices. The teachers mentioned teaching practices such as class control and class managerial techniques. They further indicated that due to the need to cater for pupils with different learning abilities and interest at the same time, there is the need for teachers to possess special teaching practice skills, which according to them, is lacking.

#### 4.2 Discussion

This study investigated multigrade teaching in rural and remote primary schools in Assin Central, Ghana. The result shows that teachers face challenges in implementing multigrade teaching because they were ill-equipped by their teacher preparatory programs. Research shows that most undergraduate students do not receive adequate training in multigrade teaching, and therefore, have no idea about it when they enter professional life (Göçer, 2014). In a similar view, Checchi and Paola (2018) reported that teacher training education usually offer little to no training about teaching in rural regions or care less about it than other general educational programs. The multigrade teachers of this study argued that their teacher preparatory programs only prepared them theoretically which was also geared towards specific content education. In line with this outcome, Kucita et al. (2013) note that multigrade teachers feel incompetent because they are inadequately trained in multigrade teaching. The practicing teachers are more comfortable with monograde teaching than multigrade teaching and this explains why the outcome of this study revealed this as a major challenge that confronts multigrade teachers. This requires the teacher training institutions to revise their curriculum to make room for multigrade teaching.

Although the multigrade teachers in this study were not literate about the multigrade teaching, they devised their own strategies such as peer tutoring, differentiation, collaboration and cooperation to cope with the situation. The result of this study is consistent with the outcome of a study by Gray (2023) which concluded that multigrade classes allow teachers to make their own decisions about learning-teaching processes and develop and execute their own lesson strategies. Brown (2010) also argues that multigrade teachers can use different strategies and materials and integrate different disciplines. Due to the lack of knowledge in multigrade teaching, multigrade teachers are usually faced with diverse challenges that prevent them from meeting the learning needs of every learner. The temptation of applying their general pedagogical knowledge to multigrade classes at times become challenging since the context of monograde (in which they were prepared) differs from the multigrade context which requires the teacher to possess specific knowledge and experiences in combining students of different age grade or teaching different grades at the time. This will likely prevent the multigrade teacher from having adequate time to prepare lesson plans because they have to devote a significant amount of time and attention to all multigrade classes. The multigrade teachers regarded multigrade teaching as a challenging task that required multitasking, and therefore, could not devote enough time to in-class learning-teaching activities as well. The increase in teachers' workload was identified as another challenge encountered by multigrade teachers. Since teachers have to combine two or three classes, their workload in terms of teaching, monitoring, supervision, assessment, marking exercises, providing feedback as well as promoting remedial lessons

become herculean task for teachers. This situation becomes serious when the classes' size is large and there are few teachers involved in the multigrade teaching. This is consistent with the views of Göçer (2014) who asserted that teachers of multigrade schools are unable to cover much grounds in terms of the content as they are always overwhelmed by workload and administrative tasks they had to tackle at the same time.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

Multigrade teaching has become an unavoidable option for providing instructions to rural and remote learners. It however requires teachers who are well trained, resourceful, innovative and committed to embracing the practice, most multigrade teachers lack the requisite skills, knowledge and experiences of teaching multigrade classes. They have not received any formal training on how to teach multigrade classes, thus, they find the teaching of multigrade a challenging task to cope with. Although teachers have not received any formal training on teaching multigrade classes, they are able to adopt strategies and effectively combine pupils of different age and learning abilities for the purpose of implementing the monograde primary school curriculum on multigrade basis. Finally, multigrade teaching puts unbearable pressure on affected teachers. This usually results in increase in teachers' workload, poor teaching practices such as poor class control and class management and poor academic performance.

### 5.2 Recommendation

Multigrade teaching calls for a much broader regulation and policy measures to address the problems and issues regarding this phenomenon in remote and rural education system in Ghana. The Ministry of Education should officially recognize and accept multigrade teaching as a key pedagogical option in rural and remote places in Ghana where teachers are in short supply. The general idea is that, even in monograde classes, with just one grade group, there is always a considerable range of age, interests, abilities, aptitudes, maturity and needs which makes all teachers in monograde classrooms multigrade in disguise. Besides, the Ministry of Education and the GES need to be aware of the causes of multigrade teaching in rural and remote areas and put in place measures to address them. The government of Ghana, as a matter of urgency should provide the needed infrastructural and recreational facilities in rural areas. This will make teaching in rural areas attractive to teachers who are mostly posted to rural areas.

Teacher training institutions (University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba) in collaboration with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, should include in their curriculum, knowledge, skills and experiences needed to teach multigrade classes. Professional development programs and in-service programs in multigrade teaching should also be developed by the Ministry of Education and the GES for all teachers. This will empower teachers with learner-centered pedagogies for teaching multigrade classes. It will also equip them with skills in planning lesson for multigrade classes, timetabling and class management and control in multigrade classes.

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