

Meeting the Challenges of the Multi-grade Classroom

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BACKGROUND

CHALLENGES, ADVANTAGES OF MULTIGRADING;
REQUIRED SKILLS

- Multi-grade teaching refers to the teaching of students of different ages, grades and abilities in the same group (Little, 1995)
- Necessity (de facto) vs. choice (pedagogical)

Multi-grade Teaching Defined

- Burkina Faso, West Africa, 2000:
36%
of schools and 20% of classes were
multi-grade
- England, 2000, 25.4 per cent of all
classes in primary education were
classified as mixed year

Extent of Multi-Grade Education

- In New Brunswick, Canada, 2003–04: 13.9% of all classes in elementary schools combined grades.
- In France in 2000, 34% of public schools had “combined” classes

Extent of Multi-Grade Education

- 30% of classrooms worldwide are multi-grade
- 30% of Jamaican Primary and All Age schools are multi grade schools (Holness, 2008)

Extent of Multi-Grade Education

- A pedagogic approach to increase access and retention, while improving quality education.
 - Expansion of access
- A strategy to address teacher shortages, particularly in small and remote schools.

(Juvane, 2007)

- Teachers develop a wide range of organisational and teaching skills

Advantages of Multi-Grade

- Students are better prepared for self learning after school
- Contributes greatly to the mastery of basic skills
- Study indicates that children in multigrade perform no better and no worse compared to children in monograde (Veenman, 1995; Miller, 1991; Mason and Burns, 1997)

Advantages

- Allows for continuity in learning especially for low achieving students.
- Younger and older children benefit from multi-grade:
 - Younger ones grasp concepts more quickly
 - Older children gain confidence in assisting younger ones

Advantages

- Personal and Social learning effects:
 - Positive effects on self esteem
 - Good work ethics
 - Sense of responsibility
 - Learners help each other
 - Learners work together
 - Peer tutoring learning strategies
 - Learning appropriate behaviours

Advantages

- 11 participants face challenges with facilitating different levels
- 4 persons cited inadequate resources
- 2 cited class size
- 4 persons cited time
- 2 cited lesson delivery

Participants' Challenges

- The structure of the National Curriculum: expectations of curriculum coverage
- Range of abilities
- Pressure to prepare one group within a multi-grade for external/standardised assessments

Challenges

- Unpreparedness of teachers to teach in a multi-grade classroom
- Insufficient educational materials to support learning.
- Teachers' negative attitude to multi-grade teaching

Challenges

- The 'burden' of lesson planning
- Time: to teach
 - To address specific needs of students
- Ensuring quality of teaching and learning: engaging all

Challenges

- Feeling of isolation: little opportunity to share with other teachers
- Limited parental or community involvement

Challenges

- Curriculum organization: a skill that one has to develop
- Materials design and development: stimulating, differentiated, challenging materials
- Organizing pupils effectively: discreet grades, interest, ability, learning styles

Skills of a Multi-Grade teacher

- Monitoring the Learning Achievement: keeping track of students' achievements
- Organizing Classroom Space: flexibility with classroom space. Sectioning room might prove useful.
- Managing time effectively: Sharing

Skills of a Multi-Grade teacher

- The teacher as the manager of the learning process
- Teacher must experience shift of position in the classroom: guide versus sage on the stage

Skills of a Multi-Grade Teacher

Session 1

METHODS OF TEACHING

- Creating multiple paths so that students of different abilities, interest or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process.
- Variations to meet the needs of learners

Differentiated Instructions

- Differentiating the content: assess to determine who needs direct instructions
- Differentiating the process/activities: varying activities
- Differentiating the product: varying expectations
- Differentiating by manipulating the environment

Differentiated Instructions: 4 Ways

- Variety of assessments: targeting readiness and different abilities.
Moving throughout groups
- Adjusting questions: targeted towards students' ability
- Compacting curriculum: assessment to provide alternative activities to those who have mastered

Differentiating Strategies

- Tiered assignments: related tasks varying in complexity all of which relating to key skills students need to develop
- Acceleration/deceleration: accelerating or decelerating the pace with which students move through the curriculum

Differentiating Strategies

- Flexible Grouping: allow movement between groups. Students readiness varies based on interest, subject etc. Ability is not static
- Peer Teaching: to develop expertise.
- Learning profiles/styles: used to determine appropriate activities, strategies, adjusting environment

Differentiating Strategies

- Student Interest: An interest survey; start with students' interest, then interest them in finding out more.
- Reading buddies: Pairing students with different reading abilities. One child helps the other.

Differentiating Strategies

- Learning contract: A written agreement between teacher and student aimed at students working independently.
 - Helps students to develop learning goals
 - Develop management skills.

Learning Centres: activities with varied level of complexity.

Differentiating Strategies

- Anchoring activities: a wide range of activities that students can choose from once they are through with their assigned task.

Differentiating Strategies

Five key elements (Johnson et al, 2006):

1. Positive interdependence: sink or swim together
2. Individual Accountability: students learn together but perform alone
3. Face-to-face (promotive) interaction: promoting each others learning. Develops commitment.

**Interactive Teaching Strategies:
Cooperative Learning**

- Interpersonal and small group social skills: groups skills (team work).
Role for everyone.
- Group Processing: Analyzing group's success and measures for improvement

Interactive Teaching Strategies: Cooperative Learning

- Round Robin
- Round Table
- Numbered Heads Together
- Jigsaw
- Circle the Sage
- Tea Party
- Think-Pair-Share
- Three-Step interview
- Three minute review
- Team-Pair-Solo
- Partners

Cooperative Learning Strategies

❑ **Considerations:**

- Rates of development/Stages of development
- Interests
- Student centred versus teacher centred
- Meaningful learning versus rote memorization
- Facilitators versus keepers of knowledge

Lesson Planning

- Flexible lesson plans
- Catering to differences among learners
- Active versus passive learners
- Materials and resources
- Multiple Intelligences
- Learning Styles

Lesson Planning

Multiple Intelligence and Learning Style Inventories

QUESTION AND ANSWER

SESSION 2

CLASSROOM LOGISTICS

- Use of shifts: shorter school day for children
- Grade 1 in the morning, grade 2 in the afternoon
- Abandonment: Divide the school day by the number of grades expected to teach

Classroom Logistics: Timetabling

- Quasi-monograde: organising a multigrade class as if it were a monograde.
 - Organise the class into separate spaces and grade groups. Students work in their age group
 - Integrate concepts across curriculum
 - Whole class approach: one lesson to all

Classroom Logistics: Timetabling

- Differentiation: Whole class approach with differentiated activities; different expected learning outcomes
- Graded learning materials

Classroom Logistics: Timetabling

- Common timetable option: same subject in a given period but each grade group follows its own work
- The subject stagger option: subjects are staggered on the timetable so that grade groups learn different subjects in the same period. Subjects which require high teacher pupil contact are matched with those requiring little

Timetabling Options

- The subject grouping option: subjects are presented to all grade groups together at the same time.
- Some subjects eg. Music, Art, Religious Knowledge and Social Studies lend themselves well to this option.

Classroom Logistics: Timetabling

- Cooperative learning and grouping:
- Mixed abilities, mixed sexes
- Size: 4-5
- Specified roles:
 - Resource Manager
 - Spokesperson
 - Time Keeper
- Recorder
- Facilitator

Classroom Logistics: Grouping

- Varied grouping arrangements:
 - Working in pairs
 - Working in groups: effective with activities the entire class can enjoy
 - Whole group
 - By grade
 - Mixed grade
 - Individual

Classroom Logistics: Grouping and Management

- Organising groups: location of independent workers versus those working in groups
- Plan for flexibility: assigned seating is not ideal
 - Allow for movement between different working groups

Classroom Logistics: Grouping and Management

- Traditional versus Alternative Assessment
- Diagnostic, Formative, Summative assessment
- Evaluation versus assessment
- The role of data in improving teaching and learning
- Use of peer and self assessment

Classroom Logistics: Record Keeping

Question and Answer

Practical Demonstration

Question and Answer



Thank you!