






Objectives and Content of the Empowerment Curriculum for Multigrade Primary School Teachers

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Introduction

Education, particularly during childhood and adolescence, plays a fundamental role in shaping ethics, culture, and individual and social development, and serves as a key foundation for national progress (Best, 2016; Fernández, 2024). In knowledge-based societies, teachers are regarded as the core drivers of development and require professional empowerment, which entails enhancing motivation, skills, and participation in educational and decision-making processes (Niyazari et al., 2011; Yang & Oh, 2024).

Empowerment can improve teachers' job performance and creativity while increasing their commitment to the profession (Choi et al., 2016). This is especially critical in multigrade classrooms—where students of different ages and grade levels are taught simultaneously by a single teacher—due to their unique challenges and advantages, such as fostering students' social growth alongside limited resources (Berry, 2000; Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015).

Perspectives on multigrade classrooms vary: some view them as a problem to be eliminated, while others regard them as an opportunity for optimized education.

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Research indicates that improving the quality of such classrooms requires better management, planning, and teacher skills, particularly in rural and low-population areas where they are often unavoidable (Cooper & Elton-Chalcraft, 2018).

Previous studies (Akdaş & Kalman, 2021; Mnyandu, 2020) have highlighted challenges such as resource shortages, infrastructure limitations, and the need for specialized teaching methods in multigrade settings. Despite the importance of defining objectives and curriculum content for empowering multigrade teachers, there remains a notable research gap in this area. The present study therefore aims to develop a curriculum framework outlining the objectives and content for multigrade teacher empowerment.

Methodology

The study adopted a conventional qualitative content analysis approach, appropriate when prior theory and literature on the topic are limited. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively selected participants, comprising faculty members in educational sciences with prior multigrade teaching experience and multigrade teacher leaders holding at least a master's degree. Interviews continued until data saturation was achieved. To ensure credibility and confirmability, the study employed member checking, peer debriefing by qualitative research experts, and independent coding of selected interviews to assess inter-coder agreement. All procedures were fully documented to support auditability. Transferability was enhanced through purposeful participant selection based on expertise and organizational role, alongside rich description of the research context and process. Data analysis involved inductive coding, grouping codes by similarities and differences, and developing categories directly from participants' responses.

Findings

The analysis identified two core dimensions: curriculum objectives and curriculum content.

1. Curriculum Objectives

Five main themes were derived:

- Evaluation and enhancement of teachers' psychological and professional skills.
- Strengthening individual, professional, and psychological competencies.
- Expanding the use of modern teaching methods.
- Improving and managing instructional quality and educational processes.
- Recognizing and addressing cultural, social, and gender-related differences.

These themes encompassed 29 concepts and 11 subcategories, reflecting the diverse challenges and essential competencies required for effective performance in multi-grade teaching contexts.

2. Curriculum Content

The content analysis revealed one overarching theme: Attention to Individual, Social, and Psychological Dimensions, which comprised four subcategories:

- Personal Skills: Communication, self-awareness, and capacity building.
- Professional Skills: Instructional knowledge, job-specific training, and media literacy.
- Psychological Skills: Emotional intelligence, stress management, creativity, and motivation.
- Social Life Skills: Citizenship education, cultural awareness, and community engagement.

These content components were systematically designed to holistically address the professional and personal development needs of multi-grade teachers, particularly in diverse and resource-constrained educational settings.

Conclusion

This study underscores the necessity of a multidimensional and contextually tailored curriculum designed specifically to empower multi-grade teachers. By comprehensively addressing psychological resilience, pedagogical effectiveness, cultural adaptability, and personal development, such curricula can significantly enhance the performance and professional growth of teachers operating in complex and often resource-limited educational environments. Ultimately, the findings advocate for the development and implementation of policy frameworks that institutionalize ongoing teacher empowerment as a strategic approach to improving both the quality and equity of education, particularly in remote and underserved communities.

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