

Stories of Teachers-in-Charge with Multifaceted Functions in a Multigrade Setting

Argine M. Nillosa

Graduate School, Master of Arts in Education, Northwestern Visayan Colleges, Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines

Email of Corresponding Author: argiemir@gmail.com

Publication history:

Received: August 26, 2026

Revised: September 22, 2026

Accepted: September 24, 2026

Published: September 25, 2026

International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 622–632, September 2026.

Abstract

This study examined the stories, experiences, opportunities, and professional realities of Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) performing multifaceted functions in selected pure multigrade schools in the District of Madalag, Division of Aklan, as a basis for developing a capability-enhancement program. The study was anchored on Role Theory and Stress-Coping Theory to understand how TICs interpret overlapping role expectations and respond to the demands associated with teaching and school leadership. A qualitative Narrative Inquiry design was employed involving seven purposively selected TICs. Data were gathered through a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide and analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Findings revealed that TIC experiences were characterized by three major themes: From Assignment to Adaptation, Juggling Multifaceted Demands, and Leading through Relationship. Participants encountered dual-role strain, heavy administrative workloads, limited resources and manpower, time constraints, and diverse learner needs while simultaneously fulfilling instructional and administrative responsibilities. Despite these challenges, they demonstrated adaptability, resilience, creativity, resourcefulness, collaboration, and shared leadership. Their roles also created opportunities for leadership development, career readiness, instructional innovation, professional learning, and stronger school-community partnerships. Based on the findings, the study proposed EMPOWER-TIC: Enhancing Multifaceted Leadership and Professional Competencies of Teacher-In-Charge in Multigrade Schools, focusing on leadership and role management, multigrade instructional competence, administrative and school-management competence, collaboration, and personal well-being. The study recommends sustained leadership training, mentoring, coaching, professional development, administrative and instructional support, and stronger stakeholder participation for TICs. The study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals by supporting educational access and quality in rural and resource-constrained multigrade communities. It contributes to educational, institutional, governance, professional, and community sustainability by strengthening the capacity of TICs and promoting shared responsibility for sustaining effective multigrade school operations.

Keywords: Capability-Enhancement Program; Collaboration; Multigrade Education; Narrative Inquiry; School Leadership; Stakeholder Engagement; Teacher-In-Charge; Workload Management

1. Introduction

Multigrade schools are essential in sustaining access to basic education in rural, low-enrollment, and geographically challenged communities where permanent school heads may not be assigned. Within these settings, Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) simultaneously perform instructional, administrative, supervisory, and community leadership functions. Their work therefore involves not only responding to the diverse learning needs

of pupils across grade levels but also managing school operations, resources, stakeholders, and institutional requirements. This study examines the stories, experiences, opportunities, and professional realities of TICs in selected pure multigrade schools in the District of Madalag, Division of Aklan, and uses these experiences as the basis for a capability-enhancement program.

Effective public elementary education requires both sound instructional practice and effective school leadership. In small and multigrade schools without permanent principals, a Teacher-in-Charge assumes responsibility for leading, managing, and supervising school operations while continuing to perform regular teaching functions (DepEd Order No. 85, series of 2007, and DepEd Order No. 42, series of 2007). This arrangement is consistent with Section 6.1, Rule VI of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9155, which provides for a school head in every public elementary and secondary school. Multigrade classrooms combine learners from different grade levels and age groups, requiring teachers to address diverse competencies and learning needs simultaneously. For TICs, these instructional demands are compounded by administrative work, supervision, resource management, and community engagement. In the District of Madalag, Division of Aklan, public multigrade schools are managed by TICs who extend their responsibilities beyond classroom instruction to school-wide leadership. Evidence from the Division of Aklan indicates that TICs contribute significantly to school administration. Indemne and Escalona (2024) emphasized their role in accountability, transparency, and efficiency in financial management. At the national level, SEAMEO INNOTECH (2020) reported that many Philippine multigrade schools are managed by TICs who simultaneously serve as classroom teachers, school leaders, and community partners. Their overlapping responsibilities highlight the need to understand how they experience, interpret, and manage their multifaceted functions.

Literature consistently portrays Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) in multigrade schools as educators who simultaneously perform instructional, administrative, leadership, and community functions. This combination of responsibilities requires adaptability, resilience, creativity, and reflective practice (Alda and Gementiza, 2023; Reyes and Ching, 2024; Bunglay and Cutab, 2025; Cornish & Taole, 2021). However, the dual role of teaching and school management also creates substantial challenges, including heavy workloads, limited staffing and instructional resources, competing grade-level needs, curriculum demands, and emotional strain (Bojos et al., 2025; Naparan and Castañeda, 2021; Caduyac et al., 2025; Literal and Sabud, 2025; Iballa et al., 2025; Bagay, 2025). Administrative responsibilities such as reporting, record keeping, financial management, and coordination further reduce time for instructional preparation, particularly in rural and geographically isolated schools where access to resources, mentoring, and professional development may be limited (Recla and Potane, 2024; Bunglay and Cutab, 2025; Rondero and Casupanan, 2024; Cornish and Taole, 2021). These conditions may contribute to exhaustion and personal sacrifice despite TICs' strong commitment to learners and school communities (Alda and Gementiza, 2023; Solomon & Solidarios, 2025; Deepthi et al., 2023; IDinsight & EDCOM II, 2025). Despite these difficulties, the TIC role also creates opportunities for leadership development, professional growth, and instructional innovation. Administrative and leadership responsibilities help TICs strengthen competencies in supervision, communication, decision-making, school management, and stakeholder engagement (Bunglay and Cutab, 2025; Solomon and Solidarios, 2025; Arnido Jr. and Vibal, 2025; Ortiz, 2025). At the instructional level, multigrade teachers respond to diverse learner needs through differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, collaborative learning, flexible grouping, integrated lesson planning, contextualized resources, project-based learning, and technology-supported approaches (Shareefa, 2021; Montalbo et al., 2021; Recla and Potane, 2024; Bagay et al., 2024; Isler, 2022; Supremo & Siat, 2025). These adaptive practices demonstrate how multigrade teaching can foster flexibility, creativity, and resourcefulness even under constrained conditions. Coping and collaboration are also central to sustaining TIC performance. TICs manage overlapping demands through prioritization, scheduling, cooperation, adaptive teaching, reflection, and personal coping strategies such as optimism and emotional regulation (Mediadero et al., 2025; Naparan and Castañeda, 2021; Grech, 2025). Professional networks, cluster meetings, shared planning, distributed leadership, and collaborative decision-making help reduce workload pressures and strengthen professional learning (Bunglay and Cutab, 2025; CooperGibson Research, 2023; Manegdeg and Paglinawan, 2024; Solomon-Solidarios, 2025; Andaya and Quinito, 2025). Community partnerships further extend school capacity by mobilizing parents, barangay officials, local government units, and other stakeholders for resource support, school improvement, and shared responsibility (Rondero and Casupanan, 2024; Khadija, 2022; Mandolado and Ancho, 2023; Milano, 2024; Lopez and Bauyot, 2025; Acierto, 2026). Overall, the literature shows that TICs operate within demanding but developmental environments where institutional support, professional learning, collaboration, and community engagement are essential to sustaining effective multigrade education.

At the local level, the study focuses on selected public pure multigrade schools in the District of Madalag, Division of Aklan, where TICs manage schools while simultaneously teaching multigrade classes. Existing research in Aklan has given greater attention to monograde elementary and secondary schools, although Indemne and Escalona (2024) demonstrated the administrative importance of TICs in financial accountability and school management. Nationally, multigrade education supports access to schooling in sparsely populated and geographically difficult areas. SEAMEO INNOTECH (2020) documented the prevalence of TIC leadership in

Philippine multigrade schools, while DepEd policy recognizes the importance of multigrade education in providing quality education to learners in remote and low-population communities (DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2009). The experiences documented across Philippine studies consistently show that TICs operate under complex instructional, managerial, and community expectations. Within the broader literature, multigrade education is characterized by the need for flexible pedagogy, teacher resourcefulness, differentiated instruction, collaboration, and context-responsive leadership. Cornish & Taole (2021) highlighted the complexity and creativity of multigrade teaching across contexts, reinforcing the relevance of examining how educators adapt their practice when conventional single-grade organizational arrangements are not possible.

The study is grounded in Role Theory and Stress-Coping Theory. Role Theory, put forward by Biddle (1986), explains how individuals understand and perform roles according to expectations arising from their organizational and social environments. Stress-Coping Theory, formulated initially by Lazarus and Folkman (1987) and later redeveloped by Morgan (2018), provides a complementary explanation of how individuals evaluate and respond to demanding situations. Biddle (1986), as cited in the role theory used by Flies Töttenborg et al. (2024), explains that individuals interpret their roles according to expectations imposed by different organizational stakeholders. This is particularly relevant to TICs, who must simultaneously satisfy expectations associated with teaching, school administration, supervision, and community leadership. Role Theory therefore provides a basis for understanding how these overlapping expectations influence their professional identity, decision-making, and leadership behavior. The study is also guided by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory of stress and coping and its later development by Morgan (2018). Stress develops when perceived environmental or occupational demands exceed available resources. Applied to TICs, the theory explains how they assess the pressures created by multiple responsibilities and how they employ problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Conceptually, the study positions TICs' multifaceted functions at the center of their professional experience. Their experiences and opportunities as instructional leaders, administrators, supervisors, and community partners provide the empirical basis for developing a capability-enhancement program responsive to their actual professional needs.

Although existing literature extensively documents the workload, instructional challenges, competencies, leadership practices, coping strategies, and professional opportunities of TICs, much of the available research is descriptive or phenomenological. The literature explains what TICs encounter but provides comparatively limited understanding of how they construct meaning from these experiences, interpret their overlapping roles, build professional identity, and develop resilience over time. In particular, the reviewed literature identifies limited narrative inquiry into how TICs understand their designation and make sense of simultaneously being classroom teachers and school leaders. This gap is especially relevant in the District of Madalag, where multigrade TICs perform multiple functions under rural and resource-constrained conditions. The present study therefore examines their stories and experiences, the opportunities emerging from their multifaceted functions, and the professional realities that can inform a capability-enhancement program for TICs in multigrade schools.

The study is most directly aligned with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it addresses the leadership and instructional capacities needed to sustain quality education in rural, low-enrolment, and multigrade schools. Strengthening TIC competencies can support the continuity and quality of teaching for learners who may otherwise have limited access to conventional single-grade schools. It also relates to SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities because multigrade education provides access to basic education for learners in remote, sparsely populated, and geographically disadvantaged communities. Understanding the realities of TICs can help identify support mechanisms necessary to reduce disparities in educational provision. Finally, the study supports SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through its emphasis on collaboration among teachers, parents, barangay officials, government institutions, and community organizations. The literature demonstrates that stakeholder participation, shared responsibility, and resource mobilization are important mechanisms for sustaining educational programs in resource-constrained multigrade communities.

The study contributes primarily to educational, institutional, governance, professional, and community sustainability. Educational sustainability is supported by examining how TICs maintain teaching and learning despite limited personnel, resources, and multiple grade levels. Understanding their experiences can inform interventions that strengthen instructional adaptability, differentiated teaching, classroom management, and continuity of educational services. Institutional and governance sustainability are addressed through the study's focus on school leadership, administrative responsibilities, accountability, workload management, and capability development. Strengthening TIC competencies can improve the capacity of small multigrade schools to maintain essential school operations even without permanently assigned principals. The study also contributes to professional sustainability by recognizing the pressures associated with overlapping teaching and leadership roles and by identifying coping, collaboration, reflection, and professional learning as mechanisms that may help TICs sustain their effectiveness. At the community level, the emphasis on parents, local officials, and other stakeholders recognizes that the sustainability of multigrade schools depends not only on individual teachers but also on shared responsibility and locally supported educational initiatives.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design employing Narrative Inquiry to explore the stories and lived experiences of TICs performing multifaceted functions in multigrade schools. Narrative inquiry was appropriate because it examines how individuals understand their experiences and construct meaning from stories situated within personal, social, and professional contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It enabled the study to examine how TICs interpreted their instructional, administrative, and leadership responsibilities, including the challenges, opportunities, and coping experiences associated with their roles. Data were obtained primarily through semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to narrate their experiences while enabling the researcher to pursue relevant insights that emerged during the interviews. Although Narrative Inquiry served as the overall research design, the participants' narratives were systematically examined using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis. The combination of these approaches enabled the study to retain the participants' voices while identifying patterns and themes that could inform the proposed capability-enhancement program.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public pure multigrade schools under the Department of Education in rural and low-enrolment areas of the District of Madalag, Division of Aklan. These schools had no permanently assigned principal, requiring designated TICs to manage school operations while continuing their teaching responsibilities. The setting was appropriate because TICs simultaneously handled professional and personal responsibilities while sustaining educational access and learning for diverse pupils in multigrade classrooms.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants were seven TICs currently assigned to public multigrade schools in the District of Madalag. They consisted of six female and one male teacher, aged 33 to 59 years, occupying Teacher I, Teacher III, and Teacher VI positions. Their teaching assignments covered combinations of Kindergarten to Grade 4, while their teaching experience ranged from nine to 32 years and their experience as TICs ranged from three to 31 years. Participants were required to be regular public school teachers in the District of Madalag, currently teaching and designated as TICs in DepEd multigrade schools, and willing to participate in narrative interviews and share their experiences. Before participation, they were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical safeguards and provided informed consent.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select the seven participants because they possessed firsthand experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. The TICs were chosen from their respective multigrade public elementary schools based on their direct experience in performing multiple instructional and administrative responsibilities within a multigrade setting.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions designed to elicit narratives about the TICs' experiences, roles, challenges, opportunities, and coping mechanisms. The questions were developed in accordance with the research questions and allowed participants sufficient flexibility to explain their experiences while keeping the discussion aligned with the objectives of the study. The guide covered the participants' experiences in managing multigrade schools, the challenges and opportunities associated with their roles, and the coping mechanisms they employed. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and follow-up questions were used when clarification was required. Reflective journals and other relevant documents were also considered as additional sources of information.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, authorization was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Aklan and the Principal-in-Charge of the District of Madalag. The selected participants received informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, their role, and the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation. Semi-structured, in-depth narrative interviews served as the primary data-gathering method. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or online according to the participant's preference. Follow-up interviews and discussions were undertaken when clarification or validation was necessary. With participants' consent, the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The interview data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, as formulated by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2021). This approach provided a systematic yet flexible means of identifying meanings and patterns within the participants' narratives. The analysis followed six stages: familiarization with the data, development of initial codes, generation of themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and preparation of the research

report. The researcher repeatedly reviewed the interview recordings and transcripts and recorded initial observations and reflections. Relevant portions of the transcripts were coded according to their meanings and relationship to the research questions. Related codes were then clustered into broader categories and preliminary themes. These themes were reviewed against the codes and complete dataset and were refined, merged, or removed when insufficiently supported. Final themes and subthemes were defined according to their scope and contribution to the research objectives. Participant quotations were subsequently incorporated into the presentation of findings to represent their experiences and relate the themes to the literature and theoretical framework. Throughout the analysis, the researcher maintained reflexivity by considering how personal assumptions and biases could influence interpretation.

2.8 Validity and Trustworthiness

The researcher-made interview guide underwent face and content validation to establish its suitability and relevance to the research questions. Validation was conducted by three experts: a school head who served as the Multigrade District Coordinator, a TIC assigned to a multigrade school, and the researcher's academic adviser. The guide was examined in terms of format, content, clarity, and alignment with the research questions. Trustworthiness was further supported through collaborative reflexivity. The researcher discussed interpretations of the data with knowledgeable individuals, particularly the thesis adviser and a district research coordinator. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), this process recognized that researchers' backgrounds, assumptions, and interpretations influence the construction of codes and themes and that critical discussion can strengthen reflexive interpretation.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Required permissions and consent were secured before data collection, and participants were informed of the purpose of the research, their expected participation, and their rights as research participants. Participation was voluntary, and information obtained from the participants was treated with confidentiality and sensitivity. Pseudonyms were used in research documents and reporting to protect participants' identities. Participant information and interview data were maintained confidentially in compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Experiences of Teachers-in-Charge with Multifaceted Functions in Multigrade Settings

The experiences of TICs reflected a continuing process of transition, adjustment, learning, and relationship-building. Three major themes emerged: From Assignment to Adaptation, Juggling Multifaceted Demands, and Leading through Relationship.

3.1.1 From Assignment to Adaptation

The participants' experiences showed a progression from unexpectedly assuming the TIC designation to gradually learning the responsibilities of school leadership and eventually viewing the role as an opportunity for professional growth and service. This progression was reflected in unexpected designation, learning through experience, and growth through demanding responsibilities.

3.1.1.1 Unexpected Designation

Most participants did not initially aspire to become TICs. Their designation generally resulted from organizational necessity, personnel transfers, limited staffing, or the absence of another teacher who could assume school leadership. Although they initially expressed hesitation and lack of preparation for administrative work, they gradually accepted the position as necessary for maintaining school operations and serving their communities. This finding shows that TIC designation often develops from institutional need rather than an intentional career pathway. The finding is consistent with the study conducted by Bunglay and Cutab (2025), which described TICs in rural schools as teachers assuming multiple functions because of organizational demands and limited personnel. Alda and Gementiza (2023) similarly showed that multigrade teachers develop resilience, adaptability, and professional commitment as they adjust to changing responsibilities. Reyes and Ching (2024) also characterized TICs as multitaskers performing instructional, administrative, and leadership responsibilities, particularly in geographically isolated schools. Thus, unexpected designation may eventually become a meaningful professional experience when teachers learn to connect the responsibility with service and school continuity.

3.1.1.2 Learning through Experiences

Participants developed their leadership, organizational, decision-making, communication, and problem-solving abilities through actual engagement in school administration, classroom teaching, stakeholder coordination, report preparation, and responses to emerging school concerns. Their narratives indicated that competence was developed progressively through practice rather than acquired before their designation. The findings indicate that TIC development is largely experiential and should therefore extend beyond formal seminars to include mentoring, coaching, peer learning, technical assistance, and reflection on actual school situations. These findings

are consistent with Cornish and Taole's (2021) claims that multigrade teaching makes teachers adaptive and reflective. Cornish and Taole's (2021) findings further support the development of competencies through adjustment to complex teaching conditions. Arnido Jr. and Vibal (2025) likewise found that teachers develop leadership competencies while simultaneously teaching and leading, while Ortiz's (2025) finding demonstrated supervisory, communication, and decision-making competencies among TICs managing schools without permanent principals.

3.1.1.3 Growing Through Demands

Participants regarded pressure, multitasking, and difficult responsibilities not only as burdens but also as experiences that strengthened their leadership, organization, creativity, adaptability, resourcefulness, and resilience. Administrative demands developed their management abilities, while the complexity of multigrade instruction encouraged them to become more creative in responding to diverse learner needs. The results indicate that demanding experiences can contribute to professional growth, although such growth should not justify excessive workload. Institutional support remains necessary to sustain the competencies gained through experience. This is consistent with the study conducted by Caduyac et al. (2025), which found that School-In-Charges remain resilient and professionally developing despite difficult roles. Bunglay and Cutab (2025) similarly observed that TIC responsibilities create opportunities to strengthen management and decision-making skills, while Cornish and Taole (2021) emphasized creativity, flexibility, and reflection in multigrade teaching.

3.1.2 Juggling Multifaceted Demands

The participants simultaneously managed classroom instruction, multiple grade levels, administrative reports, meetings, school programs, stakeholders, and other school concerns. Their narratives demonstrated that TIC responsibilities do not replace teaching duties but are added to them, creating overlapping demands for time, attention, and energy.

3.1.2.1 Dual Role Strain

Participants experienced strain from simultaneously functioning as classroom teachers and school administrators. Administrative deadlines, reports, stakeholder communication, meetings, and school monitoring often occurred alongside classroom instruction. Maintaining teaching quality while ensuring uninterrupted school operations required constant adjustment, patience, resilience, and emotional control. The results show that TICs experience role conflict not simply because they have many tasks but because several critical roles must be performed at the same time. The results correspond with Bojos et al. (2025), who discussed difficulties encountered by multigrade school leaders in simultaneously serving as administrators and classroom teachers. Caduyac et al. (2025) likewise identified overlapping instructional and administrative responsibilities and concerns regarding workload and institutional support. Solomon-Solidarios (2025) similarly reported that TICs continuously balance teaching, school management, and administrative responsibilities through time management and personal sacrifice.

3.1.2.2 Workload Pressure

Participants reported that workload pressure resulted from the volume, urgency, and overlap of reports, school activities, documentation, deadlines, meetings, classroom teaching, and unexpected administrative concerns. Some administrative requirements occurred during teaching hours or required completion beyond regular working time, potentially affecting instructional attention and personal time. The findings indicate that workload pressure cannot be addressed solely through individual time-management strategies. Prioritization and flexibility help TICs respond to immediate demands, but administrative assistance, delegation, realistic reporting expectations, and adequate personnel are also important for preventing excessive workload and protecting instructional responsibilities.

3.1.2.3 Diverse Learner Needs

Participants also faced the instructional complexity of teaching learners from different grade levels, ages, competencies, abilities, and learning needs in a single classroom. They responded through differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, individualized activities, peer learning, varied assessment, careful lesson planning, and classroom-management strategies. The findings establish diverse learner needs as a major instructional demand that occurs simultaneously with TICs' administrative responsibilities. This finding is similar to Naparan and Castañeda (2021), who identified the difficulty of addressing competing grade-level needs while providing appropriate support to individual learners. Literal and Sabud (2025) likewise identified challenges arising from different grade levels, competencies, and educational needs within one classroom. Recla and Potane (2024) further identified differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, and collaborative learning as relevant practices in multigrade education.

3.1.3 Leading through Relationship

Participants managed their multifaceted responsibilities by developing relationships with colleagues, supervisors, parents, community members, barangay officials, and other stakeholders. Their experiences indicated that

effective TIC leadership was relational and depended on collaboration, shared responsibility, and community participation.

3.1.3.1 Collaborative Support

Participants identified colleagues, supervisors, parents, community stakeholders, and professional learning groups as important sources of guidance, resources, technical assistance, mentoring, and emotional support. They emphasized the importance of continuous training, consultation, coaching, peer learning, and professional networks in helping them perform their responsibilities. The results demonstrate that collaboration is essential rather than supplementary to TIC leadership, particularly in small and isolated schools. Bunglay and Cutab (2025) emphasized the importance of peer networks, cluster meetings, and professional-development activities in providing emotional, instructional, and problem-solving support. Manegdeg and Paglinawan (2024) similarly found that collaborative work environments provide professional support and help teachers manage workload. Solomon-Solidarios (2025) further emphasized collaborative leadership and the use of the strengths and expertise of school personnel and community members.

3.1.3.2 Shared Responsibility

Participants distributed responsibilities among teachers, learners, parents, and other stakeholders instead of attempting to manage all school functions independently. Delegation and participation allowed members of the school community to contribute according to their capabilities and created greater ownership of school programs and activities. Shared responsibility transformed leadership from an individual responsibility into a collective process. This finding agrees with Andaya and Quinto (2025), who associated teacher leadership with collaborative dialogue, decision-making, collective action, mentoring, and professional collaboration. Arnido Jr. and Vibal (2025) likewise emphasized collaboration and shared responsibility in TIC leadership. CooperGibson Research (2023) further identified collaborative planning, distributed leadership, and shared administrative functions as strategies for reducing workload pressures.

3.1.3.3 Community Partnership

Participants described parents, SPTA members, barangay officials, LGUs, community volunteers, and other stakeholders as important partners in providing resources, supporting school activities, maintaining facilities, implementing programs, assisting learners, and undertaking school-improvement initiatives. Community participation consequently expanded the limited human and material capacity available within multigrade schools. The findings indicate that school-community partnership is a core dimension of TIC leadership and requires competencies in communication, stakeholder engagement, partnership-building, and resource mobilization. Rondero and Casupanan (2024) found that relationships with parents, barangay officials, and community organizations help TICs mobilize resources and support educational initiatives. Khadija (2022) emphasized stakeholder participation in maximizing human and physical resources and supporting educational management, while Mandolado and Ancho (2023) found that parents, communities, local agencies, and volunteers contribute to infrastructure, resource mobilization, and school activities.

3.2 Opportunities of Teachers-in-Charge in Multigrade Settings

Despite the difficulties associated with their multifaceted responsibilities, participants viewed the TIC role as a source of professional and personal development. Three major opportunities emerged: Growing into Leadership, Innovating through Multigrade Teaching, and Strengthening through Collaboration.

3.2.1 Growing into Leadership

Participants regarded their everyday responsibilities as practical opportunities to develop leadership competencies. Managing school operations while teaching exposed them to decision-making, planning, communication, organization, stakeholder engagement, problem-solving, adaptability, and resilience.

3.2.1.1 Leadership through Experience

Participants reported that performing actual school-management responsibilities strengthened their leadership confidence and competencies. The complexity of simultaneously managing classroom instruction and school operations required strategic thinking, rapid decision-making, effective communication, organization, stakeholder coordination, and resourcefulness. The findings indicate that TIC designation can function as an experiential leadership-development pathway, although practical experience should be reinforced by structured support. Arnido Jr. and Vibal (2025) identified “Teaching While Leading: Rising Above Challenges” among TIC personnel and showed that leadership competencies develop through simultaneous teaching and leadership. Ortiz (2025) similarly found strong supervisory, communication, and decision-making skills among TIC personnel. Andaya and Quinto (2025) further associated teacher leadership with collaborative dialogue, shared decision-making, collective action, and professional collaboration. Therefore, experience can develop leadership competence, but mentoring, coaching, role clarification, and administrative support remain necessary.

3.2.1.2 Career Readiness through Expanded Responsibility

Participants viewed the TIC designation as preparation for future administrative positions because it provided direct exposure to responsibilities typically performed by school heads. Managing school functions, making decisions, communicating with stakeholders, and organizing programs increased their perceived readiness for broader leadership responsibilities. The findings suggest that expanded responsibility can contribute to career readiness when accompanied by recognition, mentoring, feedback, and professional development. Bunglay and Cutab (2025) found that TIC responsibilities provide opportunities to develop managerial and decision-making skills normally associated with school heads. Solomon-Solidarios (2025) likewise found that TICs gain leadership-development experience and autonomy through school responsibilities. Caduyac et al. (2025) further reported resilience and adaptability among TICs despite heavy workloads and overlapping functions.

3.2.2 Innovating through Multigrade Teaching

Participants described the multigrade classroom as a setting that required continuous instructional adjustment. Teaching learners from different grade levels with limited resources prompted them to develop more flexible, creative, and context-responsive approaches.

3.2.2.1 Sharpening Instructional Creativity

Participants reported using differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, integrated lessons, peer learning, contextualized activities, improvised materials, and locally available resources. They adapted lessons to learners' grade levels, abilities, interests, and learning needs, making instructional creativity a practical response to the complexity of multigrade teaching. The findings show that multigrade teaching can strengthen creativity and adaptability, although innovation should complement rather than replace adequate institutional resources. Cornish and Taole (2021) described multigrade teaching as encouraging creativity, flexibility, and reflective practice. Supremo and Siat (2025) identified integrated lesson planning, flexible grouping, peer tutoring, and customized learning activities as multigrade instructional adaptations. Montalbo et al. (2021) likewise found that multigrade teachers develop innovative approaches in response to limited resources and simultaneous instruction across grade levels.

3.2.2.2 Resourcefulness Amid Scarcity

Participants responded to shortages of instructional materials and technology by adapting or reusing materials, utilizing locally available resources, contextualizing lessons, incorporating available technology, and maximizing instructional time. These practices enabled them to sustain learning activities appropriate to several grade levels despite resource limitations. The findings demonstrate that resource scarcity encouraged resourcefulness but should not be interpreted as a substitute for sufficient educational provision. According to Montalbo et al. (2021), multigrade teachers respond to limited resources through creativity and contextualized instructional materials. Bagay (2024/2025) similarly noted that multigrade teachers adapt instructional approaches and resources when materials are insufficient or outdated. Isler (2022) further emphasized innovative classroom arrangements, learning resources, and instructional processes in addressing multigrade complexity.

3.2.3 Strengthening through Collaboration

Participants regarded collaboration not only as support but also as an opportunity for professional learning, shared leadership, problem-solving, resource mobilization, and school improvement. Their interactions with colleagues, supervisors, parents, community members, and government stakeholders strengthened their capacity to perform multiple responsibilities.

3.2.3.1 Professional Learning through Others

Participants gained knowledge, confidence, and guidance through mentoring, coaching, consultation, collaboration with other educators, supervisors, co-TICs, and professional learning communities. Their experiences showed that professional development occurred not only through formal seminars but also through routine interaction, shared experiences, and collective problem-solving. The findings suggest that TIC professional learning is strengthened when it is collaborative and context-based. Bunglay and Cutab (2023) showed the importance of peer networks, cluster meetings, and district level professional development for material, emotional and problem solving support. Manegdeg and Paglinawan (2024) found that collaborative working environments facilitate professional development and assist teachers with workload issues. Andaya and Quinito (2025) likewise found that teacher leaders engage in decision-making, collective action, and evaluation, supporting the value of professional learning through shared expertise.

3.2.3.2 Shared Responsibility as Strength

Participants recognized that effective school leadership did not require the TIC to perform every responsibility independently. Through delegation and participation, responsibilities could be shared among teachers, parents, learners, community members, and other stakeholders, enabling TICs to balance administrative and instructional functions more effectively. The results show that shared responsibility transforms leadership into collective action and develops competencies in delegation, participatory decision-making, communication, and team building. Arnido Jr. and Vibal (2025) emphasized collaboration and shared responsibility in TIC leadership and their

contribution to a positive school climate. Solomon-Solidarios (2025) similarly reported that collaborative and facilitative leadership enables TICs to utilize the strengths of school personnel and community stakeholders. CooperGibson Research (2023) further identified collaborative planning, distributed leadership, and shared administrative functions as mechanisms for reducing workload pressure.

3.2.3.3 Community Engagement as Opportunity

Participants reported that partnerships with parents, barangay officials, LGUs, community volunteers, and other stakeholders provided manpower, materials, ideas, technical assistance, and support for school programs, school improvement, learner welfare, and resource mobilization. Community involvement consequently created opportunities for co-responsibility in education rather than functioning only as a source of material assistance. The findings establish community engagement as both a leadership opportunity and a mechanism for strengthening multigrade schools. Rondero & Casupanan (2019) reported that TICs engage parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders in responding to resource deficits and school improvement. Khadija (2022) emphasized that stakeholder participation facilitates efficient use of human and physical resources while reducing workload pressures. Mandolado & Ancho (2023) likewise found that parents, community members, local organizations, and volunteers contribute to infrastructure improvement, resource mobilization, and school activities.

3.3 Proposed Capability-Enhancement Program

3.3.1 EMPOWER-TIC Program

The combined findings showed that TICs require development not only in teaching or administration separately but across the interconnected responsibilities of instructional leadership, school management, supervision, stakeholder engagement, resource management, collaboration, and personal well-being. Based on these findings, EMPOWER-TIC: Enhancing Multifaceted Leadership and Professional Competencies of Teacher-In-Charge in Multigrade Schools was proposed as a comprehensive capability-enhancement intervention. The program integrates four major competency areas: leadership and role management, multigrade instructional competence, administrative and school-management competence, and collaborative and personal well-being competencies. It responds directly to the workload demands, resource limitations, professional-support needs, and overlapping role expectations identified in the participants' narratives.

3.3.2 Program Structure and Learning Activities

EMPOWER-TIC is designed as a three-day, face-to-face seminar-workshop for TICs assigned to multigrade schools in the District of Madalag. The first day focuses on multifaceted TIC functions, transformational leadership, role clarification, decision-making, time management, workload prioritization, leadership self-assessment, and role mapping. The second day addresses instructional leadership, differentiated instruction, collaborative lesson planning, curriculum implementation, school documentation, administrative management, school improvement planning, and peer coaching. The third day focuses on school-community partnerships, resource mobilization, stakeholder collaboration, stress management, resilience, and the preparation of individual Leadership Enhancement Action Plans. The program combines seminar-workshops with mentoring, coaching, collaborative learning, reflection, peer interaction, and action planning. Resource persons include personnel involved in multigrade education, district supervision, social mobilization, and instructional leadership. Program requirements cover participant and facilitator meals, training materials, certificates, supplies, resource-person honoraria, venue requirements, and reproduction of modules and workshop materials, with the manuscript identifying a registration fee of ₱100.00 per participant and School MOOE as funding sources.

3.3.3 Expected Outputs and Outcomes

The program is intended to strengthen participants' understanding of TIC responsibilities, instructional leadership, administrative management, time and workload management, stakeholder collaboration, coping strategies, and leadership planning. It also seeks to strengthen mentoring, coaching, and Learning Action Cell mechanisms for TICs through the participation of school leaders and supervisors. Expected outputs include a Leadership Enhancement Action Plan, Multigrade Instructional Portfolio, School Management Checklist, School-Community Partnership Plan, Resource Mobilization Plan, Personal Wellness Plan, and a compendium of TIC best practices. Program success is expected to be reflected in training completion, contextualized multigrade lesson plans, completed school-management outputs, strengthened instructional and administrative competencies, enhanced stakeholder engagement, collaborative leadership, and improved capacity to balance the multiple demands of multigrade school leadership.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) in multigrade schools perform complex and interconnected functions encompassing classroom teaching, instructional leadership, school administration, budgeting, program implementation, and community coordination. These overlapping responsibilities expose TICs to heavy administrative workloads, insufficient resources and manpower, time constraints, and difficulty balancing

teaching and management functions. Despite these challenges, TICs demonstrate resilience through time management, teamwork, professional development, optimism, creativity, flexibility, and support from colleagues and stakeholders. Strong cooperation among schools, families, government agencies, and communities is therefore essential in sustaining TIC performance, particularly in resource-constrained multigrade settings, and the findings support the need for a structured and sustainable capability-enhancement program addressing leadership, instructional management, administration, stress management, and stakeholder communication.

The Department of Education should strengthen policies and support mechanisms for TICs through leadership training, administrative assistance, instructional resources, and appropriate professional development, while Schools Division Offices should provide capability-building programs, mentoring, Learning Action Cell activities, monitoring, coaching, and technical assistance. Public Schools District Supervisors and school heads should strengthen mentoring in instructional leadership, management, workload prioritization, collaborative decision-making, and community relations. TICs should continuously develop their competencies through leadership training, professional learning communities, stress-management practices, and stronger stakeholder relationships, while parents, LGUs, NGOs, alumni groups, and other community stakeholders should sustain their participation, resource support, volunteerism, and collaboration with multigrade schools. Future researchers may replicate the study using larger participant groups or other geographical settings, assess the effectiveness of the proposed capability-enhancement program, and examine other factors influencing TIC leadership effectiveness.

The study was limited to seven Teachers-in-Charge currently teaching in multigrade schools in the District of Madalag, with data gathered from June to August 2026. It excluded the perspectives of non-teaching personnel, administrative officials, and teachers from monograde schools and did not quantitatively assess learning effectiveness through test scores or achievement measures. Instead, it focused on the qualitative accounts, experiences, practices, and workload-management strategies of TICs; consequently, the findings may provide useful contextual insights but are not intended to be universally applicable to all multigrade schools in the Philippines.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The authors affirm that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study. The research was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for human-participant research. Prior to data collection, authorization was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Aklan and the Principal-in-Charge of the District of Madalag. All Teachers-in-Charge who participated in the study were informed of the purpose of the research, their role as participants, and the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation before providing informed consent. Permission was also obtained before audio-recording the semi-structured interviews. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used in all research documents and reports, and the information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality and sensitivity. The handling of participant information was undertaken in compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

REFERENCES

- Arnido, J. P., Jr., & Vibal, J. C. T. (2025). The lived experiences of teacher-in-charge in elementary schools: Basis for enhanced capability program. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 34(5), 559–581. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.340502>
- Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12, 67–92. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435>
- Bojos, W. M., Almeriez, Q. L. G., Trinidad, A. E., Arnado, J. A. S., & Fuentes, A. E. (2025). Leadership complexities of school heads in multigrade education. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(6), 574–588. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.240>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Cervellione, B., Lombardo, E. M. C., & Iacolino, C. (2025). Psychological resources and interventions for teachers' emotional competence and well-being: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, Article 1640968. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1640968>
- Chan, J. R., Marasigan, A. C., & Santander, N. T. (2021). Multigrade teachers' experiences and learning assessments on modular remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 10(6), 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2021.6>
- Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. S. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48–71). Oxford University Press.

- Deepthi, A. C., Wilson, F., Revathi, L., Shirisha, Y. N., & Yashwanth, N. (2023). Exploring the effects of imposing administrative tasks on teachers: Assessing productivity and resilience. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 10(4), h651–h654.
- Department of Education. (2024). *Rationalization of teachers' workload in public schools and payment of teaching overload* (DepEd Order No. 005, s. 2024). https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DO_s2024_005.pdf
- Eden, J. J. O. (2025). Teachers' work and family life: Impacts and the need for balance. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(4), 465–474. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.102>
- Fuentes, R. S. (2025). Leadership, governance and management skills of Teachers-in-Charge (TIC) in relation to their administrative performance in the Division of Aklan: Basis for TIC training program. *International Journal of Open-Access, Interdisciplinary & New Educational Discoveries of ETCOR Educational Research Center (iJOINED ETCOR)*, 4(3), 447–457. <https://doi.org/10.63498/etcor439>
- Isler, N. K. (2022). Re-thinking multigrade classrooms as an alternative educational environment. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, 17(2), 71–90. <https://doi.org/10.29329/epasr.2022.442.4>
- Magpatoc, A. G. (2021). Quality at stake: Travails of the multigrade teachers in the Division of Southern Leyte. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 10(14), 95–121. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2021.a086>
- Mediadero, D. F. D., Gante, L. I., Jr., Galay-Limos, J. A., & Lazaro, N. J. (2025). The effect of time management on teachers' administrative task in San Jose North District. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 14(11), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2025.25501>
- Montalbo, I. C., Pogoy, A. M., Pepito, G., & Cabanilla, A. B., Jr. (2021). Teachers' experiences in multi-grade instruction: A meta-synthesis. *Multicultural Education*, 7(10), 387–397. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5567812>
- Ortiz, J. C. (2025). Leadership skills and school performance of Teachers In-Charge in integrated schools. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(7), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.276>
- Pendijito, L. M., Castro, M. A. R. L., Caduyac, M. D., Lacao, R. H., Lloren, R. B., Amoto, N. B., Lumacang, S. M. B., Marikit, H. G., & Ampo, W. M. G. (2025). Balancing leadership and management of school-in-charge's dual roles. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(10), 32–39. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.571>
- Reyes, R. R., & Ching, D. A. (2024). Opportunities and challenges of a multigrade teacher: Inputs for a proposed professional development action plan. *TWIST*, 19(3), 445–455. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10049652>
- Solomon-Solidarios, J. R. (2025). Managing responsibilities: Teacher-in-charge personnel's lived experiences in school management. *Globus Journal of Progressive Education*, 15(1), 20–25. <https://doi.org/10.46360/globus.edu.220251004>
- Tayoni, A. C., & Abocejo, F. T. (2023). The multigrade education program: A policy evaluation. *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research*, 7(1), 1–6.