



## Gender Comparison on Teaching Practices of One Teacher Schools

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**Abstract:** Primary schools in rural areas of Pakistan have been opened at very short distance firstly due to small geographical boundaries of the villages and secondly to improve the enrollment of students. The small population in villages resulted in low enrollment of the students. According to rationalization policy of Government of Pakistan, the student-teacher ratio is 35:1; therefore, student strength of schools in rural areas hardly reaches 40; hence, a single teacher is allocated, and students in a school from Zero grade to 5th grade sit together in either one room or two and are taught by mostly one or two teachers concurrently. This qualitative study was conducted in rural primary schools for girls and boys to explore lived experiences of male and female teachers in One Teacher Schools/multi-grade and to find out differences in teaching on the gender-disaggregated basis. The management of multi grades single-handedly is the toughest job.

**Key Words:** Education, instructional, multi grade, phenomenological, qualitative, one-teacher schools.

### Introduction

The elucidation of multi-grade teaching varies among researchers and educationists. Multigrade teaching is defined by PASTEP (2000) that it is a classroom where only one teacher teaches different grades of a school at the same time in the same room. Vithanapathirana (2006) gave the same meaning of single teacher teaching to a number of grades at the same time. Little (1995) also supported the same interpretation. Maximum countries are running multi-grade teaching because of the need of time. According to Brown (2008), the shortage of teachers is one of the reasons for multi grade teaching. Multigrade teaching is a means to achieve the goals of the World Declaration for EFA which was affirmed in Jomtien in 1990, and the Dakar Framework of Action in 2000 are to be reached (Brown, 2008; Little, 2005). Most systems of education adopt multi-grade teaching to achieve targets of EFA and SDGs as it becomes the only option or a last resort. This last reinforces and highlights the necessity motive.

Considering the targets of EFA and SDG, Government of Pakistan has opened primary schools in each village irrespective of the fact that villages are very small and schools are at a very short distance. This approach helped in improving literacy rate but adversely affected the strength of schools in a way that the strength of a single school is divided into a couple of schools. In result, to utilize education budget rationally, the student-teacher ratio was fixed, e.g. 35:1 or each province gives. If strength increases from the decided number, then one more teacher will be allocated. The policy was for both urban and rural primary schools. Rural primary schools affected due to low enrollment of schools while urban primary schools do not have an issue of low enrollment. Strength of rural primary schools hardly cross 40 due to small geographical boundaries; therefore, a single teacher remains in a school to handle all classes. This is how one teacher schools came in existence, without any policy, (Suzuki, 2003). Single teacher school means multi-grade classes where a teacher teaches to more than one grades at the same time. This phenomenon is in vogue both in developing and developed world like Sweden, UK etc. run OTSs with multi-grade teaching. Multigrade teaching is prevalent at the primary school level in many

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of the countries ([Juvane, 2005](#)), but the published data available is insufficient to facilitate the systematic evaluation of the practice in different countries. In Pakistan, since 2005 the OTSs are reported at National Level, before that every province had its own record-keeping leading to the inception of Education Management Information System (EMIS) in the year 1992. The background of these schools is not factual. [Juvane \(2005\)](#) concluded that it is possible that the organizational structure of multi-grade schools and teaching will vary both within, and among countries. Due to non-availability of official data of OTSs and no apparent organizational format, it is difficult to compare across contexts ([Little, 1996](#)). This is only well known that multi-grade schools either with one teacher, two teacher or with three teachers are teaching several grades in one classroom throughout the school year.

The purpose of this research was to make gender comparison of the teaching of One Teacher schools in rural areas of Pakistan because usually, teachers are skilled to teach in normal conventional schools while they are posted to the area which they experience the first time and have no training and scenario is more complicated as compared to normal schools in which they are trained. There are separate schools for boys and girls, so there is a need to compare their teaching and its effectiveness. The study was conducted to first examine how teachers of primary level teaching in One Teacher schools/multi-grade for which they have no training. After examining this, the researcher analyzed and compared whether rural primary school teachers across gender use the same way of teaching or there is a difference.

Literature review evidenced that most of the previous researches done worldwide considered cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes in this setting. This is also not mentioned in previous researches that the whole school is multi-grade or only some classes. A gap found in the research literature was a focus on teaching: the strategies that teachers use and the ways that teachers cope with the complexities and challenges of this instructional setting (Kyne, 2005; Russell, Rowe and Hill, 1998). As far as previous research studies were done in Pakistan also did not focus on how teachers teach multi-grade classes especially where there are only one or two teachers in a school to teach the whole school in one room. The general understanding is that they learn by experience and adapt teaching of normal schooling to multi-grade teaching. The ambiguity lies yet that how they teach all classes at a time. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore the teaching of male and female teachers adapted in OTSs and to add more knowledge in the existing knowledge available about OTSs.

## **Research Question**

How teachers teach in OTSs while they are not trained for multi-grade teaching? Is there a difference in the teaching of male and female teachers in OTSs?

## **Review of Related Literature**

An Institute of Education from the University of London has conducted a number of researches on multi-grade environment defined multi-grade as 'students of different grades are placed together for administrative reasons (IOE, 2010). Thus the term 'multi-grade teaching' (MGT) is applicable to a variety of graded classroom organization where one teacher is liable for children in two or more curriculum grade levels at the same time, usually in one classroom ([Little, 2007](#)). One of the examples is of rural and remote areas schools of Zambia where a number of primary schools have a multi-grade system and children are taught in one classroom typically by one teacher within a timetabled period, for example, grade 1 and 2 or grade 3, 4 and 5 are taught by a single teacher in one classroom simultaneously irrespective of the fact that they are of different ages and competence level is also different. The same situation is in rural areas of Pakistan with only one difference that here in Pakistan there are not only two or three grades, but all students enrolled at primary level in a school from zero grade to 5<sup>th</sup> grade comprising 7 grades sit in one classroom and are taught by a single teacher. These schools in Pakistan are given names like One Teacher School, Two Teacher School or multi-grade schools.

The purpose of introducing multi-grade teaching is to ensure that all students are given an opportunity to learn. This is needed that teachers must have skills and ability to teach in a way which is Helpful to adapt the curriculum of different grades in one classroom. MGT is similar to the philosophy

of inclusive education because they both have the same purpose of ensuring that teaching is provided for all learners, and no one is left behind. As an approach to educating all students in a single classroom, multi-grade sits within the central domain of inclusive education philosophy. It is said in almost every research, e.g. (Little 2001, Mulkeen 2007) that introduction of multi-grade teaching is basically to achieve the aim of EFA and SDG that every child has right of education; therefore, it can be said that the objectives of the famous Salamanca policy statement that proposed that the inclusive oriented schools are to be opened to combat discriminatory attitude to provide effective education for the majority of children, and eventually improving the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system” (UNESCO, 1994), is taken within the multi-grade teaching agenda.

Multigrade teaching and learning strategies may be chosen by schools as part of a positive pedagogy (Blum and Diwan, 2007). However, multi-grade is a result of low enrollment and/or too few teachers (multi-grade through necessity). Previous researches Diane 2014 have stated that multi-grade schools with one or two teachers exist basically in rural areas of the world. These rural schools especially face considerable shortages of teaching and learning resources and basic infrastructure, which leads to poor educational quality, student lack of expectation, high drop-out and low rates of retention. These schools with one or two teachers, organize classes and follow different strategies to manage timetables considering these constraints, and face significant challenges in providing quality teaching and learning.

The practice of multi-grade teaching has been reviewed by several researchers (e.g. UNESCO/APEID, 1989; Birch and Lally, 1995; Little, 1995). There are some researches where the reality of multi-grade teaching has been recognized at national level authorities and is taken as a genuine area of enquiry for teacher educators and teacher trainees while in some countries NGOs and teachers themselves try to get recognition of multi-grade teaching. As witnessed in a study by DES (1967) multi-grade classes in many urban and rural areas of English primary schools in the 1960s and 1970s played the role of a wider change in the philosophy and pedagogy of primary education. In the 1970s, Swedish people developed an interest in multi-grade teaching in urban and rural areas, and a bill was forward in 1976 called ‘age integration’ for the benefit of student development. According to that bill, new curricula was introduced, the grade-wise division was removed and cooperation among inter-age (Malmros and Noelen, 1984). Laukkanen and Selventoinen (1978) evidenced about multi-grade schools in Finland; therefore, education departments introduced different innovations in teaching and curriculum strategies in multi-grade schools. As far as Pakistan is concerned multi-grade schools exist only with either one or two teachers and have become part of the education system without any policy even then the government has been successful in developing neither any strategy for these schools nor any bill for giving incentives to the teachers to teach 5 to 6 grades concurrently.

As government policies of countries vary throughout the world hence policies and practices of multi-grade, teaching also varies countries to countries. This difference affected the construction of research, research questions and conclusions. The focus of already done researches was on the achievement level of the students of both multi-grade and normal schools. Pervasiveness, location and invisibility of multi-grade teaching are focused in very few studies.

Industrialized countries examined the effectiveness of multi-grade teaching by comparing with monograde teaching. Per-student cost is high in multi-grade schools than monograde schools. Those who oppose these schools and support savings of budget raise points on the overheads being spent on keeping small multi-grade schools open and emphasize on merging students to adjacent schools for the sake of cost-efficiency. Those who support multi-grade schools argue that primary schools play a positive role in the life of the community, and students are benefitted socially in multi-grade structures. According to Mulcahy (1993), Multigrade teaching plays a role in promoting independent and individualized learning. In some areas of countries like Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada, exciting and challenging fields are available for learning. Others have considered multi-grade classrooms as leftovers of the past where the quality of education has no match with monograde classrooms.

The present study was conducted in Pakistan to explore how male and female teachers adapt their teaching to be successful and what is the difference in their teaching gender-wise. The phenomenological

Approach allowed participants, through face-to-face interviews and lesson observations to draw conclusions.

## **Methodology**

OTSs teaching was explored and described in this study; therefore, a phenomenological exploratory, descriptive approach was adopted from a type of qualitative research (Shank, 2002). Participants were allowed to describe their teaching experience in OTSs in their own words through phenomenological interviews and lesson observations to describe the phenomenon ([Husserl, 1989](#)).

As being the main instrument for data collection in qualitative research interviews and lesson observations were conducted by the researcher with the participants to generate data about their teaching experiences in One Teacher Schools. Cresswell (2006) and Colaizz (1978) data analysis steps were followed as bracketing strategy. The researcher gave a detailed description of data, put aside the researcher's own point of view about the phenomenon and went through the literature review in detail after collecting data for the purpose of bracketing.

Researcher's concern was with the male and female teachers teaching in One teacher schools; therefore, 5 female and 5 male Teacher schools were purposefully selected for the study.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Face to face interviews and classroom observations were used as tools of study which is supported by Lofland and [Lofland \(1995\)](#) by emphasizing that interviews and observations are considered " the mutuality of (interviews and observations) as the dominant techniques of real-life investigation.". Male and female teachers from One Teacher Schools were interviewed and observed. Each teacher was observed for five days in a week in classrooms that how they teach in multi-grade set up in OTS for which they have never taken any training.

Interviews were audio-recorded and later converted in writing. The researcher read and reread the interviews couple of times, extracted irrelevant data then drew themes from the remaining data and aligned data according to themes converted. After aligning interview with themes next step was to align observations with the data which was done carefully. The final version of the report of all data developed. The authenticity and consistency of data were done through seven steps given by [Creswell \(1998\)](#). Verification of data and interpretations obtained by teachers interviewed was necessary.

## **Results and Discussions**

The highlights of the lived experiences of male and female teachers of One Teacher Schools' teaching were compressed in the following themes:

### **Theme 1: Lesson Planning**

Both male and female respondent teachers of One Teacher Schools were unanimously accepted that proper lesson planning, which has been learnt during the teacher training program is, not possible to follow in this scenario where multiple classes sit in the same room and are taught concurrently according to the class-specific syllabus. Although teachers are given diaries to enter daily school, routine entries are only done whenever possible. It is said by female respondents that during pre-service training it was emphasized on some steps of lesson plans i-e "previous knowledge, recapitulation and review of the lecture" which are not possible to follow in these schools. According to females, they are in a rush to complete the syllabus and do not have time for these. They switch from one grade to another grade to complete the syllabus. It is stated by male teachers that they start the lesson with previous knowledge and also do recapitulation after completing the topic.

### **Theme 2: teaching methods**

According to female teachers, they use different teaching methods as studied in pre-service training like Discussion method, question-answer method, activity method etc., while male teachers emphasize on

The textbook method.

### **Theme 3: Use of AV aids and relevant material other than the textbook**

Female teachers stated that they use AV aids wherever applicable. It is also said by them that they involve students too in bringing relevant AV aids if have in their homes while male teachers were not in favor of AV aids. According to male teachers, use of AV aids is a way to waste the time of students.

### **Theme 4: Group Learning**

Neither male nor female teachers were in favor of group learning. They were of the view that Primary level students are not mature to learn themselves. They need teachers' guidance in any case. They stated that group learning works only if the teacher is busy in some task other than teaching.

### **Theme 5: Individual learning needs**

Female teachers were well aware of the importance of individual learning needs of the students, and according to them, they do care of these while male teachers stated that there are always some students who need individual learning and we recognize those students, but in scenario of OTS, this is not possible to teach them individually. Occasionally we guide them occasionally but not on a regular basis.

### **Theme 6: Integration of syllabus**

Female respondents indicated that although they integrate the syllabus of some classes, the truth is that there are very few topics, which can be integrated. According to them, the integration is beneficial only for teachers to save time as far as learning through integration is concerned, learning graph is very low. It is difficult for a teacher to keep the difficulty level the same for both classes. Female respondents also gave a point that both classes know their class level and also well aware that difficulty level of the topic in books of each class is different therefore if the teacher is giving attention to one class then other class thinks to be neglected. Male respondents teach each class separately. They do not consider integration an effective method at any cost.

### **Theme 7: Completion of syllabus**

All of them shared that although this is very tough to complete the syllabus, they have to especially of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In case syllabus of any grade is remaining then they teach important topics and leave the rest. They were said from the education department to teach main subjects i-e English, Urdu and Maths to all grades while if difficult to complete the syllabus of rest of the subjects then teach only those topics which relate to students daily life. There are no official directions of omitting the syllabus. This is the discretionary power of the teacher. Teachers are only accountable to complete the whole syllabus of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Male teachers also shared that if the syllabus of any grade is left other than 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they try to teach it at the beginning of next year before starting the book of the new grade. This method works sometimes and sometimes not works.

### **Theme 8: Training for OTSs teaching**

All male and female respondents unanimously stated that they are not trained properly for multi-grade teaching, where one or two teachers are responsible for the whole school. The reported that training is arranged monthly or bimonthly for primary teachers, but those are not specific to multi-grade teaching. It is stated by respondents that maximum primary schools in rural areas are multi-grade with either one or two teachers, scarcely find any school with more than two teachers but training are general as of normal school teachers. They listen to our problems without giving any solution. In-service training is mostly done for the development of knowledge about the specific content or in case they find that any topic is not delivered properly by the teacher. Another respondent said that two things are very important in multi-grade teaching, i.e. teaching methods/styles and syllabus, which is not yet given importance in any training. One of the male respondents who was directly posted to OTS after qualifying

Government job stated that he attended induction in which on the first day a Performa was filled by trainees in which our opinion was taken about multi-grade teaching other than that there was no component relating to multi-grade teaching throughout the induction.

### **Theme 9: Assurance about effective teaching and learning in OTSs**

Female respondents said that there are different ways to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning, e.g. previous knowledge, recapitulation, quizzes, tests, exams etc. but we do not get reliable results because of cheating factor. The teacher is accountable for many more tasks other than teaching; therefore, she cannot give due attention to check the effectiveness of teaching and learning properly.

Male respondents indicated that we start the lesson with previous knowledge and do recapitulation, but that is only for the sake of following steps of lesson plans. In reality, these rarely help because we are always in a rush to finish every day's tasks. One of the respondents stated that there is only one way to assure the effectiveness of teaching and learning i-exams/tests. Teachers conduct tests weekly or whenever possible, but that is not a reliable source. Teachers remained involved in other tasks; therefore, students get a free hand to attempt questions by cheating.

### **Theme 10: Cognitive achievements**

As part of cognitive achievements of teaching and learning in OTS settings, male and female respondents stated that there is no exam policy from KG to grade 4<sup>th</sup>; therefore, students are promoted to next grade without exams. We do take oral/ written tests and conduct some other activities for measuring their cognitive achievement but to be honest; none is reliable because a teacher cannot give proper time to students at the time of measuring them. Students attempt tests with cheating. If a student gets good marks, then apparently s/he is improving cognitively, but we as eye-witnessed confess that these students have no cognitive achievement. We are trying our best, but the results are terrifying. It is stated by female respondent that I convince parents of 5<sup>th</sup> grade to give them tuitions in winter vacations because they have centralized final exam and parents do so. 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students appear in the finale exam. According to teachers, it is found that all of them are promoted unless someone's performance is nil.

### **Classroom observation**

Each schoolteacher was observed 5 days a week. It was originated during observation that neither male nor female teachers had lesson plans. They behaved like to have done planning in mind. It is detected in these days that the teaching process revolves around only "reading, words meaning and exercising". There is no other activity relating to lesson plan steps. Female teachers mentioned in their interviews that they neither can start the lesson with previous knowledge nor can do a recapitulation of the lesson. It was proved during observation. None female teachers follow these points while male teachers started the lesson with previous knowledge and do recapitulation on the next day before starting the next topic, but it was observed that students were not responding.

It was found during observation that female teachers tried to teach through multiple methods like discussion method, the question-answer method for grade 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> but that was not practical because they could not complete the topic on a day when they teach through methods other than textbook method. It was witnessed that they teach some topics through activity method to Zero, KG and 1<sup>st</sup> classes, but it also resulted in wastage of time of students. They were left busy inactivity on their own, and the teacher got involved with other grades and activity learning left behind. During the observation of male teachers, they were sticking to a textbook method and did not let the students move in class or discuss anything. Students were passive receivers with male teachers.

It was found during observation that each school is provided AV aids by the education department. Female teachers were found using these AV aids for Zero and KG classes. One day during observation, a female teacher said to 5<sup>th</sup> grade to bring AV aids relevant to their Science topic. As far as male teachers were concerned, they taught only Science subject through AV aids that were naturally available in school like flowers, leaves etc. Male teachers used the textbook method for Zero and KG instead of activity method.



It alluded teachers taught each grade individually. It was found only once that they said to 5<sup>th</sup> class to study in the group when a monitoring team visited the school and teacher was busy with the team.

As said by female teachers in an interview that they do consider needs of students, but it was observed during observation that they tried to and pointed out during observation those students who needed individualized instruction, e.g. polio patient, blind student, but in reality, those students were also taught in the normal way with other students. Male teachers did not highlight any such student and were teaching all students in normal go.

The alphabetical concept is taught to KG and 1<sup>st</sup> class in an integrated way. It was confirmed that their way of teaching is like tuition method. It was evidenced during observation from students about the completion of subjects, especially 5<sup>th</sup> grade. They gave a positive response. As the researcher observed classes five days a week in each school and was in school from 08:00 am to 1:30 pm, so it was also reconfirmed from parents of students if any visited the school.

## Conclusion and discussion

The research was done with the intention to explore the teaching of OTSs and to find out if there is any difference of teaching gender-wise in adapting their teaching according to the situation i-e OTSs with 5 to 6 grades for which they have never been trained. The data collected through interviews and observations revealed the teaching of OTSs in a rural context. It was clearly stated in many researches (ASER, 2011 and [Little, 2001](#)) that OTSs are a spark in darkness for those who want to learn but could not migrate to other places in search of knowledge. It can be said that the OTSs/ multi-grade are the last hope for many. Considering the findings of the study, it is evident that neither male nor female teachers do lesson planning formally for teaching multiple grades concurrently. This is also evident through direct observation of their teaching that both male and female teachers teach in a better way as much as possible for them. It is concluded that male teachers complete their tasks of teaching each grade because they follow only textbook method while female teachers could not complete topics of a day because they try to teach through different methods other than the textbook method which resulted in incomplete classwork. There is an issue in following some steps of lesson planning, but it is also true that these schools do not play a role in the quality of education. These are functional because there is no alternate of these. One of the research done by [Winsome \(1997\)](#) where it is argued that if the teacher has the responsibility of teaching a single grade even then teachers hesitate to prepare lesson plans so how a single teacher can prepare lesson plans for a day for 6 grades to teach around 20 subjects in a day.

Teachers are jumping from one grade to another for teaching multiple subjects at a time and also perform other roles like administrator, guide, peon etc. Therefore jumping from one grade to another grade leaves a gap in students mind about the topic, and students remain confused. According to Prem (2015), AV aids play an important role in the effective learning of the students. Female teachers were seen using AV aids, while male teachers did not prefer to teach AV aids. It is concluded that teachers are performing like a magician who performs the duties of the teacher but immediately turns in to administrator then again jump into a teaching role and so on. This is also revealed by a researcher that teachers of OTSs are involved in too much work in schools. Besides teaching, they are overburdened with planning and assessment. It is concluded from interview and observation that male teachers are good managers as compare to female teachers.

According to the researcher's analysis during observation, male teachers behave autocratically and teach all students in the same pattern of the textbook method. They do not let the students freedom in class; therefore, classrooms are managed, and each task is completed in time while female teachers show lenient attitude towards students which resulted in mismanagement of class.

It is concluded that the concept of syllabus integration is not practical until integrated books are provided by the respective education department. Teachers are said to leave some topics if they are not able to complete the syllabus. Question is how teachers could on their own leave the topic, but they do. So, it is concluded that they are said unofficially to omit some topics. It is up to teachers' choice that which topics s/he cuts. According to [Little \(2004\)](#), teachers of OTSs and curriculum experts must carry out jointly integration of syllabus for OTSs/multi-grade. (Kucita et al, 2011).

It is also concluded that different trainings are conducted time by time, but those do not specifically relate to multi-grade teaching. Those trainings relate to the context of content delivery in a way to have command on topic. It is also concluded from interviews and direct observation that there is no surety of effective learning. Male and female teachers conduct assessments, but those are also not helpful because students can easily cheat.

Another interesting point came into notice that 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students appear in the external centralized final exam. According to teachers, students are promoted to 6<sup>th</sup> grade even if they are at margin line in marks. Hence, there is no reliability of cognitive achievement of these students.

Male teachers were autocratic as compare to female teachers who were lenient. It is also concluded that young female teachers try to use all those methods and strategies they learnt during pre-service training while male teachers follow traditional methods of teaching.

It is concluded that both male and female teachers are not trained specifically in the perspective of multi-grade teaching. Both males and females try to survive with the multi-grade situation and try their best to achieve objectives of teaching. Suppose any gap is found in their teaching that is basically due to not having any training. Teachers cannot be accountable for their teaching in OTSs because their performance depends on their own struggle without any support. This is also true that it takes time in adapting their teaching with multi-grade and coping with the situation, which adversely affects students' performance until they become familiar.



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