



REL Pacific Ask-A-REL Response

Educator Effectiveness

August 2017

Question:

What are research-based practices and strategies that support teachers in classrooms consisting of students from multiple grade levels?

Response:

Following an established REL Pacific research protocol, we conducted a web-based search for resources related to teaching in multi-grade classrooms in the Pacific (see Methods section for search terms and resource selection criteria). We focused on identifying resources that were specifically relevant to small, remote schools, such as those in Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia. The compiled sources have been organized into the following categories:

[Teacher Preparation](#)

[Instructional Strategies](#)

[Handbooks](#)

Descriptions of the resources are quoted directly from the publication abstracts.. We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. and We offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in this response from the most commonly used research resources, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

Research References

Teacher Preparation

Lingam, G. I. (2014). Multi-class Teaching: Is it a Satisfactory Arrangement for Quality Rural Education? In Dorovolomo, J., Koya-Vaka'unta, CF, Coutts, R. & Lingam, G.I. (Eds.), *Discussions and Debates in Pacific Education*. 13–22. ISBN 9781612295343. Retrieved from University of the South Pacific's website <http://repository.usp.ac.fj/8547/>

Mulryan-Kyne, C. (2007). The preparation of teachers for multigrade teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 501-514. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=EJ756896>

From the abstract: “A large proportion of teachers throughout the world teach in multigrade classrooms, or classes with more than one grade level. It is reliably predicted that the number of multigrade classes will increase in the future. This paper addresses the issue of teacher education for multigrade. The main thesis of this paper is that the professional knowledge and skills that are relevant and necessary to teaching effectively in single-grade contexts are also relevant and necessary for effective multigrade teaching. However, many of these skills need to be given a specific multigrade emphasis in the context of the preparation of teachers for multigrade teaching. This does not necessitate separate teacher education programmes for multigrade teachers. The paper makes comparisons between multigrade and single-grade teaching in terms of outcomes and teaching practices and highlights the importance of effective teacher education programmes that cater for the needs of teachers in a broad rather than a narrow sense. The content of programmes aimed at the specific preparation of multigrade teachers are examined, and a categorisation of specific areas of content that need particular emphasis in the context of teacher education for multigrade is provided.”

REL Pacific at McREL tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible; however, we were unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. This resource is available through university or public library systems.

Instructional Strategies

Hyry-Beihammer, E.K. & Hascher, T. (2015). Multi-grade teaching practices in Austrian and Finnish primary schools. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 74, 104–113. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2015.07.002>

From the abstract: “This article describes the teaching strategies used in multi-grade classes in five small rural primary schools in Austria and Finland on the basis of the content analysis of transcribed teacher interviews. Two main types of strategies were identified: practices that (1) aim to reduce or (2) capitalize on students’ heterogeneity. The results illustrate how differently multi-grade teaching can be realized and how it can effectively support individual student learning. The findings are discussed with regard to teacher education with the intention of increasing the awareness of the professional skills required in high-quality teaching practices in multi-grade teaching.”

REL Pacific at McREL tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible; however, we were unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. This resource is available through university or public library systems.

Lingam, G. I. (July 2007). Pedagogical practices: The case of multi-class teaching in Fiji primary school. *Educational Research and Review*, 2(7), 186-192. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=EJ900190>

From the abstract: “Multi-class teaching is a common phenomenon in small schools not only in Fiji, but also in many countries. The aim of the present study was to determine the teaching styles adopted by teachers in the context of multi-class teaching. A qualitative case study research design was adopted. This included a school with multi-class teaching as the norm. Data for the study was gathered by means of nonparticipant observation and interviews from the population of teachers in the case study school. A purposive sampling technique was employed for the purpose of the study. Analysis of the feedback obtained show that the teachers in the case study school generally carried out the teaching/learning process using transmissive approaches. A number of factors have influenced these teachers to take this position, such as lack of professional preparation and limited resources for teaching and learning. The findings have implications for the delivery of basic education in rural schools where multi-class teaching is the norm and it is suggested that some in-depth training is needed to equip future teachers to cope with multi-class teaching.”

Little, A. W. (2001). Multigrade teaching: Towards an international research and policy agenda. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 21, 481-497. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(01\)00011-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(01)00011-6)

From the abstract: “Despite its prevalence in many educational systems, multigrade teaching remains invisible. In the global effort to achieve education for all in the post-Dakar decade the needs of multigrade teachers, classes and schools must be addressed. The paper (i) explores the meaning of the term multigrade teaching in developing and industrialised countries and identifies a range of conditions under which it arises; (ii) synthesises knowledge of the practice of and research on multigrade teaching; and (iii) proposes an international agenda for future research on and dissemination of policy and practice. The agenda underlines the need for context-specific questions and comparisons, more awareness of the prevalence and challenges of multigrade teaching, more research on the practices and training needs of multigrade teaching and the exploration of synergies between teachers, curriculum, assessment and classroom organisation. It is suggested that knowledge of multigrade teaching strategies is needed by all teachers and not simply those in classes designated as ‘multigrade’.”

REL Pacific at McREL tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible; however, we were unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. This resource is available through university or public library systems.

Saqlain, N. (2015). A comprehensive look at multi-age education. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 5(2). ISSN 2240-0524. Retrieved from <http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/jesr/article/view/6588>.

From the abstract: “Multi-grade schooling has been used in many countries around the globe. It is a cost effective model of schooling especially in rural areas where teacher retention and recruitment is a major problem. The findings of various research studies indicate that multi-grade education is as effective as single-grade schooling in terms of academic achievement and better in terms of social learning. The success of multiage education greatly depends on teaching techniques. Our universities prepare teachers for single-grades. Therefore, teachers in multi-grade settings face many challenges such as inadequate training, social and cultural isolation, instructional, lack of time, lack of community understanding, and rural nature of most of the multi-grade settings. Some of the issues can be overcome through proper pre-service and in-service teacher training.”

Handbooks

Mathot, G.B. (2001). *A Handbook for teachers of multi-grade classes: Volume One. Improving performance at the primary level*. UNESCO. France: Ag2i Communication. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001259/125919eo.pdf>

Sigsworth, A., & Solstad, K. J. (2001). *Making small schools work: A handbook for teachers in small rural schools*. UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001240/124010eo.pdf>

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- "multi-grade" or "multi-age" AND "education" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "multi-grade" or "multi-age" AND "learning" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "multi-grade" or "multi-age" AND "Pacific" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "multi-grade" or "multi-age" AND "teach" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "multi-grade" or "multi-age" AND "instruction" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "multi-grade" or "multi-age" AND "schools" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of over 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences, for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

REL Pacific searched ERIC and other academic journal databases for studies that were published in English-language peer-reviewed research journals within the last 20 years. REL Pacific prioritized documents that are accessible online, although not all sources may be publicly available, and prioritized references that provide practical information based on peer-reviewed research for the teachers and leaders who inquired about multi-grade classrooms for this Ask-A-REL.¹ Resources included in this document—including URLs, descriptions, and content—were last accessed in August 2017.

¹ This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educational stakeholders in the Pacific Region (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific) at McREL International. This memorandum was prepared by REL Pacific under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-17-C-0010, administered by McREL International. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.