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## CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF TEACHERS TEACHING READING TO MULTIGRADE CLASSES IN THE ISLAND SCHOOLS: BASES FOR INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to determine the challenges and coping strategies of teachers teaching reading to multi-grade classes in the island schools: bases for intervention program. This study used qualitative method using in-depth interview and phenomenological design. The researcher-made interview schedule was the instrument used to gather data. Audio and video recorders were also used for data gathering and documentation. It was found out that some of the challenges and coping strategies of teachers teaching reading to multi-grade include different reading levels, preparation of different lesson plans, time constraints, lack of training, lack of reading materials. While the coping strategies made by teachers on the challenges encountered by teachers in teaching reading to multi-grade classes by applying differentiated instruction, encouraging peer tutoring, creating and providing reading materials, collaborating with parents and colleagues, attending training opportunities, and encouraging group learning.

**Keywords:** *Challenges and Coping Strategies of Teachers, Teaching Reading, Multigrade Classes, Island Schools*

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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching reading in a multigrade class is not an easy task for a teacher who needs assessment tools, appropriate resources, instructional strategies, and training.

Developing individualized learning plans and modifying assessments for students at different reading levels is a demanding process. Teachers are expected to monitor student progress continuously and adjust instruction based on assessment data. However, many educators lack the training or support to use assessment data effectively for differentiation, leading to inconsistent implementation of individualized plans (Manivannan & Nor, 2020).

Teachers in multigrade classrooms must select and modify reading materials to suit a broad range of reading abilities and grade-level expectations. The process of sourcing, adapting, and differentiating texts is time-consuming and often hampered by limited resources. Teachers frequently struggle to provide appropriate reading materials for all learners, especially when school funding does not support the acquisition of leveled texts or when resources are scarce. This challenge is compounded by the need to align instruction with multiple curricula simultaneously (Ares-Ferreiros et al., 2025).

Implementing differentiated instructional strategies—such as flexible grouping, peer teaching, and scaffolded tasks—requires advanced classroom management skills and a deep understanding of student needs. Teachers often resort to mixed-ability grouping and may "downgrade" lessons to accommodate struggling readers, which can limit opportunities for advanced learners (Ziernwald et al., 2022). Effective differentiation involves not only varying

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the complexity of texts and tasks but also creating a supportive learning environment that fosters engagement for all students (Magableh & Abdullah, 2021).

Successful implementation of differentiated reading instruction in multigrade classrooms requires more than individual teacher effort; it depends on institutional support, including access to resources, time for planning, and a collaborative school culture. Studies highlight that school leadership, policy mandates, and a professional culture of collaboration significantly influence teachers' ability to differentiate instruction. Inadequate support systems can exacerbate the challenges teachers face, leading to frustration and reduced efficacy (Ares-Ferreiros et al., 2025).

Many multigrade teachers need more support and program intervention for them to work effectively as expected.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis. The study aims to determine the challenges and coping strategies of teachers teaching reading to multigrade classes in the island schools as bases for intervention program in the Municipality of Ajuy during the School Year 2025-2026.

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## Research Method

The research method utilized in this study was qualitative research using in-depth interview.

The descriptive research method focuses on systematically describing a phenomenon as it exists in its natural setting, without manipulating variables. According to Elliott (2025), it aims to provide an accurate portrayal of current conditions, practices, or relationships within educational settings, enabling researchers to understand trends, patterns, and implications for practice. This approach is particularly useful in educational studies that seek to document and analyze real-world events, behaviors, or perceptions without altering the environment in which they occur (Elliott, 2025).

The interviewer with the interviewee during the interview was allowed to sit together in a distance and to think about the series of questions about a certain issue. The aim was to get the main or the necessary views of the participants in a certain issue in a social context through the responses of the participants to the questions.

## Research Design

The study used phenomenological research design. Phenomenology can be considered a philosophical approach to undertaking qualitative research. The goal of phenomenology is to understand how others view the world, and how this view may vary from commonly held views by focusing on a person's subjective interpretations of what he or she experiences. Phenomenology is done by interviewing the subjects to learn their impressions, and is frequently used in such fields as psychology, sociology, and social work.

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Phenomenology focuses on the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person perspective. The central aim of phenomenology is to investigate and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced, without resorting to theories about their causal explanations or being influenced by unexamined preconceptions (Biemel & Spiegelberg, 2024).

### Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were eight (8) purposely selected multigrade teachers in the Municipality of Ajuy. These teachers must handle multigrade classes and teach reading to learners having different grade levels but stay in one room together. These teachers must be assigned in a primary school located in the island schools of the Schools District of Ajuy, Clusters 1 and 2. They must have direct experience as a reading teacher of multigrade classes. They must have at least one year teaching experience in the present school. Only those multigrade teachers who were willing to share their challenges and coping strategies as teachers teaching reading to multigrade classes in the island schools were included, and the participant was informed about their consent prior to taking part in the study.

### Sampling Design

Purposive sampling design was used in the study. Purposive sampling according to Nikolopoulou (2023) refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. In other words, units are selected "on purpose" in purposive sampling. This is also called judgmental sampling, this sampling method relies on the researcher's judgment when identifying and selecting the

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individuals, cases, or events that can provide the best information to achieve the study's objectives.

## Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule.

An interview schedule in qualitative research is a structured or semi-structured guide comprising a list of questions or topics that the interviewer intends to cover during the interview process. Its primary purpose is to ensure that all relevant areas are systematically explored across interviews, enhancing consistency, rigor, and comparability of data, while still allowing flexibility for in-depth probing and adaptation to emerging insights (Morris, 2025).

The interview schedule had four questions focusing on the purpose of study.

Voice and video recorder were used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

## Validity of the Research Instrument

Prior to the determination of the validity of the interview schedule made by the researcher, the adviser, Dean of the Graduate School then a panel of juries who were considered for their expertise in the field of research, testing and assessment, and English, were requested to validate each question for review and modification.

Validity refers to the extent to which the findings, interpretations, and conclusions derived from a study are accurate, meaningful, and appropriate in representing the concept being examined. It ensures that the research instrument truly measures what it is intended

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to measure and that the results are credible reflections of reality. In establishing content validity, the questions and format of the instrument must align with the study's defined variables and objectives to guarantee that each item accurately reflects the construction under investigation. This process often involves expert review to determine whether the items are relevant, clear, and representative of the concepts being studied. By ensuring that the content and structure of the instrument are consistent with the study's framework, researchers enhance the accuracy and usefulness of the data collected in relation to the research objective (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Comments, corrections, and suggestions of the panel of validators regarding the interview schedule were considered using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (Appendix A).

### Data Gathering Procedures

Permits from the adviser, Dean of the Graduate School, Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, Office of the District Supervisors, School Heads, and individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher personally went to the schools/community/place convenient on the part of the participants to conduct the interview.

The researcher conducted an interview to the participants but prior to this, the researcher encouraged first the participants to sign a waiver or permission relative to the conduct of the study.

Using in-depth interview, a voice and video recorder were also provided to completely

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capture the interviewee's words. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after series of interviews.

## Data Analysis

The data collected through the interview schedule were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method designed to identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns or themes within narrative data. This approach enables the researcher to uncover meaningful insights into the challenges and coping strategies of teachers teaching reading to multi-grade classes in the island schools.

Each written response was carefully examined to extract emerging themes related to behavior, communication, decision-making, motivation, and support of multi-grade teachers.

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), thematic analysis provides a flexible yet rigorous framework for analyzing qualitative data, allowing researchers to identify both explicit and implicit meanings across participants' narratives. It is particularly suitable for educational research that seeks to understand complex social and organizational dynamics. Nowell et al. (2021) further emphasize that thematic analysis enhances transparency and credibility in qualitative studies by ensuring systematic coding and interpretation of data.

The transcribed data from the interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke (2023), which is well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

The analysis followed the standard six-phase process: (1) Familiarization with Data: Reading and re-reading the transcripts (in local language and English translation); (2)

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Generating Initial Codes: Assigning short phrases or labels to meaningful segments of data (e.g., "shared phone," "fear of judgment," "poor signal"); (3) Searching for Themes: Grouping the initial codes into potential overarching themes and sub-themes that captured significant patterns (e.g., Codes like "no insult," "private correction" will be grouped under a theme); (4) Reviewing Themes: Refining and checking the themes against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' meanings and the study's focus; (5) Defining and Naming Themes: Developing clear, concise, and academically sound names for the final emergent themes (will be presented in Chapter 4); (6) Producing the Report: Weaving the themes, supported by direct quotes, into the narrative structure of the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data (Chapter 4), and linking them to the theoretical framework.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the challenges and coping strategies of teachers teaching reading in multigrade classrooms in the island schools of Ajuy during the School Year 2025–2026 to inform intervention program.

Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight (8) purposively selected multigrade teachers.

A researcher-made, content-validated interview schedule, along with voice and video recordings (with permission), was used for data gathering. Necessary permits were obtained from relevant authorities, and interviews were conducted at locations convenient for

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participants. The collected data were consolidated, analyzed, and interpreted using a thematic approach.

The following are the findings of the study:

Based on the results of the in-depth interviews with the participants, it was found that the challenges encountered by teachers in teaching reading in multigrade classes include varying reading levels, the preparation of different lesson plans, time constraints, a lack of training, and a lack of reading materials.

It was also found that the coping strategies used by teachers to address the challenges they encountered in teaching reading in multigrade classes include applying differentiated instruction, encouraging peer tutoring, creating and providing reading materials, collaborating with parents and colleagues, attending training opportunities, and promoting group learning.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

Teaching reading in multigrade classrooms is a complex task that requires teachers to constantly adapt to varied student abilities, manage limited resources, and balance multiple instructional responsibilities.

These challenges highlight the strain on teachers' time, skills, and planning capacity, underscoring the need for targeted support, professional development, and accessible teaching materials to ensure that all learners receive effective and equitable literacy instruction.

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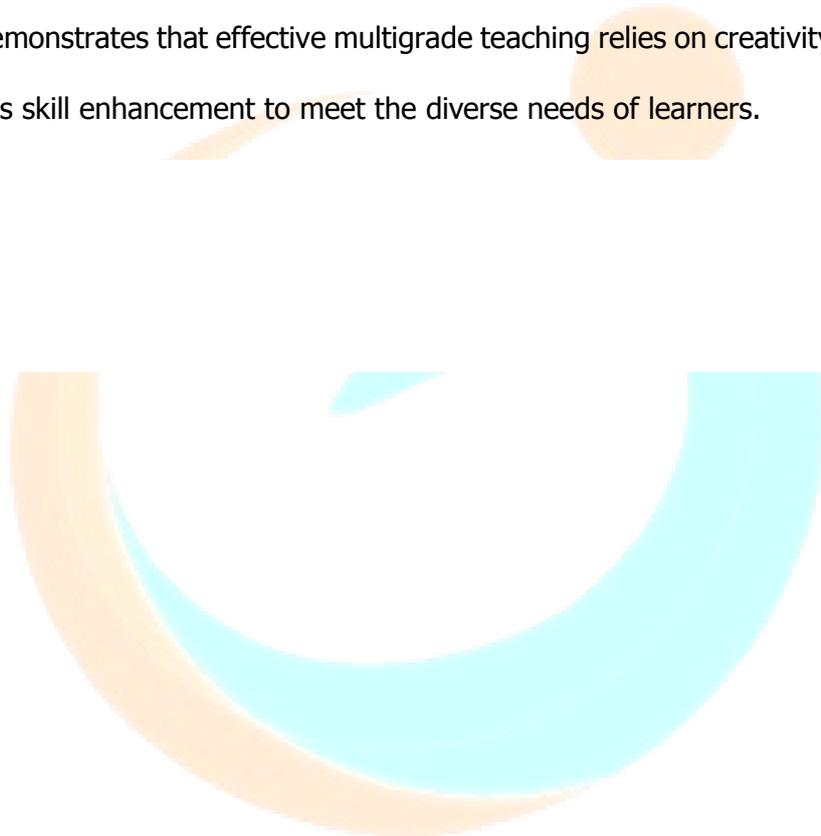
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Teachers in multigrade classrooms respond to instructional challenges by adopting flexible, student-centered approaches that make use of both internal and external resources. They actively adjust their teaching methods, foster collaborative learning among students, develop their own instructional materials, and seek support from colleagues, parents, and professional development opportunities.

This demonstrates that effective multigrade teaching relies on creativity, collaboration, and continuous skill enhancement to meet the diverse needs of learners.



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