Implications Of Multi-Grade Classroom On Teaching And Learning: A Case Study Of Dimamo Circuit

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to check the implications of multi-grade classroom on teaching and learning in the Dimamo Circuit of Mankweng Cluster. The study followed the qualitative research approach to investigate multi-grade teaching. A case study research design was followed within an interpretive paradigm to evaluate the multi-grade teaching on daily basis. The population in this study consisted of principals and teachers who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through focus group, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Kolb's Experiential Learning theory was used as theoretical framework. The thematic approach was used to analyze data. To a greater extent, issues of ethical consideration not escape the attention of the researcher. He ensured that there is anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation participants' privacy and safety by using pseudonyms and nicknames to represent participants. In this case study, the researcher discovered a number of affecting teaching and learning in a multi-grade classroom at Dimamo Circuit of Mankweng Cluster. Such problems range from lack of faith in multi-grade teaching to ownership of the curriculum content. On the other hand, the researcher pointed out that the same problem led to small schools being affected in allocation of Norms and Standard for School Funding (NSSF). The study further proposed the model best suited for the effective delivery of multi-grade teaching. The study recommended a number of strategies ranging from the classroom management to concerted support to multi-grade schools. The study further recommended that the Department of Basic Education should develop human resource policies (HRP) which aim to address shortage of staff as per the recommended post provisioning model (PPM) in multi-grade teaching.

Keywords: *Multi-Grade Teaching, multi-grade classroom, mono-grade teaching, mono-grade classroom, curriculum flexibility.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Jordan (2006:26) in Msimanga (2014:1), multi-grade teaching is associated with small school; for example, farm and deep rural areas schools in remote and sparsely populated areas. Multi-grade teaching therefore refers to teaching of students of different ages, grades and abilities in the same group (Little, 1995:5). Teaching is the transmission of information by a teacher to his or her learners in a classroom set-up. Teaching is the work of teachers. It shows vividly that teachers have a greater responsibility to accomplish and with the utmost efficiency. The act of learning cannot be divorced from the act of studying. Therefore, learning is an outcome of studying and these two concepts are inseparably intertwined. Multi-grade means many grades in one classroom with teaching and learning taking place (Joubert, 2007:6). Multi-grade classroom therefore means many grades in one classroom with combined grades. Kokela (2021:1) states that schools with a cluster of classrooms scattered across different locations would offer multi-grade teaching. The aim of this study is to address the problems encountered in implementing multi-grade teaching and learning in the classroom.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Multi-grade teaching is the teaching by one teacher of children working in several grades or age groups (Hargreaves, 2000:1). Multi-grade teaching and learning emanated from deeply remote rural areas which did not have either enough learner to make a grade or face the scarcity of resources, physically and humanly or both (Jordaan, 2006:26). The major reason behind the establishment of multi-grade teaching and learning is to ensure that no learner is left out in terms of ensuring that every learner receives primary education. According to Berry (2006:1), multi-grade

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teaching occurs when a single class contains two or more student grade levels. In this case, a teacher is faced with two or more grades to teach at the same time. The Cooperative Learning and teaching approach should cater for diverse groups, both individuals and groups. Multi-grade teaching is a long practiced phenomenon. It is an approach used worldwide. Rural Education Newsletter (2010:3) in (Msimanga, 2014:20) concurs that multi-grade teaching is prevalent in many farm and rural schools, but also occurs in urban schools. Msimanga (2014:3) points out that combined grades classrooms have been in existence since the rural classroom school house, and that combined grades are not an issue while educators have used split grades for twenty years with creative and successful results. This shows that the existence of multi-grade teaching and learning is a long time practice. It only requires educational authorities to properly structure it in a manner beneficial and befitting to its recipients. Proper training during tertiary education and through in service training and workshops should be given in an attempt to close the gaps and alleviate the envisaged pitfalls and shortcomings.

The International perspective of multi-grade teaching
Two countries were identified to prove that multi-grade teaching does not only happen in South Africa, but it is a global phenomenon. The chosen countries are Finland and Austria, as well as the Philippines. All these countries share concomitant views with regard to multi-grade teaching.

Finland and Austria
Multi-grade teaching in the international world is practiced in rural areas as explained by Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015:1). According to Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015:1), multi-grade teaching in the world is found even in developed and developing countries. Multi-grade teaching has certain benefits which include among others: student-centered learning and teaching processes, flexible teaching, a family- like and a secure atmosphere, the case of implementing innovative change, support for individual learning tempos, and flexible school-entry (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:2). They both emphasize multi-grade teaching in primary schools. Schooling in both countries is slightly different, though similarities exceed the differences. In Finland, the school going age is seven, whereas in Austria the school going age is six (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:4). Both countries have challenges of school education and school reforms. Their challenges involve: the need for improvement in dealing with students' heterogeneity, more personal support for students, lack of suitable training, lack of enough support from key stakeholders, lack of proper resources, lack of enough number of organized workshops for the teachers of multi-graded classrooms, too much workload and more inclusive education (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:5). Pertaining to teacher education, Master's Degree was a prerequisite in Austria forthwith 2016, whereas in Finland, the issue of a Master's Degree as a requirement for teaching in a school started in the 1970s (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:6). There was no special training offered to teachers teaching in multi-grade classes (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:6). According to Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015:97), teachers adopted the following as their teaching methodologies: student group formation and subject organizing, personal working plans and peer learning. These methods were found to be effective in teaching and learning in a multi-grade classroom. Multi-grade teaching is advantageous and seen to be a good practice in both Finland and Austria as outlined by Kalaoja (2006) in (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:108) as follows: Parallel curriculum: students share the same themes or subjects, but study the syllabus of their own grade is taught in turn, Curriculum rotation: an entire class studies the curriculum of grade for one year, in the next school year, they follow the syllabus of the other grade, grades are taught together, Curriculum alignment and spiral curriculum: similar topics are identified in different grade curricula, students share the same themes or subjects, the basic concepts or ideas that are taught in the lower grades are deepened and expanded on in the upper grades, subject stagger: grades study different subjects, each grade is taught in turn, whole-class teaching: grades study and are taught the same subject at the same time and use the same material. The education system in both Austria and Finland, as well as South Africa reflects both similarities and the dissimilarities as outlined by Staff Reporter (2017:3). Spotted similarities are: both countries offer day-care, pre-schooling, adult education where adult literacy is encouraged, compulsory meal is offered for free from primary to secondary school and education is free for all from grade R to 12 in all public schools in both Austria and Finland, as well as South Africa (Staff Reporter, 2017:3). The dissimilarities identified are: Finnish

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children start school at age seven, whereas South Africa the school going age is six. Finnish education system is divided into six main categories, namely: day care, pre-school, basic comprehensive school, secondary general academic and vocational training, higher education, and adult education (Staff Reporter, 2017:3). South African education system is divided and controlled by two departments: The Department of Basic Education (DBE), as well as Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (Staff Reporter, 2017:4).

The African perspective of multi-grade teaching

Multi-grade teaching is an increasingly important policy option for most African countries as explained by Mulkeen, Aidan, Higgins and Cathal (2009:1). The aim of adopting multi-grade teaching by most African countries was to provide schooling for out of- school children in areas of low population density (Mulkeen Aiden, Higgins & Cathal, 2009:1). Their focal point was on Sub-Saharan countries. The African view of multi-grade teaching is that a teacher works with students from two or more grade levels at the same time in a single classroom as explained by Mulkeen, Aidan, Higgins and Cathal (2009:1). Study by Mulkeen, Aidan, Higgins and Cathal (2009:1) indicates that an estimation of 20 percent of primary schools in Uganda and 18 percent in Senegal had some multi-grade classes. Multi-grade teaching is a promising option for provision of education services in small schools as depicted by Mulkeen, Aidan, Higgins and Cathal (2009:1). They perceived the use of multi-grade schools as comparable to mono – grade schools in the same area, attendance, and retention. They derived a common conclusion and agreement that examination results were similar in both compared classes. Multi-grade teaching is a global solution used by most countries to address education inequalities and ensure provision to all those who are in need.

The South African perspective of multi-grade teaching

Multi-grade teaching, or multi-level teaching refers to the teaching of children of different grade levels at the same setting (Joubert, 2010:58). According to Joubert (2010:58), multi-grade teaching in South Africa was established for two major reasons, namely:

- To reduce hunger and poverty

- To address the needs of the world's biggest neglected majority of rural people.

Joubert (2010:58) further points out that more than 8 million children can be found in rural school classrooms in South Africa. He further states that major inequality affecting the poor is their unequal access to quality education. Poverty and illiteracy remain the challenging problems in South Africa (Joubert, 2010:58). According to Joubert (2010:60) new teaching approach for teachers teaching in rural areas should be adopted with the following principles being taken in account: arrange and organize instructional resources and the physical environment, develop and implement lesson timetables and routines, plan, develop and implement instructional strategies and routines, employ teaching methods that will improve the quality of instruction, develop skills and strategies in learners, as well as develop skills routine.

The major reason behind all these was to try and equip teachers who are teaching in multi-grade classes to be able to facilitate and teach with the better knowledge and understanding of what they are teaching. Multi-grade teaching has got several challenges requiring attention if it is to be called a success as pointed out by Mulaudzi (2016:27) in (McEwan, 2008:465). Those challenges are curriculum organization, professional and social isolation, parents' attitude towards multi-grade teaching, instructional materials, as well as classroom management. All the above-mentioned problems deter proper teaching and learning in multi-grade classes. Such anomalies need to be attended to if proper teaching and learning are to be living possibilities in multi-grade classes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

For teaching and learning to be living possibilities, a number of factors need to be considered and measures put in place to address problems encountered in multi-grade teaching. Multi –age or multi-grade classes, by contrast, deliberately mix age and grade levels and students stay with the same teacher for several years, usually three

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(Veenman,1995:319). Problems encountered are among others: training of teachers to teach multi – grade classes, address scarcity of resources, classroom layout, proper planning and preparation of lessons specifically meant for multi-grade classes, peer teaching, discipline and classroom organization (Miller, 1989). There are several schools consisting of multi-grade classes in South Africa, especially in Kwazulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces (Brown, 2008). Hence, they are facing a challenge in terms of policy guidance on how to teach multi-grade classes. The main reason behind the formation of multi-grade classes was to ensure that every child receive primary education as depicted by the Republic of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996, Section 29 as amended. The very same Act guarantees education to every child below the age of 14 and further mentions adult basic education meant to equip illiterate adults with basic education skills, such as reading and writing.

It brings to every citizen that education is a societal responsibility and should be upheld as such. In 2016, the rightsizing process affected the school in which I am a principal, and as such, rationalization and redeployment process took place.

RESEARCH QUESTION
- What are the implications of multi-grade classroom on teaching and learning?

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS
- What are the effects of multi-grade teaching and learning on the performance of learners?

- What are the challenges experienced by teachers teaching in multi-grade classes?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory
According to Kolb (1999:3), Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a holistic model of the learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow and develop. Genry (1991:2) define experiential learning as: "a business curriculum related endeavour which is interactive (other than between teacher and pupil) and characterized by variability and uncertainty.'' Genry (1990:2) in (Hoover & Whitehead, 1975:25) defines it thus: "Experiential learning exists when a personally responsible participant cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally processes knowledge, skills and or attitudes in a learning situation characterized by a high level of active involvement. ''Therefore, discussion in Hoover's definition involve ''participative'' and 'environment''. This suggests that there is an interaction between the subject matter and the environment in which learning takes place (Genry, 1990:3). Genry (1990:3) in Wolfe and Byrne (1975) points out that experientially based approaches involve four phases: design, conduct, evaluation and feedback.

- Design. this phase involves the upfront efforts by the instructor to set the stage for the experience. Included in this phase are the specifications of learning objectives, the production or selection of activities for participants, the identification of factors affecting learning and the creation of a scheme for implementation.

- Conduct. This phase involves maintaining and controlling the design. The design phase may include the creation of timetable for the experience, but the conduct phase involves the altering of the original timetable and activities to sustain a favorable learning environment. The important implication of this phase is that the experience is a structured and closely monitored one.

- Evaluation. To be sure, evaluation is conducted by the instructor being the teacher, but the emphasis here by Wolfe and Byrne is on the provision of opportunities for student/learners to evaluate experience. Participants should be able to articulate and demonstrate specific learning gained from the design and conduct of the experience.

- Feedback. Wolfe and Byrne point out that feedback should be an almost continuous process from the pre-experience introduction through the final debriefing. Included is the monitoring of the process by the instructor / teacher to foster positive aspects and eliminate those features that are negative. One possible

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concern in this phase is whether students / learners should have the opportunity to fail, to the extent that we learn from our errors, and the freedom to fail may be encouraged. On the other hand, if the experiential exercise involves a business client, failure can affect the business / school's reputation negatively.

Therefore, learning is best facilitated when all four phases are present and repeated over time. The theory is called 'Experiential Learning'' to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process, an emphasis that distinguishes ELT from other learning theories (Kolb,1992:2). Hence, Kolb (1993:3) points out that the term "experiential" is used to differentiate ELT both from cognitive learning theories and behavioral theories. The Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) originated from the experiential works of Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, Lewin's social psychology and Piaget's cognitive developmental genetic epistemology (Kolb,1999:3). Kolb (1984:41) defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". Therefore, this theory brings relevance to the study because of the researcher's ability to effectively use both teachers and learners' life experiences in learning and articulating the multi-grade teaching.

Application of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory
Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory is most relevant to the study. The researcher investigated a number of factors and aspects which ultimately convinced him to choose Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory to ensure proper teaching and learning takes place in Dimamo Circuit, Capricorn South Education District of Limpopo Province Department of Education.

Diverging (Concrete, reflective)
According to Healey and Jenkins (2007:187), diverging view situations from many perspectives and rely heavily upon brainstorming and generation of ideas. This learning style is also regarded as a concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO) stage (Kokela ,2021:19). Learners in this learning style prefer to see, touch and feel the learning materials (Kokela, 2021:19). It is at this stage where in which learners work in groups, pairs and as peers whereby they develop deeper understanding of the learning materials in a multi-grade classroom (Kokela, 2021:20). Learners learn best when they are divided into groups of same class and age, sometimes according to their abilities and skills (Kokela, 2021:20). Hence, this makes multi-grade classroom functional and effective. Peer-tutoring and pairing also play a prominent role in ensuring the effectiveness of a multi-grade classroom (Kokela, 2021:20). Junior grade learners can learn more and freely when they are taught by their brothers and sisters who attend with them under one roof, although not doing the same grade. Therefore, the implications are that working groups and pairs ensure the effectiveness of multi-grade classroom. Individual learning is not encouraged at this stage. Kokela (2021:20) points out that multi-grade teaching environment should adhere to cooperative and collaborative principles such as cooperative learning, team learning, reciprocal learning, information gathering, less teacher-centred approach, regular feedback, and peer assessment.

Assimilating (Abstract, reflective)
Healey and Jenkins (2007:187) explain this stage as the use of inductive reasoning and have the ability to create theoretical models. Learners in a multi-grade classroom compare alternatives, define problems, establish criteria and formulate hypotheses (Healey & Jenkins, 2007:188). Kokela (2021:20) points out that elaboration of key concepts during lessons delivery creates a better platform for learners to understand the learning content in a multi-grade classroom. Moreover, the present study expects multi-grade teachers to engage learners in a variety of reading activities such as: reading aloud, silent reading, paired reading and group reading (Kokela, 2021:20). Therefore, learners in a multi-grade classroom would be required to develop sense making and information analysis skills for abstract conceptualization and reflective observation (Kokela, 2021:20). It means independent learning and learner-centered approaches could make multi-grade teaching most effective and profitable to learners learning in a multi-graded classroom.

Converging (Abstract, active)
According to Kolb (1984:16), converging as a learning stage in the experiential learning cycle is fact oriented. Converging learning style involves abstract conceptualization (AC) and abstract experimentation, laboratory

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assignments, and practical applications because they learn by thinking and doing (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 1999). This means that learners enjoy using their technical and problem-solving skills to complete the tasks given to them (Kokela, 2021:21). Learners can be given a practical assignment on building electric circuit whereby they are encouraged to work in pairs or groups. Such a practical work could make multi-graded teaching effective because a learner in grade 4 will be paired with a learner in grade 5. This will also encourage peer-tutoring which is one of the most effective methods used in multi-grade teaching. Such an assignment will stimulate abstract conceptualization and experimentation (Kokela, 2021:21). Therefore, this learning stage would require availability of resources in a multi-graded setting.

Accommodating

According to Kolb (1984:187), learners at this stage carry out plans and experiments and adapt to immediate circumstances. Kolb (1984:187) further maintains that learning at this stage is through concrete experimentation (CE) and abstract experimentation (AE). Learners in a multi-grade classroom prefer working in groups to complete assignments and projects given to them (Kokela, 2021:21). Hence, this study requires learners in Dimamo Circuit to use experimental learning by organizing educational excursions and exhibitions which will force them to be hands on in getting the project or assignment done. Therefore, learners of different age groups will undertake such trips in order to ensure that the initially formulated groups are still maintained for learners in lower grades to tap skills and techniques on how best to complete the projects from their senior learners who attend with them under one roof.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed the qualitative approach in discussing the implications of a multi-grade classroom on teaching and learning. Case study was used as a research design with interpretivism as a research paradigm. Population consists of all principals and teachers from all six (6) schools that offer multi-grade teaching in Dimamo Circuit of Mankweng Cluster of the Capricorn South District of Education. The total number of population was six schools (6), which consisted of the principals and teachers of multi-grade schools in Dimamo Circuit within Capricorn South District of Education in Limpopo Province. The total population made of 94 participants. Therefore, the sample was made from the population of six (6) case study schools and 22 participants were purposively selected. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Thematic approach was used to analyse data.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The main findings of the study are in line with the research questions. The findings of the study by the researcher are as follows: teachers' view on multi-grade teaching, availability, and use of enabling resources for multi-grade teaching, and the challenges experienced by teachers teaching in a multi-grade classroom. Those findings of the study were interrogated under discussion and analysis of the findings.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDING

The following findings were made by the study.

Teachers' view on multi-grade teaching

This section of the study answered the research question on "what are the implications of multi-grade classroom on teaching and learning?" many scholars of multi-grade teaching had the same view on what multi-grade teaching is all about. Hence, they derived similar definitions of multi-grade teaching. Joubert (2006:6) explains multi-grade teaching as a setting whereby the teacher is responsible for teaching children of different grade levels at the same time. According to Kokela (2021:18), multi-grade teaching is a situation in which a single teacher usually teaches each class at a given time. Furthermore, teachers and scholars of multi-grade classroom are in agreement in their definition of multi-grade teaching. Accordingly, teachers teaching in a multi-grade class share the same views on the demands posed by multi-grade teaching. This is what T3 in the focus group discussion had to say:

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"I am not happy to be teaching in a multi-grade classroom. In fact, I find it difficult to handle two grades under one roof."

This view was supported by T1 who commented as follows:

"Multi-grade teaching is an unusual practice, and it does fully unlock the learners' potentials. It is also time consuming since a teacher must teach and discipline the other class at the same time."

T7 responded as follows:

"It is indeed not easy to handle two or more classes simultaneously. This gives me a headache when it comes to completion of the ATPS"

T9 supported the notion that completion of ATPs is a difficulty when she said:

"The topics on the ATPs are not sequentially interrogated and completed as directed".

Participants' common view on multi-grade teaching is that it was introduced in developing countries with a view to rapid expansion of access to primary education in the rural areas. Hence, teachers of a multi-grade classroom shared their personal experience which led to the establishment of multi-grade teaching. Their personal experiences were as follows: unequal access to education, poverty, illiteracy, severe lack of goods and services, lack of teachers and insufficient number of classrooms (Joubert, 2010:58). This is a clear implication that teachers teaching in multi-grade classes have no choice. Moreover, the learners' workbooks which were sampled attested to the difficulty of non-completion of tasks and proper control of them by the teachers. Meaning, if they had choice, they would not be teaching in multi-grade schools, but in mono-grade schools. Conclusively, multi-grade classroom teachers are not contending in their teaching due to the challenges faced in multi-grade teaching.

Availability and use of enabling resources for multi-grade teaching.

This section of the study responds to the research question on "what are the effects of multi-grade teaching and learning on the performance of learners?" during individual semi-structured interview, focus group discussion and document analysis, it was found that some schools did not have multi-grade toolkits. Some schools did not even have workbooks for either Mathematics or English First Additional Language, if not both in the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phases.

T6 lamented regarding unavailability of multi-grade toolkits as follows:

"Lack of enabling documents and tools such as multi-grade toolkits leave some of us in the dark when it comes to how a multi-grade lesson plan should be prepared."

T4 complained about the non-delivery of learner workbooks in grades such as 5 and 6 in some of the subjects such as English as follows:

"I really find it very much difficult to make ends meet in grades 5 and 6 due to non-supply of learners' workbooks. The time for reading is very limited because reading is only done for 5 minutes during assembly."

T8 is in agreement with T4 when he said:

"There is no progress in terms of ensuring that learning master the reading material. Learners cannot work ahead in subjects such as English FAL."

This lack of enabling tools to facilitate teaching and learning lead to multi-grade schools finding themselves in a difficult situation to deliver effective education to its recipients. Kokela (2021:52) pointed out the main purpose of national curriculum guidelines is to provide a framework for a particular phase of learning. Accordingly, lack of those documents inhibits proper teaching and learning in a multi-grade classroom. Hence, it has a negative effect on curriculum delivery in a multi-grade classroom. In conclusion, lack of resources in a multi-grade classroom deters effective curriculum delivery.

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Challenges experienced by teachers teaching in a multi-grade classroom.

This section of the study responds to the research question on "what are the challenges experienced by teachers teaching in a multi-grade classroom?" UNESCO (1989:6) pointed out to challenges of multi-grade teaching as follows: curriculum design, classroom and teaching or learning processes, space organisation, instructional management, grade combination, teachers' role perception, existing teachers' programs as well as learner' behavioural problems. According to Khazaei et al (2016:135) teachers face the following problems: lack of time, lack of learners' motivation, academic failure, lack of proper classroom management due to congestion, inappropriate age composition, lack of attention to learners' individual needs, lack of educational facilities, lack of educational justice and inadequate support by authorities to teachers. Therefore, T11 commented as follows:

"I have only attended a two days' workshop and it was not sufficient."

P2 responded as follows:

"In fact, we did not attend a workshop, but briefing session where we just given an overview without details".

All the above-mentioned challenges pose a threat to teaching and learning in a multi-grade classroom. Summarily, the challenges discovered and raised require serious attention to ensure success of a multi-grade classroom.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented, it can be concluded that no one was ready for multi-grade teaching. Multi-grade teaching was introduced as an option to give basic education to every learner. Furthermore, the study revealed that there was no curriculum framework specifically designed for multi-grade teaching. Besides, lack of teacher training geared towards multi-grade teaching was also a challenging factor. Moreover, lack of capacity building in a form of offering developmental workshop deterred effective teaching and learning in a multi-grade classroom. Therefore, multi-grade was the responsibility of Department of Basic Education (DBE) as much as mono-grade teaching. Lack of support by the parents, principals and the DBE was also a contributing factor to the failure to effective multi-grade teaching (Malatji, Mavuso & Malatji, 2018). The use of post establishment to allocate both teachers to schools and found that school hinders the effective implementation of multi-grade teaching. Summarily, the study indicated that a collaborative framework is necessary for the effective implementation of multi-grade teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Guided by the study's research questions and research findings, the following recommendations were made.

Provision of teacher training and developmental workshops

This study recommends that the Department of Basic Education should collaborate with the Universities to chart a way forward in terms of making provision to offer courses and training to teachers teaching in multi-grade classes. The DBE should also organize frequent workshops to develop multi-grade teaching. This will help in equipping teachers who will be teaching in multi-grade classes.

Provision of human resource

The study recommends that the post provisioning model (PPM) should be changed to accommodate multi-grade schools. It is imperative for the Department of Basic Education not only to consider learner enrolment, but also to take cognizance of factors such as the number of phases and grades in a particular school when allocating them posts. This could at least off-load multi-grade teachers and reduce the burden carried by principals managing multi-grade schools.

Allocation of financial resources

The funding model of the Department of Basic Education is in accordance with the learners' enrolment. Therefore, small enrolment schools are allocated little money to run their activities. This study further recommends that the grade model should be used, rather than using learner enrolment to allocate funds. Hence, this could relieve low enrolment schools that receive less funding yet faced with similar obligations like big enrolment schools.

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Provision of enabling resources

The study recommends that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) provides multi-grade schools with resources such as multi-grade toolkit and national guidelines on multi-grade teaching to ease their job. Multi-grade toolkit may assist multi-grade teachers to plan their lessons and develop an idea in terms of related content during their lesson planning and preparations. National guidelines may direct them on the common understanding and interpretations when developing multi-grade policies. Hence, this may enable multi-grade schools to operate in the same way.

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