

Delights and Difficulties Multi-Grade Teachers in Rural Schools

Monette Capiendo Lapuz

Abstract— This study described the delights and difficulties of the multigrade teachers in rural schools of San Jose District, San Jose, Tarlac through a case study design. Three (3) teachers from ten multigrade schools were taken as respondents of the study who spent more than five years teaching in the remote schools in San Jose, Tarlac. Findings showed that the delights of the multigrade teachers were seeing their pupils improve academically, physically and socially. They were also spiritual and regarded their teaching assignment as a mission and a vocation. They also took pride in their humble winnings in various academic and non-academic in the district, provincial and Cluster levels. These made the teachers stay long in their assigned locations. Multigrade teaching in the remote villages in San Jose District entailed a lot of difficulties which were mostly on travel, lack of physical facilities, inadequate instructional materials and inadequate trainings. Some were also personal such as lack of time to spend with the family due to so many school works. Others were on financial problems. Some of these may not be pedagogical but require support for communications and roads, building wells and latrines or partnership building with parents. Multigrade teaching literally affected the lives of the teachers since all their plans were dependent upon what is possible considering their time staying in the mountains. In fact, some permanently reside near their multigrade schools together with their families.

Based from the findings the study recommends that school administrators have to schedule regular visits to the multigrade schools to guide teachers on administrative concerns. They have to make sure that workbooks are available before the start of the school year and that these are delivered promptly. It would help teachers a lot especially that they have to address three grade levels in one room. They have to increase incentives to multigrade teachers because of the unique system of multigrade education. They have to ensure that a system of communication is in place in case teachers need to contact them in emergency cases. Moreover, Multigrade teachers should develop instructional plans before school opening including their teaching needs and submit these to the principal or district for provision of support. Early planning and careful projection of instructional materials would prevent them from scarcity of material needs at the middle of the school year. They should develop their own workbooks and request for reproduction in the district.

Index Terms— Multigrade Schools, Delights, Difficulties , Rural Schools, Physical facilities, Remote Villages

I. INTRODUCTION

“A haven of tranquil beauty,” this is how San Jose, Tarlac in the western part of Tarlac Province [1]. This town can be reached from the lofty peaks of the mountain range to the greenery paradise of the eco-tourism park located at Sitio Padlana Brgy. Lubigan San Jose, Tarlac. It hosts the

well-known Monasterio De Tarlac, a place where one can find peace to refresh the soul and spirit and bond his heart with the beauty of Mother Nature.

Along these mountain ranges, lie the rustic hamlets of the Multigrade pupils who are eager to learn from their Multigrade Teachers. They enrolled themselves in the Multigrade School with hopes and aspiration that they will acquire knowledge and wisdom--their armor from ignorance and poverty.

Multi-grade schooling is a worldwide phenomenon in most of the rural areas. Multigrade teaching is a result of financial constraints, non-availability of teachers or lack of resources. Multigrade classes are commonly found in sparsely populated areas in rural settings or in areas with high student population but few teachers [2].

For many rural educators, multigrade instruction is not an experiment or a new educational trend, but a necessity imposed, in part, by economic and geographic conditions. In an environment dominated by graded schools, the decision to combine grades can be quite difficult, especially if constituents feel shortchanged by the decision. Nonetheless, recent proposals for school restructuring reflect renewed interest in multi-grade organization [3] and in small-scale organization generally. Such work may eventually contest the norm of the graded school.

Increasing access to basic education was accorded priority attention through the establishment of schools in identified barangays, without elementary school, the completion of incomplete elementary schools presently offering at least four (4) grades and organization of multigrade classes. As a solution to the problem of incomplete elementary schools and newly established schools in remote barangays, multigrade classes were organized to support DECS' thrust to improve access to elementary education.

The Basic Elementary Curriculum (BEC) typically produced for the mono-grade classroom. Such curriculum is difficult for the multigrade teacher to use because they tend to write multiple lesson plans for each grade level separately. This is not only time consuming, but may also result in ineffective instruction [4].

Most teachers have been trained to work in single-grade classrooms. Their knowledge of teaching method is based on whole-class instruction and small-group instruction (with groups often formed on the basis of ability or achievement level). When placed in a multigrade setting, they discovered that the time requirements and skills needed to be effective were simply not part of their prior training and experience.

Managing multigrade classes is difficult because there is more than one grade level in the classroom. Any novice teacher who is not trained to handle a multigrade classes in both his bachelor's degree and even as an appointed permanent teacher is usually confused about what she will do and how she will handle this type of classes (multigrade).

Monette Capiendo Lapuz, Department of Education, San Jose District, Tarlac, Philippines

Aside from these facts they do not have book or handouts about teaching these classes effectively [5].

Teachers of multigrade classrooms who encounter the biggest challenges are those working in single-grade classrooms. If a teacher fails to address differences among students, the effectiveness of instruction suffers. Likewise, teachers are harmed when they have not been adequately prepared to teach students with varying ages and abilities, no matter what sort of classroom they work in.

Multigrade education often takes place in remote schools in difficult to reach areas. This is true to San Jose, Tarlac. Teachers not only face the difficulties of dealing with a multigrade organized class, but also other constraint such as lack of resources, infrequent supervision, and poor living conditions [5]. Another burden for the multigrade teachers is that they have to sacrifice being away with their respective families. The sole means of transportation to such mountainous and rugged places is through hiking for long hours. Teachers also experience the difficulties of inadequate facilities and other comforts usually experienced in regular schools. They should learn to adjust and adopt with the new community's culture they are working for the sake of harmony. These conditions also make teachers resistant to the idea of multigrade teaching (MGT) and reduce their enthusiasm for the task.

Multigrade classes are common in most far flung sitios and barangays in San Jose District, San Jose Tarlac. There are thirteen (13) Multigrade schools, eight of which are complete elementary schools and the rest are primary schools, with one or two teachers. There are twenty nine (29) multigrade teachers district wide. Despite of the difficulties coupled with challenges of handling two or more grades, these teachers continuous to exert precious time and effort to nurture the children under their care ([6].

The existence of multigrade classes in San Jose District is to support universal access to education and to response to our country's program which is Education For All (EFA) Filipino children. In this way, many (if not all) San Josenian children will be given the opportunity to have quality education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multigrade education is one of the measures instituted to realize the global commitment of 164 UN members to make education available and accessible to all [7]. This school system is combining two to three grade levels in one class because the enrollees are few and is often carried out in remote villages [8]. This school system is intended for children in far flung areas. Teachers go to the remote communities to ensure that education is accessible to all children.

Multigrade teaching offers advantages aside from its main purpose of making education accessible to the remote villages. Some of the benefits are opportunities for re-teaching becomes real since teachers handle small number of pupils compared to regular schools; academic, physical, and social competition between peers is reduced since cooperation is more emphasized rather than competition; older students have the opportunity to teach younger ones so they become more responsible; longer time spent by the same teachers with students increases more trust, understanding and positive relationships; and teachers could spend more

time with the children after classes since most teachers have to live in the place of their work over the period of classes [9].

On the other hand, MGT has disadvantages. These include more discipline, greater concentration, and more focus in order to benefit from peer teaching, group work and self-directed learning; less reliance on direct supervision by teachers; requires more initiative and resourcefulness to function effectively; and students may have less trained teachers who may not fully transfer the basic literacy expectations from the students. In addition, preparation of 11 to 12 lesson plans a day, preparation of multi-level instructional materials, lack of college training and background in the multi-grade classes, lack of seminars, trainings and workshops, lack of appropriate incentives and proper recognition, lack of interest and positive attitudes of teachers and school administrators on multigrade teaching, inconsistent monitoring and instructional supervision of school heads, inadequate school facilities and supplies, location, status and condition of the school site and lack of active parent and community participation are also additional problems in multigrade teaching [10].

The strengths and weaknesses of MGT in Kalangala District, Uganda were analyzed. The study found that low enrolment, fully sensitized key stakeholders, big-sized classrooms and an adequate supply of teachers were favorable to the successful introduction of MGT in a school and teachers had to be adequately trained, supplied with relevant instructional materials, implementation guidelines and appropriate furniture for them to successfully implement MGT. Furthermore, the study established that MGT has advantages over Mono-grade teaching but MGT has weaknesses in itself and in the way it was introduced; and that for perfect implementation, certain issues needed to be addressed [11].

MGT demands for both the capacity and will of all the stakeholders especially the teachers [12]. For success of MGT system, Hargreaves [13] suggested needed training, guidance that teachers must undergo adequate training. Moreover, Little [14] also suggested that knowledge of multi-grade teaching strategies is needed by all teachers and not simply those in classes designated as multi-grade.

Several studies on MGT were also conducted in the Philippines, Ramos [15], showed that handling multi-grade classes was hardly manageable. Classrooms were sub-standard; school furniture and textbooks were described not enough while school equipment and instructional tools and devices were none at all. Pupils from Multi-grade classes excelled in mathematics and performed fairly in other subjects. Fifty percent of the teachers had no seminar in Multi-grade teaching. The administrative support on instruction development and instructional materials development were only satisfactory.

No less than the Undersecretary of Education in the Philippines, Armin Luistro promised that there will be investments on trainings for teachers, curriculum planning and development, and preparation of learning materials [16].

Another study by Polvorido [17] recommended that for MGT to be successful, (1) a formal form of a flexible/varied class program showing the modified sequence and time allotment of learning areas should be utilized; (2) integrative of subjects must be provided across grade levels considering the commonality in skills to be developed, on the integrative threads; (3) Multi-grade Instructional Package [MIP] for

multigrade teachers and Self-Instructional Multi-Level Materials [MLM] should be provided for multigrade pupils; (4) in-Service Trainings for multigrade teachers and district supervisors / administrators in multi-grade program should be conducted for proper implementation and evaluation of such program; (5) Utilization of the Proposed Daily Lesson Planning Program Form; (6) Specific curriculum for multi-grade classes; (7) Educational institutions offering BEED courses should include in their curriculum specific training for such multigrade classes situation, also they should practically exposed to situation during their student teaching internship; and (8) Additional compensation due to multigrade classes should be given priority attention and (9) allocation of items for Mastered teacher in multigrade classes.

All of the related studies bore significance to the present study because they were all descriptive and analytical about the instruction of multi-grade classes here and abroad. Previous studies are related to the present study conducted in terms of focus on the difficulties of the multi-grade teachers. However, the present study conducted is unique because it focuses not only with the difficulties but also with the delights of the multi-grade teachers in San Jose District, San Jose, Tarlac based on their perceptions, thoughts, and emotions regarding to the multi-grade teaching.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Describe the delights of the multigrade teachers to compensate with their difficulties to make them stay in the profession.
2. Identify the difficulties multigrade teachers encountered.
3. Describe how did their experiences in school affect their personal lives.
4. Discuss the implications of the findings to education.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study used phenomenological design via case analysis to describe the delights and difficulties of three multigrade teachers in Rural Schools of San Jose District, San Jose, Tarlac. The researcher made an initial talk with the respondents before its conceptualization to ensure that they will be available for interview. The researcher arranged for a three series interview with the respondents in order to gather all the details needed to answer the research problems. The study was conducted in three multigrade schools.

The interview was used by the researcher in gathering data among the multigrade teachers in San Jose District. Interviews were recorded for transcription and analysis. Interview guide explored multigrade teachers' delights and difficulties and probed into their thoughts, feelings and concerns with regard to their teaching. Multigrade teachers' narratives provided helpful perspectives related to their experience and rich details about their feelings and thoughts. After the recorded interviews had been transcribed, they were analyzed to identify prevailing themes by coding and categorizing the essential meanings of multi-grade teachers' responses. One or more methods were used to ensure the credibility of the findings. Direct quotes from multigrade teachers further enhanced the credibility of the findings and conclusions.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Case1: A Novice Teacher in a Multigrade School

Case 1 recalls how happy she was when her application to teach got accepted in the District. She could not wait to hold the chalk and read stories to pupils. At last, she was called to report and as she expected, she was assigned to a multigrade school. She was very much aware what to expect in this school system because of the stories being told to her by the previous teacher in a multigrade school. Nevertheless, she was very happy because at last, she would now help in providing their financial needs especially because her children were sickly. Case 1 has had delights amidst the challenges she encountered teaching in a multigrade school. It could have been easy for the first teacher to succumb to the pressures but she held on. When she sees her pupils learning to read despite scarce school supplies and empty stomach; sees how pupils gradually changed their values from going to the farm to going to school regularly; from going to school unkempt to going to school bathed, her heart grew more and more concerned about the education of the children. She also taught the children about love of God, of parents and other people. As a matter of fact, her faith in God made her strong to face the challenges of being a teacher in a multigrade school. Moreover, Case 1 feels elated every time she receives award over her accomplishments. She won 1st place in the district-wide Grade 3 CLIMBS contest in the teacher category and won 3rd place, province-wide in the same category. She also bagged 2nd place in the Malikaing Pagkukuwento sa Filipino, teacher category. In addition, she won 1st place trainer of the Sci-Art pupil category, district level. These winnings inspired her to work harder in the multigrade school.

However, Case 1 experiences daily difficulties as a multigrade teacher. The village where she was assigned is very remote which is passable by vehicle but the passenger jeep only routes the place once a day. So if Case1 was unable to catch the trip, she would be forced to walk the two hour distance or if she was lucky, she could hitch in dam trucks, in Army vehicles or in pog-pogs (small farm tractor for rice harvest).

Moreover, the room where Case 1 holds her classes was small. It could only accommodate around 20 pupils at one time. She recalled the first time she got into class, the room was dusty, chairs were scattered and some were already nearing condemnation. The old cabinet contained few pieces of books. Some were worn out and others were torn. She had a tremendous shaping to do before she could start the classes.

The teacher observed the children lacked proper hygiene. They have clothes worn about five days ago. They barely took a bath. She could recall the smell of the room with children compounded by lack of adequate ventilation because there was only a small window to open and electric fan was not possible. This went on for several months before she was able to teach the children to take a bath every day and wear clean clothes.

Day by day, the teacher experienced difficulties. There were uncooperative parents and frequent absences especially during harvest time because pupils had to be in the rice fields. They had to go for labor because money was difficult in the community. In fact, some pupils went to school without eating breakfast or without food packed for the lunch. Some pupils had to stay home to take care of their siblings

while their parents were away to look for food. These were hurting times to the teacher.

Since pupils did not go to school regularly, their academic performance was poor. They did not also study their lessons at home. Nobody would help them with their assignments because their parents were uneducated too.

Among all the hardships that Case 1 encountered, her being away from her sickly children was most painful. Her heart was very heavy by the mere thought of how her kids were doing while she was away but she could not quit since she needed a job to provide their medication expenses and add to that the burden to teach the pupils because not anyone would want to be in that place. She recalled one time she needed to go home because one of her children was very sick. It was not advisable for her because it was already afternoon but since it was emergency, she had to go. She literally had to walk and run to reach the road and hoped that an Army truck would pass by so she could hitch. Upon reaching the road, no vehicle passed by, so she had to continue walking until she reached home. This scenario did not only happen once but several times.

If only Case 1 had her choice, she would have wanted to bring her children in the mountains so she could closely monitor their health but she could not. They would not be able to bear the sacrifice of climbing the mountains under the scorching sun. So Case 1 had to leave them to her mother. She had to sacrifice going up and down to know their health condition.

Often times too, her pains as a multigrade teacher did not just revolve around her sickly children but more so with the despise she received from her school administrator and the accusations that she was a lazy teacher. Because her superiors hardly visited the school, they relied on reports about her teaching performance in the mountains. It was reported that she was often absent in school and they believed it without verifying the facts. They only got a feedback from one person who does not even go regularly to the school when the teacher calls for a parents' meeting.

She could even not recall a day that her superiors visited the place to check on her needs. There was no instructional supervision which could have helped her determine what area in teaching she still needed to improve. To her mind, successful strategies for multigrade teaching depend on adequate supplies of learning materials to support individual and group-based learning to enable her to spend time with some groups of learners while other learners work alone, in pairs or in small groups. But instructional materials were inadequate. Instead what she got from the school administrators were reprimands because of the unconfirmed reports of her frequent absences in school. They did not bother to know the difficulty she had to undergo to see her children and bring along reports to the principal or to the district. She had to travel almost one day to have her reports computerized; another day to prepare her reports; another day to submit and another day to go back to the mountains. They never bothered to be concerned about the expenses she had to incur in going home and computerization expenses only to submit what the principal needs. She was branded as lazy teacher and disobedient to superiors.

The direction of the life of Case 1, including her family depends upon what is possible considering her work as a

multigrade teacher. They cannot just go for vacation anytime they want especially if it means leaving the children for a long time. Her personal and family decisions also depend upon what will not sacrifice her time in multigrade school.

Case 1 continues to struggle and fight. As long as there are children who are interested to learn, she would remain as a teacher in a multigrade school.



Figure 1. Hanging Bridge -the way to reach the school



Figure 2. River which teachers had to walk through to reach the school.

Case 2: The Persistent Teacher

Case 2 is a married man with two beautiful daughters. To him, teaching is a vocation and mission. He believes that it is only through education that children could have a better future. These were his convictions even before he was assigned as a multigrade teacher.

He was called to report to the District office after long months of waiting. At last, he was now accepted and above that, as a permanent teacher. He had no idea he would be sent to a very remote multigrade school in San Jose District. But when he was told it was so, he accepted it with whole heart.

The day when he had to report to the school came. He was to walk together with someone who was also a multigrade teacher in the school he was assigned. As an adventurous person, he enjoyed the travel. He was amazed by the beauty of the virgin mountains. Everything was green and refreshing at the heart of the mountain. There was a raging current of water which they passed through. He surpassed the first long walk to the place.

Like other multigrade teachers, Case 2 had difficulties going to and from the mountain but to him, all the pains of being a multigrade teacher pay off when he sees children improve from being ignorant to becoming enlightened. Now, children no longer cover their face when talking to the teacher and when they are reciting. Moreover, Case 2 believes that God has assigned him to that place and this is his mission. He is needed to help innocent children and liberate them from ignorance. If God continues to give him the strength to teach in this place, he decides to stay and make himself available for hungry minds.

The delights of Case 2 also revolved around using his talents in sports as he plays coach to his pupils in competitions. They emerged as the champion in swimming in the inter-district level for boys and girls category in 2011. They qualified for the Cluster meet but to their dismay, they were unable to join because aside from having inadequate budget, almost all his players had no birth certificates yet during that time. Aside from sports, he also won 1st place as the *Makata ng Taon* in the District level and came out 3rd place in the Cluster level.

He accounts his difficulties during his first days in school. During his first day in school, he observed few children coming to school. He was told by the other teacher that the practice is normal since children had to work in the fields or stay in their homes to take care of their siblings while their parents were in the mountains to look for wild animals or anything edible to bring home. Because the children did not go to school regularly, it followed that they had very poor academic performance. Case 2 could hardly move from one topic to another since his pupils came and went. They could not master basic skills because they only went to school if they were not hired to do labor. Children also came to school untidy. They did not take a bath nor changed their clothes. Some even came without packed lunch which literally meant children learning with an empty stomach.

Case 2 could not just sit and let the situation continue on. He knew life would only be a cycle if these children would not be educated. So he thought of an idea. One day, he started to go house-to-house and convinced the parents to send their children to school. He also talked to the children and told them what schooling could do to their lives.

He did this every day. He visited homes daily. He went to the farthest house he could reach just to show how concerned he was about the education of their children. Little by little the classroom was filled with pupils who used to be only handful. To sustain the attendance, he kept on telling the children that they could only improve their situation through education. But he was a disciplinarian too. He had to impose rules which the children must follow and he made sure he consistently implemented them. He told them not to prioritize going to the fields during weekdays. Instead, they could do this on weekends. He also discussed this matter with the parents and he got their cooperation. At first, it was difficult to convince them but through constant talks, they understood him.

Another revelation that Case 2 just knew the first time he arrived was the need for him to stay in school because he had

no other place to stay in the village. There was even no electricity and adequate water supply. They had to fetch water from the well or from the river where they also take bath.

During night time Case 2 and two other teachers would pour themselves over their lessons under their lamps (*gasera*) which were really sacrifices on their parts. To prepare lessons without electricity contributed to the difficulty of Case 2. Often times they used candle light or lamp (*gasera*) to write their lessons. Sometimes their candle supplies and gas are depleted especially when they could go down due to strong typhoons which caused roads to be unpassable so they could not prepare for the next day's class.

Another difficulty of Case 2 was his thoughts about his family. It is during these times he felt he was luckier despite the crises he and his wife is undergoing. They have sickly children and both of them were always away from their kids. Their sources of support for their sickly children come from their salaries from multigrade teaching.

To be away from the family especially during the times his children were sick usually broke the heart of Case 2. He has a child who has a heart disease and there were times she needed to be brought to the doctor or hospital. He could not focus teaching so he had to rush home. During these times, he walked and literary ran to reach home before dark. He had to pray for a dump truck or a vehicle of the soldiers to hitch on. Sometimes he got lucky at other times not, so he had to continue on running and walking.

His struggle does not end upon reaching home. He would be branded lazy because some reports reached the district about his absence in school. Instead of understanding his situation, he got nasty talks about being irresponsible and disobedient to his superiors.

According to Case 2, multigrade teaching has become almost his first family. He spends more time in the mountains than with his own family. He does school jobs outside teaching such as doing repairs and building physical structures.



Figure 3. MG Pupils During Harvest Season. They escape class to join the harvest



Figure 4. MG Pupils Harvesting Charcoal Instead of attending class

Case 3: The Teacher Mistaken as a Leftist

Case 3 is a married with four (4) children and was assigned as a multigrade teacher for more than ten years now. During her first year as a teacher, she had to walk three (3) to five (5) hours on foot to reach the school in the village. This was a common problem of teachers in remote areas. But she did not quit her job. Just like the first and second teacher, she regarded this assignment not as a job but as a mission from God.

Case 3 delights in multigrade teaching because she had a great faith in God. This faith is sufficient to surpass all the hardship she had in the mountains. She chose to remain as a multigrade teacher. In fact, she had a permanent house built near the school so she could bring her children and mother along. Today, she does not need to go down every weekend to be with her family. However, she longs for that time she would be promoted and to improve their economic condition a little.

Unlike the other multigrade teachers, Case 3 had not won any competition yet. But to her, having her pupils experience socializing with other people in different places was enough to make her happy. She was victorious in allowing her pupils to taste life outside the mountains. She encouraged them to finish their studies so they could go to places.

However, multigrade teaching was not at all easy for Case 3. The village which she was assigned is separated by three rivers so they had to cross over to get to the other place. It took them three-five hours to reach the place. This was definitely a nice experience for mountain hikers but to do this every week for more than six years required dedication, patience and endurance. But to this date, Case 3 is already assigned in a near multigrade school.

During the first day of Case 3, she was met by the barangay leader and she asked if they could help her build a hut where she could stay during the weekdays. She got the support. She learned there was no electric current in the community. This was another challenge for her. But no matter how difficult the situation was, she carried on.

Case 3 experienced the same problems that teachers in multigrade schools in remote villages have had such as long hikes, unkempt children and absentee pupils but what stood out to be her difficulty was the scarcity of teaching materials

which makes teaching so hard especially because she is handling three grade levels in one class. What compounded her problem were the extremely limited resources that parents can provide such as notebook or paper and something to pencils.

During her first year as a multigrade teacher, she looked for books and other instructional materials but these were very limited in the school where she was assigned. She had to devise her teaching strategies by not depending too much of books but on charts for everyone to see. What was worst were the absence of the superiors to visit how the school was and what the problems were. In addition, physical facilities were frequently neglected by the district in regard to maintenance, repair and supervision. Pupils also had to compete for space in the classroom and learning materials. They also received less of the teacher's time and attention because they were many in one room.

The problems of Case 3 were not only related to teaching strategies and materials. One day, she was going down the mountains together with three old women, which she always did after class days so she could spend weekends with her children. All of a sudden five (5) Army men poked a gun on her suspecting she was a rebel. She started to explain to the soldiers that she was a teacher and the old women with her needed to go down for a medical check-up. No words convinced the soldiers. They had to undergo inspection. Even the old women with her were not spared from the interrogation. She was shaking of fear but she prayed hard. After the inspection, they were permitted to continue walking. She survived this ordeal.

On another day, while Case 3 was walking down the mountains together with an escort, out of nowhere, a man suddenly appeared and tried to seize and rape her. She was trembling that time. But she was able to run away from the rapist. She learned that this man raped a five-year old girl few years back and killed her by pushing her down the cliff. When the authorities heard about this, he told the police that his son, who was mentally ill, did it. His son was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit.

Every night, Case 3 heard some kind of weird animal noise right outside her house which made her so afraid. Often times she could not sleep well too. There were also many times too that she saw snakes on her way up and down the mountains. But she did not succumb to these fears and difficulties.

Multigrade teaching had set the life direction of Case 3 to the extent of building a permanent dwelling there. She is now a member of the community where she teaches.

Case Analysis

The delight of the teacher in multigrade teaching is her faith in God becoming deeper through the trials and difficulties she encountered. Being a Christian, her greatest joy is to serve God in difficult places. Her life's mission was similar to Jurado (2010) in her testimony about being a missionary. Every week Denise gladly traveled eighty miles round trip to teach Bible studies, mentor and pastor women at the Dream Center. She counted it a privilege to be a part of the amazing ministry. She did not mind the difficulties she encountered in

traveling from place to place because she delights in giving herself to unfortunate women.

The difficulty of Case 3 in teaching in multigrade school is real. It would be very impossible to render effective teaching if there are no teaching aids; worst, pupils have nothing to write on. According to Right (2010), learning materials are important because they can significantly increase student achievement by supporting student learning. For example, a worksheet may provide a student with important opportunities to practice a new skill gained in class. This process aids in the learning process by allowing the student to explore the knowledge independently as well as providing repetition.

The inability of the children to acquire school supplies was similar with the findings of Hargreaves & Montero (2001) in their study about multigrade education in Peru. In the study, they found that the resources that parents can provide for the education of their children are extremely limited, so that even to buy a notebook and something to write with may be difficult. Furthermore, teachers need materials that encourage pupil self-learning and peer learning. The development of workbooks for lower primary level to assist beginning reading and writing would be useful, as would pictures and posters that could resource pupils from a variety of grades. This means that the difficulty of having scarce teaching materials felt by Case 3 was also similar in multigrade schools in other places.

The life of Case 3 revolves around her teaching mission in the mountains. She shrugs off activities that will compromise her time with the pupils.



Figure 5. San Jose, Tarlac River Where Teachers traverse



Figure 6. Teachers and Villagers Wash Their Clothes in the River

Implications to Educational Management

Multigrade education is a must all over the world because education is a right of every citizen, regardless of their location and status in life. Teachers are then sent to remote villages and mountains to educate children in these places. Along this light, teacher education must then prepare teachers not only in a normal or regular curriculum but also in alternative education such as combination classes in multigrade schools. So that in case they work in such a school system in the future, they already had foreknowledge of it.

A regret expressed by teachers in this study was that they felt unable to give the pupils in multigrade classes the individual help and attention they needed. Teachers were aware of what ought to be done to improve students' learning, but they could not actually do it because their time was so limited and the material resources were scarce. Teachers' sense of efficacy is likely to diminish in these circumstances and thus their satisfaction also. Teachers not only face the difficulties of dealing with a multigrade organized class, but also other constraints such as lack of resources, infrequent supervision, and poor living conditions. These conditions also make teachers resistant to the idea of multigrade teaching and reduce their enthusiasm for the task. It also makes it difficult to recruit teachers for these kinds of jobs, and to retain those teachers who are recruited.

Multigrade teachers are but humans who also experience personal struggles such as domestic problems and financial burdens which also affected some of the teachers in this study. These have to be considered by school administrators and plan ways to help teachers with these scenarios.

This seemed to indicate that multigrade education not only in San Jose District but in the entire nation must be reviewed. If not, teacher effectiveness would continue to diminish because of the difficulties expressed by the Multigrade teachers. School administrators should find this helpful to improve the facilities and structures by all means. Access to education is denied without basic facilities to both teachers and pupils. Books must be adequate; with this, at least the pupils are given a good opportunity to develop themselves in school.

Moreover, teacher education must instill values as much as developing professional competence. In an alternative education, excellent mind might not prevail over impatience and difficulties.

Multigrade teachers also have needs that are different from the regular teachers. This means the government must give them special benefits. They have to be recognized for their sacrifices, aside from their professional competence.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

1. Delights of the multigrade teachers were seeing their pupils improve academically, physically and socially. They were also spiritual and regarded their teaching assignment as a mission and a vocation. These made the teachers stay long in their assigned locations. They also won in academic and non-academic competitions.

2. Multigrade teaching in the remote villages in San Jose District entailed a lot of difficulties which were mostly on travel, lack of physical facilities, inadequate instructional materials and inadequate trainings. Some were also personal

such as lack of time to spend with the family due to so many school work. Others were on financial problems. Some of these may not be pedagogical but require support for communications and roads, building wells and latrines or partnership building with parents.

3. Multigrade teaching literally affected the lives of the teachers since all their plans were dependent upon what is possible considering their time staying in the mountains. In fact, some permanently reside near their multigrade schools together with their families.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. School administrators have to schedule regular visits to the multigrade schools to guide teachers on administrative concerns. They should show that they are willing to walk the same distance as what other teachers had experienced. This will make them know and feel what the multigrade teachers experience. They have to make sure that workbooks are available before the start of the school year and that these are delivered promptly . It would help teachers a lot especially that they have to address three grade levels in one room. In whatever means, they should care to develop the infrastructure and the facilities in the school for the improvement of the pupils and teachers. They have to increase incentives to multigrade teachers because of the unique system of multigrade education. They have to ensure that a system of communication is in place in case teachers need to contact them in emergency cases. They have to boost the morale of the teachers rather than making them feel miserable by unverified reports. They have to send their teachers to regular trainings and ensure that they have teaching guides. During special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries, they should assign substitutes for the teachers so they could spend a quality time with their families. Multigrade teachers have to be awarded every end of the school year.

2. The Multigrade teachers should develop instructional plans before school opening including their teaching needs and submit these to the principal or district for provision of support. Early planning and careful projection of instructional materials would prevent them from scarcity of material needs at the middle of the school year. They should develop their own workbooks and request for reproduction in the district. They have to teach pupils how to plant vegetables in the school backyard so that the pupils would do the same in their backyards. They should determine the number of pupils who are malnourished and report this to the district for proper sourcing of funds. They could also form mothers' organization so that this could serve as the channel of information and dissemination. They could also teach mothers who cannot read. This would serve as their outreach.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher expresses her profound gratitude to the Eduardo Cojuangco Foundation for the rare opportunity of providing scholarship to public school teachers in the Province of Tarlac, Philippines. The school administrators and teachers of University of St. La Salle and Tarlac State University of the Philippines are likewise acknowledged in this study (Dr. Lolita V. Sicat)for assisting the researcher in

completing her Master's degree in Education. The researcher is also indebted to the Department of Education , Tarlac Province Division for allowing her to complete her graduate degree. The multigrade teachers in San Jose District who accommodated her during the data collection are also worth mentioning. Without their willingness, this study would not be a reality. Most of all, the researcher thanks her family for the love and support. She expresses her reverence to the Almighty Father for giving her the strength she needed in accomplishing this study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Sicat,Rodrigo M. (2007). Balayan. Tarlac State University Library.
- [2] Ali, Rana N. (2002). *Multi-grade Teaching in Northern Areas of Pakistan and Chital*. Retrieved August 12, 2011 from www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade/fulltext/fulltextresearchprop.pdf.
- [3] Taole, M. (2014). *Multigrade Teaching: A Daunting Challenge for Rural Teachers*. www.krepublishers.com.
- [4] Polvorido,E. T. (2001).*A Study on Adopted Organized Curriculum of Multi-Grade Classes in Public Elementary School*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis)
- [5] Beukes, F. (2006). *Managing the Effects of Multigrade Teaching on the Learner Performance in Namibia*. <https://ujdigispace.uj.ac.za>.
- [6] Ramos, Roger P. (2011). *The Multigrade Teaching Program (MGTP) in San Jose District, San Jose, Tarlac: An Evaluation*. A Dissertation. Tarlac State University
- [7] United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2015). *Education For All Movement*. www.unesco.org.
- [8] Sabian, Catherine (2013). *Multigrade Program in Philippine Education*. www.slideshare.net.
- [9] Word Press (2013). *The Benefits of Multigrade Teaching*. <http://multigradeteacher.wordpress.com>.
- [10] Vicente, Richlyn (2001). *The Challenges of Multigrade Teaching*. www.slidshare.net.
- [11] Kazibwe, F. (2004). *An Assessment of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Multigrade Teaching in Kalangala District (Alternative Methods of Providing Basic Education)*. www.smartsheep.org.
- [12] Miller, Bruce (2003). *Multigrade Teaching*. <http://www.ericdigests.org>.
- [13] Hargreaves, E. & Montero , C. (2001). *Multigrade Teaching in Peru, Sri Lanka and Vietnam: An Overview*. <http://www.nied.edu.na>.
- [14] Little, Angela W. (2007). *Education For All and Multigrade Teaching : Challenges and Opportunities*. <http://books.google.com.ph/>
- [15] Ramos, Roger P. (2011). *The Multigrade Teaching Program (MGTP) in San Jose District, San Jose, Tarlac: An Evaluation*. A Dissertation. Tarlac State University
- [16] Official Gazette (2012). *Multigrade Classes Bring More Children to School*. www.gov.ph.
- [17] Polvorido,E. T. (2001).*A Study on Adopted Organized Curriculum of Multi-Grade Classes in Public Elementary School*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis) . Tarlac State University, Tarlac City, Philippines

Monette Capiendo Lapuz is a public school elementary teacher in San Jose District in San Jose, Tarlac, Philippines. She is a Master of Arts in Education, Major in Educational Management degree holder. She finished Bachelor in Elementary Education, major in Mathematics at Tarlac State University. Currently, Ms. Lapuz is finishing her Doctor in Educational Leadership Degree at the University of St. La Salle, Bacolod City.

Ms. Lapuz teaches in Sta. Cruz Elementary School, Sitio Sta. Cruz Iba San Jose, Tarlac as a permanent teacher.