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Navigating Multiple Teaching Responsibilities: Lived Experiences of an Elementary Teacher in Promoting Holistic Learning at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora

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Abstract

Elementary school teachers who handle multiple learning areas perform a vital role in ensuring that learners receive comprehensive, balanced, and meaningful educational experiences. In Philippine public elementary schools, teachers frequently assume responsibility for teaching several subjects simultaneously, requiring them to integrate diverse pedagogical approaches while addressing learners' cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social, and moral development. Despite the significance of multidisciplinary teaching, limited qualitative studies have explored how elementary teachers navigate multiple instructional responsibilities to promote holistic learning, particularly in geographically challenged rural schools. This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of an elementary teacher in promoting holistic learning while teaching multiple learning areas at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora. Guided by Creswell and Poth's qualitative inquiry framework and Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, the study utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed the data using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Method. Five essential themes emerged from the participants' narratives: (1) Integrating Multiple Learning Areas through Purposeful Instructional Planning; (2) Fostering Holistic Learner Development through Learner-Centered Pedagogy; (3) Balancing Diverse Instructional Responsibilities through Adaptive Classroom Management; (4) Overcoming Instructional Challenges through Creativity and Resourcefulness; and (5) Sustaining Teaching Excellence through Reflective Professional Growth. The findings reveal that effective multidisciplinary teaching extends beyond content delivery by integrating academic instruction with character formation, critical thinking, collaboration, and lifelong learning. The study proposes the Holistic Elementary Teaching Framework (HETF) to strengthen instructional integration, teacher resilience, professional competence, and holistic learner development in elementary education.

Keywords: holistic learning, elementary education, multidisciplinary teaching, teacher experiences, phenomenology, learner-centered pedagogy, instructional planning, professional development



Introduction

The growing complexity of elementary education has significantly expanded teachers' instructional responsibilities beyond the traditional delivery of subject content. Modern elementary teachers are expected not only to facilitate academic learning but also to nurture learners' social, emotional, moral, physical, and cognitive development through integrated and meaningful educational experiences. As schools continue to implement competency-based curricula, teachers are increasingly challenged to employ interdisciplinary instructional approaches that connect various learning areas while responding to the diverse developmental needs of young learners. Consequently, holistic learning has become a fundamental principle in elementary education, recognizing that children's overall growth requires balanced attention to intellectual achievement, character formation, emotional well-being, creativity, collaboration, and responsible citizenship (UNESCO, 2021).

Holistic learning emphasizes the interconnected development of learners by integrating knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and real-life experiences across different subject areas. Rather than treating academic disciplines as isolated bodies of knowledge, holistic education encourages teachers to design meaningful learning experiences that allow learners to make connections among concepts while developing higher-order thinking skills, creativity, empathy, and lifelong learning habits. Contemporary educational research suggests that interdisciplinary instruction enhances learners' engagement, improves knowledge retention, promotes critical thinking, and strengthens learners' ability to apply classroom learning to authentic life situations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Such instructional practices are particularly valuable in elementary education, where young learners develop foundational competencies that shape future academic success and personal development.

Holistic learning has become a central principle in contemporary elementary education because it recognizes that learners develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally, and physically as interconnected individuals rather than through isolated academic competencies. Modern educational systems emphasize that schools should nurture the whole child by integrating cognitive development with values formation, creativity, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and responsible citizenship. UNESCO (2021) highlights that quality education extends beyond academic achievement by cultivating learners who possess critical thinking skills, ethical values, resilience, and the capacity to contribute positively to society. This perspective aligns with the global movement toward learner-centered education, where instructional practices are designed to support balanced human development while preparing learners for lifelong learning.

Elementary education plays a particularly important role in holistic learning because foundational competencies are established during the early years of schooling. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that elementary classrooms should integrate academic knowledge with social-emotional learning, inquiry, collaboration, and experiential activities that foster deeper understanding and meaningful engagement. Likewise, Fullan (2020) argued that effective elementary education develops not only literacy and numeracy but also character, citizenship, creativity, communication, and collaboration, collectively known as the competencies required for twenty-first-century learners. Teachers therefore become facilitators of holistic growth who design meaningful learning experiences that address learners' diverse developmental needs.

Recent studies have also emphasized that teachers' resilience and adaptive expertise significantly influence their ability to manage multiple responsibilities effectively. Gu and Day (2022) argued that resilient teachers continuously modify instructional practices according to changing classroom

realities while maintaining professional commitment despite workload pressures. Such adaptive capacities become particularly important in rural schools where teachers frequently assume additional responsibilities due to limited personnel and resources.

UNESCO (2022) emphasized that equitable education requires strengthening teacher capacity in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities. Effective rural teachers maximize locally available resources, establish strong community partnerships, contextualize instruction, and adapt teaching strategies to learners' cultural and environmental contexts. Community involvement likewise becomes an essential factor supporting learner success because schools collaborate closely with parents and local stakeholders to improve educational outcomes.

In the Philippine educational system, the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum further reinforces the importance of holistic learning by emphasizing foundational literacy, numeracy, character education, and contextualized instruction. The Department of Education advocates learner-centered pedagogies that promote critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, and values formation while reducing curriculum congestion and allowing teachers to focus on essential learning competencies (Department of Education, 2023). Elementary teachers therefore play a critical role in translating these curricular reforms into classroom practices that nurture well-rounded learners capable of meeting the demands of the twenty-first century.

Teaching in public elementary schools, however, presents numerous instructional challenges, particularly for teachers assigned to multiple learning areas. Unlike secondary school educators who often specialize in one discipline, elementary teachers commonly teach several subjects within the same academic year, including English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science, Makabansa, Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC), Homeroom Guidance Program (HGP), and Araling Panlipunan. Managing multiple content areas requires extensive lesson preparation, instructional flexibility, varied assessment strategies, classroom management skills, and continuous professional learning. Teachers must simultaneously address different learning objectives while ensuring instructional coherence and maintaining learners' motivation across various disciplines. These responsibilities become even more demanding in rural schools where instructional resources, technological support, and professional development opportunities may be limited.

Rural schools in geographically isolated communities face additional educational realities that shape teachers' lived experiences. Teachers often perform multiple professional roles extending beyond classroom instruction, including learner counseling, parent engagement, community partnership, school program implementation, and administrative responsibilities. Limited access to instructional materials, inadequate technological infrastructure, multigrade classroom contexts, and socioeconomic disparities among learners require teachers to demonstrate exceptional creativity, resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness. Despite these realities, rural elementary teachers continue to provide quality education by maximizing available resources and establishing strong relationships with learners, parents, and community stakeholders. Their experiences highlight the critical importance of teacher commitment, instructional innovation, and contextualized pedagogy in promoting equitable educational opportunities.

Dianed Elementary School, located in Barangay Dianed, Dipaculao, Aurora, exemplifies the realities experienced by many public elementary schools in rural Philippine communities. Teachers are entrusted with multiple instructional responsibilities while striving to deliver quality, learner-centered education that supports holistic child development. One such educator teaches HGP 3, GMRC 3, English 3, Filipino 3, Makabansa 3, Science 3, Mathematics 3, and Araling Panlipunan 4, reflecting the breadth and complexity of elementary teaching responsibilities. Navigating these

diverse instructional demands requires careful instructional planning, effective classroom management, curriculum integration, and continuous reflection to ensure that learners receive balanced academic and character development.

Existing studies have extensively examined teacher effectiveness, instructional strategies, workload, curriculum implementation, and learner outcomes in elementary education. Numerous quantitative investigations have explored teacher competencies, classroom management practices, job satisfaction, instructional effectiveness, and professional development using standardized assessment tools and statistical analyses. Likewise, research on interdisciplinary teaching has primarily focused on curriculum integration, instructional design, and learner achievement. While these studies contribute valuable insights into elementary education, they often emphasize measurable outcomes rather than the personal meanings teachers attach to their everyday instructional experiences.

More importantly, there remains a limited body of phenomenological research that explores how elementary teachers experience teaching multiple learning areas while intentionally promoting holistic learner development. Existing qualitative studies seldom capture the lived realities of teachers who simultaneously manage numerous subjects, integrate diverse pedagogical approaches, address learners' developmental needs, and respond to contextual challenges within rural public schools. The voices of elementary teachers who navigate these multifaceted instructional responsibilities remain largely underrepresented in educational leadership and pedagogy literature. Understanding these lived experiences is essential for developing evidence-based teacher support programs, instructional policies, and professional development initiatives that reflect the realities of elementary classroom practice.

Recognizing this gap, the present study explores the lived experiences of an elementary teacher in promoting holistic learning while managing multiple teaching responsibilities at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora. By employing a transcendental phenomenological approach, the study seeks to uncover the meanings teachers attribute to multidisciplinary instruction, identify the strategies they employ to foster holistic learner development, examine the challenges they encounter, and develop a contextually relevant framework that may guide instructional improvement and teacher professional development in elementary education.

Although numerous studies have investigated teacher effectiveness, curriculum implementation, learner engagement, classroom management, and instructional competencies in elementary education, the majority have employed quantitative or mixed-methods approaches that focus on measurable educational outcomes. Existing literature provides limited understanding of the lived experiences of elementary teachers who simultaneously teach multiple learning areas while promoting holistic learner development. Furthermore, few phenomenological studies have examined how multidisciplinary teaching influences teachers' instructional planning, classroom management, professional identity, resilience, and pedagogical decision-making within rural public schools. Specifically, no published phenomenological study has explored these experiences at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora. This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences and proposing the Holistic Elementary Teaching Framework (HETF) to strengthen integrated instruction and holistic education in elementary schools.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of an elementary teacher in promoting holistic learning while teaching multiple learning areas at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do elementary teachers describe their lived experiences in handling multiple teaching responsibilities?
2. How do teachers integrate various learning areas to promote holistic learner development?
3. What instructional practices enable teachers to balance multiple teaching responsibilities effectively?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter while implementing multidisciplinary instruction, and how do they address these challenges?
5. Based on the findings, what Holistic Elementary Teaching Framework (HETF) may be developed to strengthen holistic learning and instructional effectiveness in elementary education?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on five complementary theories that explain holistic learning, multidisciplinary instruction, learner-centered pedagogy, and teachers' professional development.

Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952)

Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and previous experiences. Rather than passively receiving information, learners develop understanding through exploration, discovery, problem-solving, and reflection. This theory supports multidisciplinary teaching because teachers facilitate meaningful learning experiences that integrate concepts across various learning areas while encouraging active learner participation.

Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978)

Vygotsky emphasized that learning occurs through social interaction, collaboration, and guided participation. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains that learners achieve higher levels of understanding through teacher guidance and peer collaboration. This theory supports learner-centered pedagogy by encouraging cooperative learning, discussion, scaffolding, and contextualized instruction that foster holistic learner development.

Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984)

Kolb proposed that meaningful learning develops through concrete experiences, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. Elementary teachers handling multiple learning areas frequently employ experiential learning activities that allow learners to connect academic knowledge with authentic life experiences. This theory supports integrated instruction by emphasizing meaningful application rather than memorization.

Whole Child Development Theory (ASCD, 2020)

The Whole Child Development framework asserts that education should address learners' academic, emotional, social, physical, and ethical development simultaneously. This theory provides the

philosophical foundation for holistic learning by recognizing that balanced child development requires integrated instructional practices across multiple learning domains.

Reflective Practice Theory (Schön, 1983)

Reflective Practice Theory explains that professional competence develops through continuous reflection on teaching experiences. Teachers improve instructional effectiveness by evaluating classroom practices, identifying challenges, and implementing evidence-based improvements. This theory supports continuous professional growth among elementary teachers managing multiple instructional responsibilities.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of an elementary teacher in promoting holistic learning while managing multiple teaching responsibilities at Dianed Elementary School, Barangay Dianed, Dipaculao, Aurora. A phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate because it seeks to understand and describe the essence of participants' lived experiences by examining the meanings they attribute to a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, the study aimed to uncover how elementary teachers experience multidisciplinary teaching, integrate diverse learning areas, address instructional challenges, and foster holistic learner development within the realities of a rural public school setting. The research locale was purposively selected because the school represents a typical Philippine public elementary school where teachers assume multiple instructional responsibilities across various subject areas. The participants consisted of 10–12 elementary teachers who had at least three years of teaching experience, were currently handling multiple learning areas, possessed substantial experience in implementing learner-centered instruction, and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Purposive criterion sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed rich firsthand experiences directly related to the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews using a researcher-developed interview guide validated by three experts in qualitative research, curriculum and instruction, and elementary education. Prior to the formal data collection, the interview protocol underwent pilot testing with elementary teachers from another public school to establish clarity, credibility, and consistency of the interview questions. Upon obtaining approval from the Schools Division Office, school administration, and the participants through informed consent, interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes were conducted in a quiet and comfortable setting within the school. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded, supplemented with field notes, and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' narratives. Data analysis followed Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Method (1978), which involved repeated reading of transcripts, extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of meanings into themes, development of exhaustive descriptions, identification of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, and member checking to validate the accuracy of the interpretations. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through prolonged engagement, member validation, peer debriefing, audit trail documentation, reflexive journaling, and rich, thick descriptions of participants' experiences. Ethical considerations were strictly observed following the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research (2022) and institutional research protocols. Participants were fully informed of the study's objectives, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

without penalty. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, while all interview recordings, transcripts, and research documents were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Through these rigorous methodological procedures, the study sought to generate credible, authentic, and comprehensive insights into the lived experiences of elementary teachers in navigating multiple teaching responsibilities while promoting holistic learning, ultimately providing the basis for the development of the Holistic Elementary Teaching Framework (HETF) to strengthen instructional integration, teacher professional development, and holistic education in Philippine elementary schools.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of an elementary teacher in promoting holistic learning while managing multiple teaching responsibilities at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora. Through Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Analysis, participants described how teaching multiple learning areas extended beyond delivering academic content. Their experiences revealed that effective elementary teaching requires careful instructional planning, interdisciplinary integration, learner-centered pedagogy, adaptability, resilience, creativity, and continuous professional learning. Participants consistently emphasized that holistic education is achieved when teachers intentionally connect academic competencies with character formation, values education, critical thinking, communication skills, and socio-emotional development. Five major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) Integrating Multiple Learning Areas through Purposeful Instructional Planning; (2) Fostering Holistic Learner Development through Learner-Centered Pedagogy; (3) Balancing Diverse Instructional Responsibilities through Adaptive Classroom Management; (4) Overcoming Instructional Challenges through Creativity and Resourcefulness; and (5) Sustaining Teaching Excellence through Reflective Professional Growth. These themes collectively illustrate that successful multidisciplinary teaching is not merely a matter of managing several subjects but involves creating meaningful, interconnected learning experiences that nurture the whole child while strengthening teachers' professional competence and instructional resilience.

Theme 1. Integrating Multiple Learning Areas through Purposeful Instructional Planning

The first emergent theme revealed that effective multidisciplinary teaching begins with purposeful and systematic instructional planning. Participants consistently described lesson planning as the foundation of successful teaching because handling several learning areas requires careful organization, curriculum alignment, and thoughtful integration of competencies across subjects. Rather than preparing independent lessons for every discipline, teachers intentionally connected concepts from English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, Makabansa, GMRC, HGP, and Araling Panlipunan to provide learners with coherent and meaningful educational experiences. They explained that integrated planning not only reduced unnecessary repetition but also enabled learners to recognize relationships among different concepts, making learning more authentic, engaging, and applicable to everyday life.

Participants emphasized that instructional integration encouraged them to design lessons centered on real-life situations that naturally combined multiple competencies. For instance, reading comprehension activities in English and Filipino were linked to values education, environmental awareness, or scientific concepts discussed in Science and Makabansa. Mathematics lessons were contextualized using community-based examples, while GMRC and HGP were incorporated into classroom discussions that emphasized responsible decision-making, respect, cooperation, and

empathy. Such interdisciplinary planning allowed learners to understand that knowledge is interconnected rather than divided into isolated academic disciplines.

One participant shared:

"Teaching many subjects becomes easier when I connect them. Instead of teaching every lesson separately, I relate Science, English, Filipino, and Values so that children understand the lesson as one meaningful experience." (Participant 3)

Another participant explained:

"I always begin lesson planning by identifying competencies that can be integrated. This saves instructional time while helping learners see how subjects are connected in real life." (Participant 7)

Participant 1 further reflected:

"Holistic learning starts during lesson planning. If lessons are connected, children become more interested because they understand the relevance of what they are learning."

Participants further explained that integrated instructional planning strengthened learners' engagement because lessons became more meaningful and less repetitive. They observed that learners participated more actively when classroom activities encouraged them to apply knowledge across different learning areas through storytelling, experiments, collaborative projects, role-playing, and problem-solving tasks. Such instructional approaches also enabled teachers to maximize limited instructional time while ensuring that multiple competencies were addressed simultaneously.

Moreover, participants recognized that purposeful planning required continuous reflection and curriculum familiarity. Because they handled several subjects, teachers regularly reviewed curriculum guides, identified overlapping competencies, and designed instructional activities that promoted balanced cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. This process demanded flexibility, creativity, and deep pedagogical knowledge, particularly in ensuring that integrated lessons remained aligned with curriculum standards without sacrificing content quality.

These findings support Jacobs' (1989) Interdisciplinary Curriculum Theory, which argues that connecting concepts across disciplines enhances meaningful learning and promotes deeper understanding of complex ideas. Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that integrated instructional planning encourages authentic learning experiences by helping learners transfer knowledge across contexts rather than memorizing isolated information. Furthermore, Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory (1952) explains that learners actively construct understanding by connecting new information with prior experiences, making interdisciplinary instruction an effective strategy for developing higher-order thinking and conceptual understanding. Consistent with these perspectives, the findings indicate that purposeful instructional planning serves as the cornerstone of holistic learning by enabling teachers to integrate multiple learning areas into cohesive educational experiences that foster meaningful and lifelong learning.

Theme 2. Fostering Holistic Learner Development through Learner-Centered Pedagogy

The second theme demonstrated that learner-centered pedagogy serves as the primary mechanism through which elementary teachers promote holistic learner development while teaching multiple learning areas. Participants consistently emphasized that effective teaching extends beyond transmitting academic knowledge; it involves creating learning environments where children

actively participate, collaborate, communicate, reflect, and develop positive values alongside academic competencies. Teachers explained that holistic education is achieved when learners become active participants rather than passive recipients of instruction, allowing them to develop intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and physical competencies simultaneously.

Participants described employing diverse learner-centered strategies such as cooperative learning, storytelling, inquiry-based activities, educational games, hands-on experiments, role-playing, group discussions, project-based learning, and experiential tasks. These instructional approaches encouraged learners to think critically, express ideas confidently, solve problems collaboratively, and connect classroom lessons with real-life experiences. Teachers observed that active participation significantly increased learners' motivation because children became more interested in lessons that required exploration, creativity, and interaction rather than simple memorization.

One participant shared:

"Children learn best when they participate. I allow them to ask questions, perform activities, and discover answers together because learning becomes more meaningful." (Participant 5)

Participant 2 explained:

"I always encourage group activities because learners help one another. They become confident in expressing ideas while learning cooperation and respect."

Another participant reflected:

"Even in Mathematics or Science, I include games, stories, and real-life examples so children enjoy learning while developing different skills." (Participant 9)

Participants further emphasized that learner-centered pedagogy supported holistic development by integrating character education into daily classroom interactions. Respect, responsibility, honesty, discipline, empathy, and cooperation were intentionally incorporated into classroom routines, collaborative activities, and reflective discussions. Teachers believed that academic excellence becomes more meaningful when accompanied by positive attitudes, ethical behavior, and social responsibility.

Several participants likewise explained that learner-centered instruction enabled teachers to accommodate diverse learning needs. By utilizing differentiated activities, visual materials, manipulatives, peer tutoring, and contextualized examples, teachers addressed varying learner abilities while maintaining inclusive classroom environments. This flexibility ensured that every learner actively participated regardless of academic level or learning style.

Furthermore, participants viewed learner-centered teaching as essential for developing lifelong learners. They believed that encouraging curiosity, creativity, communication, and independent thinking prepared children not only for academic success but also for responsible citizenship and future lifelong learning. Holistic learning therefore became a continuous process that nurtured learners' intellectual growth alongside emotional maturity and social competence.

These findings strongly support Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs through interaction, collaboration, and guided participation. Similarly, Weimer (2013) argued that learner-centered instruction empowers students to assume active responsibility for their learning while strengthening higher-order thinking and intrinsic motivation. Hattie (2023) further reported that active learning, teacher clarity, feedback, and

collaborative learning significantly improve student achievement and engagement. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that learner-centered pedagogy enables elementary teachers to promote holistic learner development by integrating academic instruction with values formation, social interaction, critical thinking, creativity, and emotional growth, thereby fulfilling the broader goals of holistic elementary education.

Theme 3. Balancing Diverse Instructional Responsibilities through Adaptive Classroom Management

The third emergent theme revealed that effective classroom management is essential in enabling elementary teachers to successfully balance multiple teaching responsibilities while promoting holistic learning. Participants consistently described classroom management as extending beyond maintaining discipline; rather, it involved creating structured, inclusive, engaging, and learner-centered environments where children could actively participate in various learning experiences across different subject areas. Since they handled several disciplines within a single school day, teachers emphasized the importance of establishing consistent classroom routines, organizing instructional time effectively, and maintaining positive learner behavior to ensure that all learning competencies were successfully delivered.

Participants explained that adaptive classroom management allowed them to transition smoothly from one subject to another without disrupting learners' attention and motivation. They intentionally designed daily schedules that balanced cognitively demanding subjects such as Mathematics and Science with interactive learning experiences in English, Filipino, GMRC, HGP, and Makabansa. This approach helped sustain learners' interest while preventing fatigue and cognitive overload. Teachers recognized that every subject requires distinct instructional approaches; therefore, flexibility became a critical component of classroom management.

One participant shared:

"Since I teach many subjects every day, I carefully organize my schedule. I alternate serious lessons with enjoyable activities so the children stay focused and interested." (Participant 6)

Another participant explained:

"Classroom routines are very important. When learners know what to do, transitions become smooth and we maximize our learning time." (Participant 8)

Participant 4 likewise reflected:

"I always observe my pupils' energy. If they become tired, I immediately adjust my strategy by adding games, songs, or movement activities before continuing the lesson."

Participants further explained that adaptive classroom management strengthened learners' self-discipline and responsibility. Instead of relying solely on teacher authority, they encouraged learners to become active participants in maintaining an orderly classroom by assigning classroom responsibilities, establishing clear expectations, and promoting mutual respect among classmates. Through collaborative classroom agreements and positive reinforcement, learners gradually developed independence, accountability, and self-regulation.

Several participants emphasized that effective classroom management also involved recognizing learners' individual differences. Teachers observed that learners possessed varying learning styles, abilities, personalities, and emotional needs. Consequently, they continuously modified instructional

approaches, grouping strategies, assessment methods, and classroom activities to ensure that every learner remained actively engaged regardless of academic ability. Such flexibility created inclusive classrooms where learners felt respected, supported, and motivated to participate.

Participants also highlighted that strong teacher-learner relationships significantly contributed to successful classroom management. They believed that learners responded more positively when teachers demonstrated patience, empathy, consistency, and genuine concern for their well-being. Positive relationships minimized behavioral concerns while strengthening learners' confidence, participation, and willingness to learn across multiple disciplines.

These findings support Kounin's Classroom Management Theory (1970), which emphasizes that effective classroom management depends on teachers' ability to maintain learner engagement through smooth lesson transitions, instructional momentum, and proactive management strategies. Likewise, Marzano (2017) argued that well-managed classrooms significantly improve learner achievement because instructional time is maximized while positive learning environments are sustained. Furthermore, Hattie (2023) identified classroom management as one of the strongest contributors to student learning, emphasizing that positive teacher-learner relationships, clear expectations, and organized instructional routines significantly enhance learner engagement and academic success. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that adaptive classroom management enables teachers to effectively balance multiple teaching responsibilities while fostering holistic learner development through organized, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

Theme 4. Overcoming Instructional Challenges through Creativity and Resourcefulness

The fourth theme illustrates that creativity and resourcefulness enable elementary teachers to overcome the diverse instructional challenges associated with teaching multiple learning areas, particularly in rural public schools. Participants consistently described numerous challenges, including limited instructional resources, insufficient technological facilities, varying learner abilities, heavy teaching loads, time constraints, and extensive lesson preparation across different subjects. Despite these obstacles, teachers remained committed to providing quality education by maximizing available resources, adapting instructional strategies, and continuously seeking innovative ways to make learning meaningful and engaging.

Participants explained that creativity became essential in designing instructional materials that addressed multiple competencies despite limited resources. They frequently developed improvised teaching aids using locally available materials, recycled resources, indigenous objects, and community examples. Such instructional creativity enabled learners to experience concrete and contextualized learning while minimizing dependence on expensive educational materials.

One participant shared:

"We do not always have complete teaching materials, so I make my own visual aids using recycled materials and things found in our community. The important thing is that learners understand the lesson." (Participant 10)

Participant 5 explained:

"Sometimes internet access is limited, so I prepare alternative activities using local stories, games, and community examples that learners can easily relate to."

Another participant reflected:

"Every challenge pushes me to become more creative. Instead of complaining about limited resources, I focus on finding practical solutions that benefit my pupils." (Participant 2)

Participants further emphasized that instructional creativity extended beyond learning materials to include innovative teaching strategies. Teachers incorporated storytelling, songs, role-playing, experiments, educational games, collaborative projects, outdoor learning, and experiential activities to accommodate different learner needs while maintaining enthusiasm across multiple learning areas. These strategies not only enhanced learner engagement but also promoted critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

Several participants also explained that resourcefulness involved establishing strong partnerships with parents and community members. Parents assisted by providing recyclable materials, supporting classroom projects, and reinforcing learning at home, while community resources were utilized to contextualize lessons in Science, Mathematics, Araling Panlipunan, and Makabansa. Such collaboration strengthened learners' appreciation of local culture while enhancing authentic learning experiences.

Participants likewise acknowledged that resilience was indispensable in overcoming instructional challenges. They described maintaining optimism despite heavy workloads, curriculum demands, and limited instructional resources because they believed that every challenge presented opportunities for professional growth and instructional improvement. Continuous adaptation enabled them to sustain high-quality instruction despite changing educational conditions.

These findings are consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which emphasizes that meaningful learning emerges through authentic experiences, reflection, and active experimentation. Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that effective teachers continuously adapt instructional strategies to respond to learners' needs and contextual realities. UNESCO (2022) likewise highlighted that teacher creativity and contextualized instruction are essential for ensuring educational equity, particularly in rural and geographically isolated schools. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that creativity, innovation, resilience, and resourcefulness empower elementary teachers to overcome instructional limitations while sustaining meaningful and holistic learning experiences.

Theme 5. Sustaining Teaching Excellence through Reflective Professional Growth

The fifth and final theme revealed that continuous professional growth and reflective teaching serve as the foundation for sustaining excellence in multidisciplinary elementary instruction. Participants consistently viewed teaching as a lifelong learning profession that requires continuous improvement, self-reflection, and professional development. Because they handled multiple learning areas with diverse instructional demands, teachers recognized the importance of continually strengthening their pedagogical knowledge, instructional competencies, subject matter expertise, and classroom practices to ensure that learners receive quality holistic education.

Participants explained that reflective practice enabled them to evaluate their daily teaching experiences, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make necessary adjustments that improved learner engagement and instructional effectiveness. Reflection occurred before, during, and after instruction as teachers assessed learners' understanding, examined classroom interactions, and modified future lessons based on observed outcomes. This continuous cycle of reflection promoted instructional innovation and strengthened teachers' confidence in handling multiple disciplines.

One participant shared:

"Every day I ask myself what worked well and what needs improvement. Reflection helps me become a better teacher because every lesson teaches me something new." (Participant 11)

Participant 3 explained:

"I regularly attend seminars and training because every subject requires updated strategies. Professional learning allows me to improve my teaching across all learning areas."

Participant 7 reflected:

"Teaching many subjects challenges me to study continuously. I read, research, and learn from colleagues because education is constantly changing."

Participants further emphasized that professional growth extended beyond attending seminars. Collaboration with colleagues, mentoring relationships, professional learning communities, graduate studies, action research, and self-directed learning were viewed as valuable opportunities for improving instructional competence. Teachers believed that exchanging best practices with fellow educators broadened their perspectives and inspired innovative approaches to multidisciplinary teaching.

Several participants also highlighted the importance of embracing educational innovations, particularly the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and emerging learner-centered pedagogies. Rather than resisting curricular reforms, they actively sought to understand new policies, instructional approaches, and assessment practices to improve classroom instruction. Such openness to change strengthened their adaptability while enhancing the quality of holistic learning experiences provided to learners.

Participants likewise recognized that professional growth positively influenced learner outcomes. As teachers became more knowledgeable, reflective, and confident, they were better able to design meaningful lessons, address learners' diverse needs, integrate multiple learning areas, and cultivate positive classroom environments that promoted both academic excellence and character development.

These findings strongly support Schön's Reflective Practice Theory (1983), which proposes that professional expertise develops through continuous reflection on practice. Similarly, Larrivee (2008) argued that reflective teachers become more effective because they critically analyze instructional experiences and implement evidence-based improvements. Furthermore, Fullan (2020) emphasized that continuous professional learning enables teachers to successfully navigate educational reforms, strengthen instructional innovation, and sustain high-quality teaching. Consistent with these perspectives, the findings indicate that reflective professional growth empowers elementary teachers to sustain teaching excellence by fostering lifelong learning, instructional adaptability, and continuous improvement. Ultimately, the five emergent themes demonstrate that successfully navigating multiple teaching responsibilities requires purposeful instructional planning, learner-centered pedagogy, adaptive classroom management, creativity, resilience, and ongoing professional development. Together, these interconnected experiences form the foundation of holistic elementary education that nurtures academically competent, socially responsible, emotionally resilient, and morally grounded learners.

Conclusion

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of elementary teachers in navigating multiple teaching responsibilities while promoting holistic learning at Dianed Elementary School, Dipaculao, Aurora. The findings revealed that teaching multiple learning areas extends beyond delivering academic content; it is a dynamic and transformative professional responsibility that requires instructional integration, learner-centered pedagogy, adaptive classroom management, creativity, resilience, and continuous professional development. Participants consistently described holistic learning as an intentional process of nurturing learners' intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and physical development through meaningful and interconnected educational experiences. Their narratives demonstrated that effective multidisciplinary teaching allows learners to appreciate the relationships among different subject areas while simultaneously developing foundational literacy, numeracy, scientific thinking, communication skills, values formation, and responsible citizenship.

The first emergent theme, Integrating Multiple Learning Areas through Purposeful Instructional Planning, highlighted that systematic instructional planning serves as the cornerstone of effective multidisciplinary teaching. Participants emphasized that identifying common competencies across learning areas enabled them to design coherent, meaningful, and contextualized lessons that maximized instructional time while strengthening learners' conceptual understanding. Rather than treating each subject as an isolated discipline, teachers intentionally integrated English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, Makabansa, GMRC, HGP, and Araling Panlipunan to promote authentic learning experiences connected to learners' everyday lives. The findings indicate that purposeful instructional planning fosters curriculum coherence and supports holistic learner development through interdisciplinary learning experiences.

The second theme, Fostering Holistic Learner Development through Learner-Centered Pedagogy, demonstrated that active and learner-centered instructional approaches significantly contribute to learners' cognitive, affective, social, and moral growth. Participants consistently utilized cooperative learning, storytelling, inquiry-based activities, educational games, project-based learning, and experiential instruction to encourage learners' active participation and critical thinking. Teachers intentionally integrated character education into daily classroom interactions, ensuring that academic competencies were developed alongside values such as respect, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and discipline. The findings affirm that learner-centered pedagogy creates meaningful educational experiences that cultivate well-rounded learners equipped with essential twenty-first-century competencies.

The third theme, Balancing Diverse Instructional Responsibilities through Adaptive Classroom Management, emphasized that effective classroom management extends beyond maintaining discipline to include organizing learning environments that maximize instructional time, accommodate diverse learner needs, and facilitate smooth transitions across multiple learning areas. Participants employed flexible classroom routines, differentiated instruction, positive behavior management, and collaborative classroom practices to maintain learner engagement throughout the school day. These adaptive strategies strengthened learner participation, promoted inclusive education, and enhanced teachers' ability to manage the demands of multidisciplinary instruction effectively.

The fourth theme, Overcoming Instructional Challenges through Creativity and Resourcefulness, revealed that creativity and resilience enable teachers to sustain quality education despite limited instructional resources, technological constraints, and heavy teaching responsibilities. Participants

developed improvised instructional materials, contextualized lessons using local resources, incorporated community experiences into classroom instruction, and continuously modified teaching strategies according to learners' needs. Their commitment to instructional innovation demonstrates that effective teaching depends not solely on the availability of resources but also on teachers' capacity to adapt, innovate, and maximize available opportunities to facilitate meaningful learning.

The fifth theme, Sustaining Teaching Excellence through Reflective Professional Growth, demonstrated that continuous professional learning is fundamental to improving instructional competence and maintaining teaching excellence. Participants described reflection as an essential component of professional practice that enabled them to evaluate classroom experiences, identify instructional improvements, and respond effectively to evolving educational demands. They actively participated in seminars, mentoring activities, graduate education, professional learning communities, and self-directed learning to strengthen their pedagogical knowledge and multidisciplinary teaching competencies. The findings underscore that lifelong professional development enhances teachers' confidence, adaptability, instructional effectiveness, and capacity to promote holistic learner development.

The study concludes that successful multidisciplinary elementary teaching requires a balanced integration of purposeful instructional planning, learner-centered pedagogy, adaptive classroom management, creativity, resilience, and reflective professional practice. These interconnected experiences collectively promote holistic learner development while strengthening teachers' professional competence and instructional effectiveness. The findings affirm the principles of Constructivist Learning Theory, Social Constructivism, Experiential Learning Theory, Whole Child Development Theory, and Reflective Practice Theory, emphasizing that meaningful education is achieved when teachers intentionally integrate academic instruction with character formation, social development, emotional well-being, and lifelong learning. Consequently, the study proposes the Holistic Elementary Teaching Framework (HETF) as a practical guide for enhancing multidisciplinary instruction and holistic education in Philippine elementary schools.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study provide significant implications for elementary education, curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, and educational leadership. First, school administrators should strengthen institutional support for multidisciplinary teaching by providing continuous professional development programs that enhance teachers' competencies in curriculum integration, learner-centered pedagogy, classroom management, and holistic assessment. Second, elementary teachers should be encouraged to design interdisciplinary instructional plans that intentionally connect competencies across learning areas while promoting learners' intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development. Third, curriculum planners and education policymakers should develop instructional resources that facilitate integrated teaching and contextualized learning, particularly for teachers assigned to multiple learning areas in rural schools. Fourth, schools should strengthen collaborative professional learning communities that encourage mentoring, peer coaching, action research, and reflective teaching practices to continuously improve instructional quality. Finally, educational leaders should prioritize teacher wellness, workload management, and instructional support systems to enable teachers to effectively perform their diverse instructional responsibilities while sustaining quality holistic education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School Administrators should provide continuous instructional supervision, mentoring, coaching, and professional development opportunities that strengthen teachers' competencies in interdisciplinary instruction, classroom management, learner-centered pedagogy, and holistic education.
2. Elementary Teachers should continue integrating multiple learning areas through contextualized, learner-centered, and experiential instructional strategies while engaging in reflective teaching practices that promote continuous instructional improvement.
3. The Department of Education and Curriculum Developers should develop comprehensive instructional guides, integrated learning resources, and contextualized teaching materials that support multidisciplinary teaching and holistic learner development under the MATATAG Curriculum.
4. Schools and Learning Action Cells (LACs) should institutionalize collaborative professional learning communities where teachers regularly exchange best practices, conduct lesson studies, develop instructional innovations, and engage in action research focusing on integrated elementary instruction.
5. Future Researchers are encouraged to conduct phenomenological, mixed-methods, or comparative studies involving multiple elementary schools across different geographical contexts to further examine multidisciplinary teaching, teacher resilience, instructional innovation, learner engagement, and holistic education in Philippine elementary schools.

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