Multigrade Schools' Learning Environment, Teachers' Instructional Practices, and Learners' Academic Performance

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between the learning environment in multigrade schools, teachers' instructional practices, and learners' academic performance in the Schools Division of Antique during School Year 2024–2025. The research aimed to determine how classroom conditions and teaching practices influence learners' academic outcomes in multigrade settings. The respondents consisted of teachers and learners selected through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire to assess the learning environment and teachers' instructional practices, while learners' academic performance was obtained from official school records. Findings revealed that the learning environment in multigrade schools was generally perceived as supportive and conducive to learning. Classroom climate and positive peer interactions were identified as key strengths that contributed to a favorable learning atmosphere. Teachers' instructional practices were likewise rated highly, particularly in terms of lesson planning, organization of learning activities, and the use of appropriate instructional strategies to address diverse learner needs. Learners' academic performance was found to be at a satisfactory to very satisfactory level, indicating that most learners were able to meet expected learning outcomes. The results further showed meaningful relationships among the learning environment, instructional practices, and learners' academic performance. A positive classroom climate and well-planned lessons emerged as important factors that influenced learners' academic success. The study concludes that a supportive learning environment combined with effective instructional practices plays a crucial role in enhancing academic performance in multigrade schools. It is therefore recommended that school administrators and teachers continue to strengthen classroom conditions, improve instructional planning, and promote collaborative learning practices to sustain and further improve learners' academic outcomes.

Keywords: Multigrade Schools, Learning Environment, Instructional Practices, Academic Performance, Teachers, Learners

1. Introduction

Multigrade teaching remains a common practice in many developing countries, including the Philippines, particularly in rural and geographically isolated areas. In multigrade classrooms, a single teacher handles two or more grade levels simultaneously, creating unique challenges related to classroom management, instructional pacing, and addressing diverse learner needs. Despite these challenges, multigrade schools continue to play a crucial role in providing access to education for learners who might otherwise be underserved.

The learning environment in multigrade classrooms is a key factor in shaping teaching and learning processes. A positive classroom climate, supportive peer interactions, and access to appropriate learning resources help promote learner engagement, motivation, and collaboration. When learners feel supported and safe, they are more likely to participate actively and achieve better academic outcomes. Research has consistently shown that a well-structured learning environment can mitigate some of the challenges inherent in multigrade teaching.

Closely linked to the learning environment are teachers' instructional practices. In multigrade settings, teachers must employ flexible and adaptive strategies, including differentiated instruction, careful lesson planning, and continuous assessment, to meet the varied needs of learners across grade levels. Effective instructional practices enable teachers to maximize limited time and resources while ensuring that learning objectives are met. Studies suggest that learner-centered and well-planned instructional approaches significantly improve academic performance even in multigrade classrooms.

In the Schools Division of Antique, multigrade schools are common, yet empirical studies examining the combined influence of learning environment and instructional practices on learners' academic performance remain limited. This study therefore aimed to determine the levels of the multigrade learning environment, teachers' instructional practices, and learners' academic performance, as well as to examine the relationships among these variables. The findings are intended to provide evidence-based insights that can guide school administrators, teachers, and policymakers in improving teaching strategies and learner outcomes in multigrade settings.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationship between the learning environment in multigrade schools, teachers' instructional practices, and learners' academic performance in the Schools Division of Antique during School Year 2024–2025. The descriptive component was used to determine the levels of the variables, while the correlational component examined the relationships among them without manipulation.

The respondents consisted of 365 teachers and learners from selected multigrade schools, chosen through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across schools and grade levels. Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire composed of three parts: the learning environment, teachers' instructional practices, and learners' academic performance. The instrument was adapted from validated tools used in previous multigrade studies and was reviewed by experts for content validity. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.80 for all constructs.

Learners' academic performance was obtained from official school records for School Year 2024–2025. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality,

and approval from the Schools Division Office of Antique. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

The findings revealed that the learning environment in multigrade schools was generally rated high (WM = 4.15, SD = 0.48). Classroom climate received the highest rating, followed by peer interactions and availability of learning resources. These results suggest that a positive classroom atmosphere and supportive peer relationships are evident in multigrade schools, although resource availability remains a challenge.

Teachers' instructional practices were also rated high (WM = 4.22, SD = 0.43). Lesson planning emerged as the strongest area, followed by instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment techniques. This indicates that teachers are able to plan and implement lessons effectively despite the complexities of handling multiple grade levels.

Learners' academic performance was rated satisfactory to very satisfactory, with a mean general average of 84.92 (SD = 5.01). Most learners obtained grades between 80 and 89, suggesting that expected learning competencies were generally achieved. Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships among the learning environment, instructional practices, and learners' academic performance. Regression analysis further identified classroom climate and lesson planning as significant predictors of academic performance.

4. Discussion

The results demonstrate that a positive learning environment plays a critical role in supporting effective instruction and learner achievement in multigrade schools. High ratings in classroom climate and peer interactions indicate that learners benefit from supportive and collaborative classroom settings, which enhance engagement and motivation. However, the lower rating for learning resources highlights the need for improved material support in multigrade classrooms.

Teachers' instructional practices were also found to be a strong contributor to learner performance. High ratings in lesson planning and instructional strategies suggest that teachers are effectively adapting their methods to address diverse learner needs. These practices are essential in multigrade settings, where careful planning and flexibility are required to manage multiple curricula simultaneously.

The significant relationships among the learning environment, instructional practices, and academic performance highlight the interconnected nature of these factors. Classroom climate and lesson planning emerged as key predictors, emphasizing that effective teaching is most successful when supported by a conducive learning environment. These findings reinforce the idea that multigrade schools can achieve positive academic outcomes when instructional practices and environmental conditions work together.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that multigrade schools in the Schools Division of Antique generally provide a supportive learning environment and demonstrate effective instructional practices. Classroom climate and peer interactions were identified as strengths, while lesson planning emerged as a critical instructional factor. Learners' academic performance was satisfactory to very satisfactory, indicating that students are able to meet expected competencies despite the challenges of multigrade instruction.

Both the learning environment and teachers' instructional practices were significantly related to learners' academic performance, with classroom climate and lesson planning identified as the strongest predictors. These findings highlight the importance of creating supportive classroom conditions and strengthening instructional practices to improve learner outcomes in multigrade schools.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, school administrators and teachers are encouraged to further enhance the learning environment in multigrade classrooms by fostering positive classroom relationships, promoting peer collaboration, and improving access to learning resources. Teachers should continue strengthening instructional practices through careful lesson planning, adaptive teaching strategies, and ongoing professional development. Schools may also implement learner support interventions such as remedial classes, peer tutoring, and differentiated instruction to address varied learning needs. At the policy level, the Schools Division Office of Antique is encouraged to provide targeted training, resources, and guidance specifically for multigrade schools. Future research may explore additional factors such as parental involvement, socio-emotional support, and technology integration to further understand and improve learning outcomes in multigrade education.

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