

Navigating the Complexities: A Narrative Inquiry of Special Education Teachers in Multigrade Classrooms in Silay City, Philippines

Jalmer Bernadette L. Regalado^{1*}, Dominic Bryan S. San Jose, EdD²

¹Kalipay Negrense Foundation, Philippines

²GLP International School, Japan.

*Corresponding Author: Jalmer Bernadette L. Regalado, Kalipay Negrense Foundation, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry study examines how a veteran Special Education teacher working in a multigrade classroom in Negros Occidental has faced professional challenges, as well as the ways he/she has adapted to those challenges. Using semi-structured interviews and classroom observation as data collection methods, the researcher identified three main themes from the teacher's 17 years of experience: Navigating Complexities of Diverse, Multigrade Instruction; Sustaining Practice Through Adaptive Relational Strategies; and Resilience and Advocacy as the Foundation of Professional Identity. The findings indicate that, in addition to the already high stress of multigrade instruction, managing students with multiple and/or severe disabilities adds another serious level of systemic stress and increases the workload. While this can lead to burnout, this teacher has continued to sustain his/her practice using effective pedagogical innovations such as Dynamic Adaptive Instructional Design (that is, differentiated instruction, Total Communication), as well as peer tutoring (Relational Learning Development). In addition to the findings and recommendations of this research study, specifically regarding the view of resiliency as an external support mechanism, institutions should take steps to provide training to their staff in Mental Health Awareness and Advanced Professional Development, as well as providing Mentorship for all Special Education Practitioners. This will help ensure the Longevity and Sustainability of Special Education Practitioners.

Keywords: Special Education (SPED), Multigrade Classroom, Narrative Inquiry, Inclusive Education, Negros Occidental, Philippines..

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: 01 May 2026

Accepted: 12 May 2026

Published: 16 May 2026

Cite this article as:

Jalmer Bernadette L. Regalado, Dominic Bryan S. San Jose. Navigating the complexities: A narrative inquiry of Special Education Teachers in multigrade classrooms in Silay City, Philippines. *Journal of Research in Nursing and Health Care*, 2026; 3(1); 49-57.

<https://doi.org/10.71123/3069-647X.030104>

Copyright:©2026. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.



Introduction

The principles of inclusive education are becoming increasingly important in schools around the world. This movement argues that students with diverse learning needs should be taught alongside other students in regular classrooms. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and other international agreements support this change, which focuses on providing fair and accessible quality education to everyone (Adipat & Chtikapanich, 2022). Special Education (SPED) teachers are at the forefront of this movement around the world. They often

need to learn how to differentiate, manage resources, and work together in ways that are very different from what they are used to. In many resource-limited areas, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that many classrooms have multiple grades, meaning one teacher oversees multiple grades simultaneously (Kalender & Erdem, 2021). This requires flexible and creative teaching methods to achieve positive educational outcomes for all students.

Geographical barriers, a lack of specialized teacher training, and unequal funding are just a few of the significant practical challenges that inclusive policy implementation

commonly faces across the Asian continent (Arias et al., 2023). In Indonesia, specific barriers include teachers' limited understanding of inclusion concepts, inadequate supporting facilities, and social stigma toward children with special needs (Melinda et al., 2024). Countries are showing a strong political will to make inclusion a reality, even though there are some challenges. They understand the big social and economic benefits of including students with special needs. In the Asian context, multiple teaching philosophies are often incorporated into an already complex multigrade structure, enabling SPED teachers to oversee caseloads that span ages, diagnoses, and academic levels. In this case, demonstrating how inclusive education program (IEP) teams must work collaboratively, maintaining high standards for special education service delivery despite limited resources requires a strong sense of commitment and a positive, forward-thinking attitude (Dillon et al., 2021).

The Philippines' Department of Education is reiterating support for Republic Act 10533, which assigns names and requires students to be educated inclusively for the K-12 Basic Education Program. Although the national framework enjoys good law and policy bases for special education, practice for it is usually thwarted by its inherent ills, especially in staffing and classroom composition (Espeño et al., 2024). Students with special needs are typically enrolled at the nearest public school due to the unavailability of SPED centers or special educators on staff. In consequence of this arrangement, special education students are often incorporated into multigrade classrooms, where the designated teacher must assume responsibility for a series of instruction across multiple grade levels of general education as well as create individualized lesson plans for each of their special education needs (Sebastian, 2025; Khalid et al., 2024). The professional competence and courage of the instructors are severely challenged by this double mandate.

As one of the largest and most geographically diverse provinces in the Western Visayas, Negros Occidental serves as a prime example of this national issue. Many schools in this province, particularly those in isolated rural areas, use the multigrade system to address low student enrollment and logistical challenges. As a result, the few committed SPED teachers in these schools frequently face the unique challenge of integrating their specialized responsibilities within this framework. A closer look is necessary to fully understand the real circumstances faced by these educators, because the local environment, defined by distinct community interactions, specific resource availability, and the pressing need for customized instruction, creates a unique setting for professional experiences.

Even though more people are starting to understand how important special education and inclusive practices are, there is not enough research on how special education teachers work in multigrade classrooms, especially in Negros Occidental, Philippines. Most current studies look at special education either in single-grade settings or in multigrade environments. This approach overlooks the unique challenges faced by teachers who work with students with different disabilities at various grade levels (Sebastian, 2025). Additionally, there is not enough documentation on the strategies these educators use to deal with limited resources, meet the diverse needs of their students, and create inclusive learning environments in rural or less populated areas. This research aims to fill this gap by thoroughly investigating the challenges and coping strategies of a special education teacher in multigrade classrooms at a school in Negros Occidental.

This narrative inquiry study aims to have further understanding of the specific issues that take place within multigrade classrooms for Special Educators in a school in Negros Occidental, as well as on coping adaptations that they implement with the intention of overcoming such issues. It also explores the experiences and life history of such an educator as he/she navigates within the dynamism of his/her working environments. This research endeavored to place the participant's personal histories on record with the hope of accumulating useful material that can be utilized in redeveloping teacher training programs, school policies, and practice at the classroom level in similar situations. Lastly, extracting learning from these experiences can be used as a resource for improving support networks and other learning spaces designed for students and teachers with special needs in multigrade special education classrooms.

Methodology

Research Design

This study followed a qualitative design that used a narrative inquiry method. The narrative inquiry method is a qualitative research method focused on capturing and interpreting the lived experiences of people (Bastola, 2023). Thus, it is preferable in this study because it provides space to move in-depth into the complex realities, challenges, and coping processes of the special education teacher in the multigrade learning context (Moen, 2006). By focusing on the participant's own narratives and reflective processes, this research technique provides dense, nuanced details into the patterns of the practices of teaching and the processes of resolving difficulties that might be more elusive with other qualitative or quantitative approaches.

Participants

The research included one purposively chosen participant

(Cleary et al., 2014), a current multigrade teacher in one of the schools in the province of Negros Occidental with special education teachers in their curriculum. The reason for selecting one participant followed the narrative inquiry principle of depth rather than breadth of knowledge. The following are the inclusion criteria: (1) at least two years of teaching experience in multigrade special education classrooms; (2) active involvement in the role of teacher that demands adaptive approaches; (3) openness and willingness to disclose vivid narratives regarding professional dilemmas and adaptive techniques; and (4) ease of accessibility for several interview and observation sessions. This deliberate choice made it easier to carry out an intensive, in-depth analysis of the lived professional life of the participant.

Instruments

Data collection used semi-structured interviews in conjunction with direct classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews proved suitable for their flexibility in enabling the research to guide the discussion in accordance with fundamental research themes without limiting the liberty of the participant in elaborating meaningful experiences and knowledge (Al Balushi, 2016). A corroboration in observation of the classroom supplemented by interviews provides contextual validation in the observation at real time of the process of teaching, interaction, and adaptive procedures in the typical setting of work of the participant. The blend reinforces data triangulation in making the findings more believable and richer

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection proceeded on a multi-step outline to facilitate coverage and contextual accuracy. It started with ethics (e.g., informed consent and rapport building). Initial observation sessions by a research assistant then contributed contextual knowledge. The principal data collection was through adaptive semi-structured interviews (60-90 minutes), which were audio recorded with contemporaneous notes added. This was succeeded by a detailed observation phase to complement verbal accounts with hands-on proof of problems and adaptive solutions. The last phase was on verification and credibility through painstaking transcription with member checking, where the participant validated accuracy in records. This ensured maximum credibility through triangulation.

Data Analysis Framework

Data were subjected to thematic analysis, a six-step approach developed by Braun and Clarke (Byrne, 2022), well-suited for qualitative research as it facilitates finding trends without losing the depth of narratives. This procedure included: 1) Familiarization through repeated reading and

listening; 2) Generating initial codes through manually undertaken, iterative analysis; 3) Searching for themes through grouping codes within wider patterns; 4) Evaluating themes for rational coherence; 5) Defining and labelling themes with clear definitions; and finally, 6) Generating report through synthesizing theme with embedding direct quotations to explain and gain detailed insights regarding professional lives of a multigrade special educator.

Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the data's trustworthiness, the research adopted various methods dealing with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility was ensured by means of interviews and observation, triangulation, and member checking with the research participant. Thick descriptions of the setting and participant's view were carried out in detail in order to allow for transferability. Dependability was ensured by keeping an audit trail of the research process, decisions, and reflections. Confirmability was ensured by a clear presentation of the findings with evidence in the form of direct quotes and observational evidence to limit the bias of the researchers.

Ethical Considerations

All phases of the research were guided by ethical standards. Informed consent registered the participant's voluntary participation and knowledge of the scope of the study, including the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. The participant's anonymity was also maintained by the use of a pseudonym, and all the data was kept in password-protected files. The researchers ensured the participant's emotional well-being by not attempting any sort of coercion or discomfort during data acquisition. Ethical clearance for the research was given by the relevant institutional review board before the start of the research.

Result

The professional narratives of a Special Education (SPED) Teacher were carefully examined to find out the ways in which she grows professionally while dealing with the intricacies of teaching in a multigrade setting with children having different special needs. The analysis conducted through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis led to the identification of three major themes that encapsulated the 17-year journey of the participant: (1) Navigating the Complexities of Diverse, Multigrade Instruction, (2) Sustaining Practice through Adaptive and Relational Strategies, and (3) Resilience and Advocacy as the Foundation of Professional Identity. The teacher's narrative serves as the foundation for each theme by providing direct utterances.

Navigating the Complexities of Diverse, Multigrade Instruction

The engagement of the participant within a multigrade environment is modified significantly due to the added complexities associated with managing students with a variety of disabilities. The participant must perform at a high level of professional development throughout this complex teaching environment and to be prepared to meet many demands upon their time and resources.

The participant's primary focus is to meet the demands placed upon them with a commitment to innovation and coordination throughout her teaching position. The core of the challenge is the complexity and high level of time and resource demands on the educator and her workload: *"Teaching Diverse learning needs per grade levels with different disabilities, lesson log preparations, limited time and classroom management."*

This unique environment requires the teacher to have an extensive, individualized preparation load and also to be able to provide high-quality instruction. The teacher, therefore, is under tremendous pressure to prepare lesson logs and instructional materials with extreme efficiency and to deliver quality instruction to students who may not have additional resources available to meet the same types of needs as those with more traditional disabilities.

Additionally, the coexistence of separate learning profiles and behaviors is an additional teaching challenge. A teacher must consistently adjust the way they engage and communicate with students. She explained: *"I have trouble engaging SNED students who have mood swings (autism); lack of communication ability (deaf), and are slow learners (intellectually disabled)."*

This statement reflects the cognitive changeover needed to deal with the emotional regulation problems of mood swings, the wide variation in communication ability, and the wide variety of learning speeds of diverse intellectual abilities that exist within one classroom.

The combined effect of these two types of organizational and pedagogical issues leads to an escalation of stress levels for the teacher. This participant openly stated, *"Personally, these issues will increase my stress because I am juggling the needs of the students in my class while still preparing lesson logs, instructional materials, managing the classroom, etc."*

Her comments demonstrate that the challenges of the teaching profession extend beyond the four walls of the classroom and have real ramifications for the teacher's physical and emotional well-being due to the volume of work that needs to be accomplished and the critical nature of the work that must be completed at the same time.

Sustaining Practice through Adaptive and Relational Strategies

During her 17 years of teaching, the participant has implemented numerous innovative ways to continually enhance her effectiveness as an educator by using adaptable, flexible strategies. These strategies include a strong focus on an adaptable curriculum, resources, and developing supportive relationships in the classroom.

The main adaptive strategy employed by this teacher is the differentiation and modification of the curriculum. She not only utilizes a standardized curriculum but also adapts it to the students' individual needs or abilities. She shared: *"I use modification and accommodation in my instructional materials, use different instructional resources, formative assessments."*

The use of modifications (i.e., changing the expected level of content to be mastered) and accommodations (i.e., changing the way students learn and/or are assessed) creates numerous accessible pathways for students. She continually uses and evaluates her implementation of formative assessments as well as the variety of instructional methodologies in developing an adaptive instructional design that is evidence informed.

To create effective communication between her students and herself, the participant uses many different methods and techniques which allow for greater comprehension from all types of learners, especially the Deaf students. She said: *"I use total communication for more understanding of the lessons."*

In addition, she actively incorporates assistive technology as a means of enhancing understanding. She shared: *"I maximize technology for better understanding and use visuals and assistive resources."*

Also, the teacher promotes relational learning through the development of collaborative relationships with the students themselves. She makes every effort to encourage peer-to-peer interaction, stating: *"SNED learners support each other like peer tutoring and assistance."*

By doing so, she encourages her students to act as partners in their learning experiences, allowing the teacher to share the instructional load and promote social competence and a sense of belonging in the diverse student body.

Resilience and Advocacy as the Foundation of Professional Identity

The continuous commitment level of the participant is maintained through a strong, enduring personal sense of purpose which factors in her ability to approach profession challenges as opportunities for professional growth and promote systematic advocacy for her profession.

The teacher's motivation is student-centered and driven by an internal desire to support the success of her students. She feels that her motivation for teaching stems from her passion for inclusion and her understanding of the needs of the many different types of special needs learners in her care. She shared: *"My passion in supporting inclusive education, my love for our diverse special need learners and my sympathy, commitment to them and importantly my compassion to see gain their confidence and academic growth."*

The emotional investment she has with regard to supporting the success of her students is an extremely strong and sustained source of energy for her work, and it is a major reason she continues to work in a very challenging and stressful professional environment. The challenging environment can serve as a source of growth for the teacher. *"I must admit that it's not easy. Aside from having students with different levels of competencies, their special needs also vary. So, it's truly challenging and stressful. But my training as a teacher helped me become resilient and focus on this as my vocation. However, professionally, it enhances my abilities in differentiated instruction, accommodation and modification and improve my teaching strategies and styles."*

The teacher comments that the environment is supportive and, as such, allows her to enhance her skillset in differentiated instruction, accommodation and modification and improves her teaching strategies and styles. This shows that she engages in reflective practice, and that the need to problem-solve in a multigrade SPED environment necessitates the establishment of solid foundational skills in teaching. Additionally, the teacher's narrative ends with a commitment to advocate for systemic change. As opposed to just advocating for herself, she advocates for the health and success of the profession as a whole. She clearly stated: *"Capacity building for teachers, collaborations and mentoring, advance professional development and the most is mental health and self-care training for teachers."*

Emphasis on the importance of "Mental health and self-care training" is indicative of a legitimate personal vulnerability experienced daily by many teachers in these high-stress environments but seldom addressed as a major factor in the profession. The participant establishes herself as an advocate for holistic sustainability for SPED teachers.

Discussion

The thematic analysis of the Professional Narrative of the Veteran SPED Teacher provides three major themes into the complexities of Inclusive Education and the foundation of a continuing Professional Identity. The following discussion synthesizes these findings and compares them to current literature to create both theoretical and practical implications for Special Education.

Navigating the Complexities of Diverse, Multigrade Instruction

The first key finding states that the participant is overwhelmed by the excessively high workload of a multigrade classroom as well as managing the physical education needs of students with severe disabilities (i.e., students who have been diagnosed with severe emotional disturbances, hearing impairments, and intellectual disabilities) (Khalid et al., 2024). According to empirical evidence from different studies, when describing their "heightened level of stress," the participant's experience supports much of what has been documented in the literature concerning the multigrade teaching model being one of the most significant structural barriers for teachers because the educational environment created by this approach requires teachers to teach multiple curricula while attempting to accommodate students who exhibit a range of behaviors (Ares-Ferreirós et al., 2025; Kartal & Demir, 2023).

The complexity of the structural system is exacerbated by the existence of the requirements of special education. Research shows SPED teachers to be a strongly at-risk population for burnout/stress versus the general education teacher population (Qangule & Letuma, 2025). The need for extensive, individualized preparation, which is a theme throughout the narrative of this study, leads directly to the factors that have overwhelmingly indicated the presence of role ambiguity, job challenges/multivariate job scope, and emotional exhaustion in this line of work (Cano-Lozano et al., 2024). As a result of this study, one of its major contributions is that it has documented the combined effect of two major job factors (multigrade teaching and the management of many different disabilities) that will create a compounding effect on a SPED teacher's stress level, and requires them to possess the highest level of professional competence/resourcefulness (Erden, 2020). The interpretation of the outcome supports the conclusion that this is a systemic problem that requires specific institutional efforts, rather than individual coping strategies, to address the problems associated with high levels of stress.

Sustaining Practice through Adaptive and Relational Strategies

The second theme centers on a teacher's use of sophisticated methods to support professional effectiveness through Dynamic Adaptive Instructional Design and Relational Learning Development. A teacher's modification of curriculum and accommodation is a clear application of the principles of DI (i.e. differentiating instruction), which is a critical pedagogical paradigm that supports individualized learning profiles within inclusive settings (Goyibova et al., 2025). Evidence exists showing that there is a positive

relationship between the extent to which a teacher adheres to DI practices and improved student outcomes including better quality of life in school, social inclusion, and self-concept regarding academics (Pozas et al., 2021).

Also, the participant's dependence on using technology/devices/etc., and the idea of "total communication," support the current, research-based practices that use a scaffolding method to create an environment where students who have sensory or developmental impairments can access abstract ideas/learning and provide support to build on each other's knowledge (Pettersson-Bloom & Holmqvist, 2022). By using peer-to-peer tutoring and other cooperative learning activities deliberately, the participant demonstrates a belief in the social-constructivist model of learning in the inclusive classroom. The relational approaches described by the participant deliver effective results in the field of SPED, and recent research has demonstrated that using small groups and the interaction of peers as major instructional approaches to building social and life skills are effective for these students (Niadas et al., 2025). Thus, it is evident that the way in which a teacher sustained their practices as long as they did was through a well-structured framework for adapting to change, along with continual pedagogical innovation supported by strong relationships, which serve to alleviate many of the systemic problems that exist in the area of inclusive education, such as a lack of adequate resources (ADB, 2022).

Resilience and Advocacy as the Foundation of Professional Identity

The teacher's professional identity is firmly rooted in a solid internal purpose and commitment to inclusive practices, which provides the main basis for resiliency. Additionally, framing challenges as opportunities to develop skills shows a high level of professional reflexivity (DeLuca et al., 2023). While the development of this internal disposition is essential, this narrative thread runs deeper. There is also a significant need for systemic advocacy. The teacher's need for institutional supports, specifically "Access to advanced professional development, mentoring, and most significantly, Mental health and self-care training," reflects the movement from an individualized focus on coping to an organizational focus on responsibility.

The policy implications of this study's results are significant. Resilience has typically been looked at as an internal characteristic (Zhang et al., 2020). However, in the field of special education, emerging external factors that institutions can provide support for healthy work environments and provide adequate training to reduce the likelihood of teachers experiencing burnout (Brunsting et al., 2023). The need to train educators in mental health is especially important given the high levels of emotional

exhaustion reported by special education teachers. Therefore, programs like the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) model are being developed to support the emotional burden placed on these educators (Jennings et al., 2019; Fosco, 2024; Niadas et al., 2025). The desire for more extensive training is supported by research demonstrating that teachers who possess more advanced academic preparation tend to be more resilient and professional autonomy (Cano-Lozano et al., 2024). Consequently, the teacher's advocacy is an effective amalgamation of their personal vulnerability and educational policy supported by the desire to achieve a sustainable SPED profession holistically.

Synthesis

The findings of this research highlight the great tension experienced in the profession of SPED (special education) by a veteran educator. Although she has developed a very sophisticated set of adaptive coping skills and is a committed advocate for her students, structural complexities are major sources of systemic stress experienced by SPED educators. The combined burden of teaching multiple grade levels and managing severely disabled students adds further clarity and confirms that the stresses and ambiguities surrounding the role of SPED educators are, in fact, systemic problems associated with structural problems rather than individual issues. Additionally, results from this study indicate that Dynamic Adaptive Instructional Design and Relational Learning Development are tools that can help SPED educators be successful. The emphasis on using Differentiated Instruction, Total Communication, and Social Constructivist approaches, such as Peer Tutoring provides a pivotal buffer to the educator from resource limitations, indicating that although the system itself provides many obstacles to effective inclusive practice, the continued implementation and success of effective pedagogy is the result of ongoing pedagogical innovation and Relational Commitment.

A strong foundation of a teacher's professional identity contributes to long-term resilience in their role within the school, as it provides a teacher with the tools and means to advocate on behalf of themselves and their profession. This research indicates that rather than viewing resilience only as an inherent trait or quality of an individual, we need to expand the definition of resilience to also include externally supported systems or structures. This is shown by the clear need expressed by the study participant for societal support through professional development, mentoring, and emotional support. The findings from this investigation show that developing and maintaining the culture of an organization is important for developing resilient SPED practitioners, especially considering the increasing level of difficulty imposed upon SPED practitioners due to the

increase in the amount of stress and strain created when providing SPED services for children and their families. The results of this study have implications for policy-building to enhance an organization's ability to provide support to SPED practitioners who need the resources they need to provide the best chance of success for children and families receiving SPED services.

Conclusion

The research employs narrative inquiry to examine a veteran special educator's career path, focusing on how structural obstacles related to classroom practices affect a teacher's growth and development. The data illustrate continuing tension associated with the significant demands of teaching varying grade levels and serving a spectrum of students with extreme disabilities. Through 17 years of experience, the participant has demonstrated that long-term professional identity is achievable by having an intrinsic commitment to teaching and learning (via Dynamic Adaptive Instructional Design and Relational Learning Development), as well as developing systemic advocacy. Even though the structures of inclusive education can present challenges for providing access for students with disabilities, a teacher's ability to grow professionally and support systemic change must be met with their ability to create meaningful relationships and make a long-term investment in their profession.

Implications of the Study

The findings have important implications for educational policy, organizational support, and teaching methods in the area of Special Education. Policymakers should recognize that systemic issues such as high levels of stress, high workloads, and role ambiguity among SPED educators are not due to individual failings but rather require institutional support and reduced workloads to enable educators to carry out their duties effectively. This study indicates that Dynamic Adaptive Instructional Design and Relational Learning Development (e.g., Differentiated Instruction, Total Communication, and Peer Tutoring) are effective forms of pedagogy for providing support during situations in which resources are limited; therefore, policymakers should seek to engage in professional development in these areas. Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that we need to view resilience as an externally supported system rather than as an inherent characteristic of an individual. Therefore, there must be a substantive allocation of resources for building Capacity for Teachers, providing more extensive mentoring, and, most importantly, providing training on mental health and self-care for SPED Practitioners to ensure they can sustain themselves holistically over time.

Limitations of the Study

This research focuses on qualitative data and a story analysis in a historical and interpretive manner; therefore, there are limitations regarding the results of this study. For example, the participant's personal experiences over the last seventeen years (the length of time this subject has been a SPED teacher), were explored during this time period, and they cannot therefore be generalized to other SPED teachers working in different schools and with different students and under different contracts. Additionally, narrative data cannot be objectively verified or validated; rather, they are a participant's personal recollection and impressions of those experiences (as remembered at that particular time) and thus are subject to the influence of that individual's memory and understanding of those experiences. Lastly, this research captures the professional development of a SPED teacher at this particular time and not any growth or changes in their profession after her current job or before she changed jobs.

Directions for Future Research

Limitations in this research will point to future directions for research to gain a greater understanding of the special education profession as well as provide further support for the special educators who serve it. First, future research should evaluate both the compounded impact of the structural factors (multi-grade classroom settings, multiple types of severe disabilities, etc.) on the burnout and retention rates of special educators by employing either mixed-methods or comparative quantitative designs. Second, future research should evaluate the effectiveness of institution-specific interventions on increasing the resiliency and autonomy of special educators, such as the implementation of structured mental health and self-care models, dedicated mentoring programs, and concentrated advanced academic preparation. Finally, an important way to support this research would be to conduct longitudinal narrative studies tracking special educators as they progress through their careers, as their coping methods change to advocacy for system-wide change over time.

Reference

1. Adipat, S., & Chotikapanich, R. (2022). Sustainable development goal 4: An education goal to achieve equitable quality education. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 11(6), 174-183. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0159>
2. Al Balushi, K. (2016). The use of online semi-structured interviews in interpretive research. *International journal of science and research (IJSR)*, 57(4), 2319-7064. <https://doi.org/10.21275/ART20181393>
3. Ares-Ferreirós, M., Álvarez Martínez-Iglesias, J.

- M., & Bernárdez-Gómez, A. (2025). Challenges and opportunities of multi-grade teaching: a systematic review of recent international studies. *Education Sciences*, 15(8), 1052. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15081052>
4. Arias, C. R., Calago, C. N. S., Calungsod, H. F. B., Delica, M. A., Fullo, M. E., & Cabanilla Jr, A. B. (2023). Challenges and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Selected Asian Countries: A Meta-Synthesis. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, 9(2), 512-534. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.3089>
 5. Bastola, G. K. (2023). Narrative Inquiry as a Viable Method in Language Teaching Research: A Short Analytical Study. *Gyanjyoti*, 3(1), 12-23. <https://doi.org/10.3126/gyanjyoti.v3i1.53032>
 6. Brunsting, N. C., Cumming, M. M., Garwood, J. D., & Urquiza, N. (2023). Special Education Teachers' Wellbeing and Burnout. In *Handbook of research on special education teacher preparation* (pp. 296-318). Routledge.
 7. Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & quantity*, 56(3), 1391-1412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y>
 8. Cano-Lozano, C., García-Garnica, E., & López-García, O. (2024). Stress and burnout in teaching. Study in an inclusive school workplace. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 17, 185-195. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10694697/>
 9. Cleary, M., Horsfall, J., & Hayter, M. (2014). Data collection and sampling in qualitative research: does size matter?. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 70(3), 473-475. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12163>
 10. DeLuca, C., Willis, J., Dorji, K., & Sherman, A. (2023). Cultivating reflective teachers: Challenging power and promoting pedagogy of self-assessment in Australian, Bhutanese, and Canadian teacher education programs. *Power and Education*, 15(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17577438221108240>
 11. Dillon, S., Armstrong, E., Goudy, L., Reynolds, H., & Scurry, S. (2021). Improving special education service delivery through interdisciplinary collaboration. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 54(1), 36-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00400599211029671>
 12. Erden, H. (2020). Teaching and learning in multi-graded classrooms: Is it sustainable?. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 12, 359-378. <https://www.ijci.net/index.php/IJCI/article/view/330>
 13. Espeño, S., Babiano, E. H., Bucoy, M. L. R., Busime, E. L., & De Borja, J. M. A. (2024). Issues and challenges of implementing special education (SPED) curriculum in the Philippines: A systematic literature review. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan*, 2(4), 196-205. <https://doi.org/10.60132/jip.v2i4.390>
 14. Fosco, S. L. D. (2024). CULTIVATING AWARENESS AND RESILIENCE IN EDUCATION. *Supporting Leaders for School Improvement Through Self-Care and Wellbeing*, 317.
 15. Goyibova, N., Muslimov, N., Sabirova, G., Kadirova, N., & Samatova, B. (2025). Differentiation approach in education: Tailoring instruction for diverse learner needs. *MethodsX*, 14, 103163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2025.103163>
 16. Jennings, P. A., DeMauro, A. A., & Mischenko, P. (2019). Cultivating awareness and resilience in education: The CARE for teachers program. In *Handbook of mindfulness-based programmes* (pp. 219-230). Routledge.
 17. Kalender, B., & Erdem, E. (2021). Challenges faced by classroom teachers in multigrade classrooms: A case study. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 5(4), 76-91. <https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.2021473490>
 18. Kartal, A., & Demir, E. G. (2023). Multi-grade teaching: Experiences of teachers and preservice teachers in Turkey. *Hungarian Educational Research Journal*, 13(2), 170-188. <https://doi.org/10.1556/063.2022.00132>
 19. Khalid, M. U., Manzoor, A., & Rashid, A. (2024). The experiences of teachers at multi grade classrooms at special education schools. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 5(1), 326-343. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024\(5-1\)30](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024(5-1)30)
 20. Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
 21. Melinda, R., Suriansyah, A., & Refianti, W. R. (2025). Pendidikan inklusif: Tantangan dan peluang dalam implementasinya di Indonesia. *Harmoni Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2(1), 337-343. <https://doi.org/10.62383/hardik.v2i1.1096>
 - 22.
 23. Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5(4), 56-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500405>
 24. Niadas, G., Quiap, A. M., Sanchez, E., Monterola, M. E., Beniga, V., Tenerife-Cañete, J. J., ... & Añero, M. (2025). Exploring The Challenges and Strategies of Special Education Teachers in Developing Social and Adaptive Skills. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 7(10), 01-12. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jhsss.2025.7.10.1>
 25. Petersson-Bloom, L., & Holmqvist, M. (2022). Strategies in supporting inclusive education for

- autistic students—A systematic review of qualitative research results. *Autism & developmental language impairments*, 7, 23969415221123429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969415221123429>
26. Pozas, M., Letzel, V., Lindner, K. T., & Schwab, S. (2021, December). DI (differentiated instruction) does matter! The effects of DI on secondary school students' well-being, social inclusion and academic self-concept. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 6, p. 729027). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.729027>
27. Qangule, T., & Letuma, M. C. (2025, October). One teacher, many grades: Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in multigrade classroom management. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 10, p. 1685825). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1685825>
28. Sebastian, R. (2025). Problematic Situations in the Multi-Grade Classrooms: Experiences of Special Education Teachers. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 38(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.380101>
29. Zhang, M., Bai, Y., & Li, Z. (2020). Effect of resilience on the mental health of special education teachers: Moderating effect of teaching barriers. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 13, 537-544. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S257842>