

# Assessing Together, Learning Forever: The Integration of Peer Assessment in Multigrade Teaching

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*Abstract* — This study aimed to investigate the integration of peer assessment in multigrade teaching. Though many teachers have practiced peer assessment, there is limited knowledge in multigrade teaching, and even less research examining how it is used in multigrade classrooms. The study used the instrumental case study design to address this gap in knowledge by exploring the concept of multigrade teachers handling intermediate classes in the Schools Division of Calbayog City for the school year 2023-2024 in integrating peer assessment, how it is conducted, and the challenges associated with it. Findings show that multigrade teachers view peer assessment as a tool for learning in multigrade classes. It is an approach to learning that is collaborative in nature. It is a powerful motivator that helps multigrade learners take responsibility for their own learning. The process of conducting peer assessment in multigrade classes include preparation, orientation, modifying rubrics or checklist, providing clear instructions and objectives, modeling the process, assigning groups or pair strategically, facilitating the peer assessment activity, session wrap-up and reinforcing. However, there are several things to be considered in integrating peer assessment in multigrade teaching such as the bias, feedback quality, standardization of criteria, and peer resistance.

*Keywords* — *peer assessment, multigrade teaching, multigrade learners, multigrade teachers, instrumental case study*

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## I. Introduction

Assessment is a multifaceted process that includes several approaches for measuring student learning and understanding. As educators, using a variety of assessment methodologies is imperative to gaining complete insights into student development and successfully modify their instruction. One of them is peer assessment, in which students evaluate their peers' work using predetermined criteria (Wesch, 2024). Peer assessment is a prominent research topic as it takes place in variety of educational contexts worldwide (Panadero et al., 2023). It is a student-centered assessment strategy that enables students to have a deeper understanding of the quality of their own work through assessing peers' work. Students are in charge of evaluating their peers' work according to the assessment standards (Nicol & Breslin, 2014). Peer assessment not only helps teachers manage assessment loads, but it also promotes successful learning through extended feedback. Assessors can learn by reflecting, offering a balanced evaluation, and providing feedback. For the assessee, the intellectual demands of receiving and evaluating the feedback,

determining which components to apply, and thinking on non-feedback concerns might result in learning gains (Topping, 2021).

Research on peer assessment has shown that it can improve student learning outcomes by providing additional perspectives and ideas for improvement. Alzaid (2017) suggested that peer assessment can be used as an alternative to conventional methods in the evaluation of the learning process, which helps in the measurement of student's achievement from their peers' perspective. According to studies learner self- and peer-assessment have been found to be useful and reliable tools for promoting and facilitating learning (Afitska, 2014). Moreover, Double (2020) supported the use of peer assessment as a formative practice to improve academic performance. Similarly, Yin et al. (2022) also confirmed the positive effects of peer assessment on student learning. Joordens (2018) concluded that the improved performance of the peer assessment group can be attributed to the fact that writers are likely exert more effort and pay more attention to their writing tasks as they know their peers will see and make judgements about their writings.

Hung (2018) also argued that peer assessment was discovered to be a generally successful social process of learning to assess and assessing to learn in elementary, particularly for fifth and sixth graders, as evidenced by the significant correlation between fifth graders and teacher ratings, as well as students' self-reports of the fairness of peer assessment and their ability to assess each other. In another study about peer assessment in secondary education conducted by Rotsaert et al. (2017), found that combining peer assessment with well-defined assessment scaffolds is a helpful classroom assessment strategy for students, since it provides a real educational benefit by improving their peer feedback abilities. Additionally, Kilickaya (2017) supported the use of peer assessment in group work in tertiary contexts.

Peer assessment is acknowledged to have some advantages, but it also has drawbacks. Joordens (2018) argued that by embracing peer assessment we can meet both challenges simultaneously. Additionally, Panadero (2016) argued that peer assessment affects one's motivation and emotions, and it has the capacity to elicit strong emotions like unfairness and discomfort (like all other forms of educational assessment).

Over the last three decades, peer assessment has sparked a lot of academic interest, with many educational scholars arguing for its inclusion into schools and instructional practice (Double et al., 2020). However, most of the research study conducted dealt with the efficacy of peer assessment, effect of peer assessment on academic performance in primary, secondary or tertiary students across subjects and domains. Despite of its popularity, peer assessment in multigrade teaching is completely unexplored area.

Multigrade teaching takes place in one classroom, with a single instructor in charge of educating students from two or more grades (Jakachira & Muchabaiwa, 2023). In Philippines, elementary schools in rural places with a low one-year enrollment normally offer multigrade classes. Consequently, some teachers are assigned to teach two or more grade levels

simultaneously. The Multigrade program intent to protect the rights of school-age children who reside in isolated, underserved, and rural parts of the nation. DepEd issued Order No. 38, s. 1993, or Improve Access to Elementary Education by Offering Complete Grade Levels in All Public Elementary Schools Through Combination and/or Multigrade Classes and DECS Order No. 96, s. 1997 Policies and Guidelines in the organization and Operation of Multigrade Classes.

According to the 2019 study *A Review of Current Situation and Practices of Multigrade Schools in Philippines*, there were 8,379 multigrade schools among the 38,911 public schools. Based on the distribution of multi-grade schools in school surveys by region, Region VIII- Eastern Visayas has the highest number of multigrade schools, ranking first (14.20%). In Schools Division of Calbayog City as of School Year 2023-2024 there are 68 pure multigrade schools and 16 mixed multigrade schools.

Multigrade teachers find it difficult to teach in a multigrade class. From the preparation of lesson plan, classroom management strategies, educational facilities, instructional resources, and community support that contribute to and improve learning outcomes are all areas where teachers believe there is an excessive amount of work to be done in multigrade classes (Naparan & Castañeda 2021). Due to their heavy workloads, multi-grade teachers have lesser time in assessing their learners' learning. Undeniably, multigrade teaching poses various and unique challenges. This study aims to help multigrade teachers ease their burden and improve quality teaching. One method that has gained attention as a potential solution to this issue is peer assessment, a process where learners evaluate and provide feedback on each other's work.

As an educator, one must demand changes and improvement that will benefit both the teacher and the learners. Hence, this present study has closely taken a look on the integration of peer assessment in multigrade teaching. By investigating the existing literature, and gathering empirical data, this study has sought to provide multigrade teachers concepts on the integration of peer assessment, how it is conducted and the challenges associated in it.

This research has sought to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on peer assessment more specifically in the context of multigrade teaching by providing evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers, and by addressing the need for further research in this area. Ultimately, this study aims to advance the understanding of how peer assessment can be optimally utilized to enhance the quality of multigrade education and promote students' holistic development.

This study aimed to investigate the integration of peer assessment in multigrade teaching.

Specifically, this research sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the multigrade teachers' concept of peer assessment?
2. How do multigrade teachers conduct peer assessment?

3. What are the challenges associated with peer assessment in multigrade teaching?

### **Literature Review**

Peer assessment, a process in which students evaluate or provide feedback on the work of their peers, has been increasingly used in various educational settings. According to Topping (2021), the definition of peer assessment that is most frequently cited is "an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product or performance of other equal-status learners". It is organized in elementary (primary) and high (secondary) school classrooms and universities or colleges, but also in practitioner staffrooms and among teachers in training.

Basically, previous research on peer assessment fails to take into account in the multigrade teaching.

Multigrade teachers exhibit exceptional fortitude, commitment, and flexibility in their endeavor to deliver high-quality education to their children (Delgado, 2019). They utilize their pedagogical proficiency, promote a sense of camaraderie and cooperation among students of varying ages, and establish a nurturing educational setting where all students can flourish (Perez, 2021). Although the challenges of teaching multiple grades are undeniably significant, the benefits, such as the chance to have a substantial influence on students' lives, cultivate a sense of inclusion and friendship, and create inventive teaching methods, make it an extremely satisfying and purposeful profession for those who decide to pursue this distinctive educational path (Daga, 2020).

Recognizing the need for effective instructional and teaching strategies tailored to the unique context of multigrade classrooms, the researcher sought to explore multigrade teachers' concept of the integration of peer assessment in multigrade, how peer assessment could be utilized as a tool for improving instructional practices and fostering collaborative learning communities in multigrade classroom and the challenges associate in it.

## **II. Methodology**

### **Design**

This study used the instrumental case study which according to Taber (2025) is a qualitative research approach that focuses on a particular case (such as a person, group, organization, or event) not for its own sake, but as a means to gain broader insights into a larger phenomenon, issue, or theory. The case serves as a tool to illustrate and deepen understanding of something beyond the case itself. In this context, the case is the integration of peer assessment in multigrade teaching to gain broader insights into the phenomenon of peer assessment in education.

The case itself serves as a means to understand the larger issue of how peer assessment is conceptualized and implemented in multigrade settings, as well as the challenges involved.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study were multigrade teachers handling grades 5 and 6 or grades 4 and 5 (intermediate grade level). Inclusion criteria were set to choose the most appropriate participants. The criteria were: they were multigrade teachers handling grades 5 and 6 or grades 4 and 5; they practiced peer assessment; and they were teaching in the Schools Division of Calbayog City. The exclusion criteria were: they were multigrade teachers handling primary grades, and they were teaching in other divisions.

### **Research Procedure.**

The researcher began by formulating her research instrument, specifically an interview guide, and sought approval from her research panel. Subsequently, three expert validators, school heads from pure multigrade schools in the Oquendo 1 and Oquendo 2 Districts (including Cagbilwang, Cabugawan, De Victoria, San Isidro, Capacuhan, and Hibuhatan Clustered Schools), were tasked with validating the content of the instrument to ensure its quality and reliability. Target participants were identified through data from DepEd Calbayog. Informed consent was secured from them, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and that their data would be kept confidential. Participants were informed of their rights to refuse or withdraw and were asked to prepare a multigrade lesson integrating peer assessment in addition to participating in interviews. Then, on agreed dates and time, the researcher conducted individual interviews and observations of the participants.

### **Ethical Issues**

The researcher obtained the participants' permission using an informed consent form that stated the nature of the study as well as how the data would be gathered with their approval. They were told that their identities and the data acquired in the study would be kept private. Furthermore, the participants' safety was stressed, and they were informed that they would not be harmed while participating in the study. They, too, were told that they could freely withdraw their agreement to participate at any moment. Throughout the research process, conflicts of interest were avoided.

Furthermore, the researcher strictly protected the privacy and safety of all study participants. The study's parameters revealed no conflicts of interest between the participants, researchers, and the study's aims, nor did the study need the involvement of persons from vulnerable communities. Participants were invited to join the research in person or by messaging app, so they were not forced to provide any personal information before consenting to participate. To guarantee anonymity throughout data collection and analysis, all identifying information about participants was deleted from interview transcripts and other written documents. Because participants might withdraw their agreement to participate in the research at any time, all papers

were allocated participant-specific reference codes, which could be used to identify and extract information from the data pool. There were no identifiable ties to individual participants in the final study report.

### **Data Processing**

This study used three coding systems in analyzing the data. First, it used open coding. This is the initial step where the data is divided into distinct sections, and concepts, ideas, or occurrences are analyzed and categorized. Making sense of complex case data requires the ability to identify and classify data segments based on their attributes and relationships. In the context of the peer assessment in multigrade teaching, the researcher conducted open coding to identify key themes and patterns related to the integration of peer assessment in multigrade.

After open coding, the researcher employed axial coding, which involves making connections between the initial codes to develop more advanced categories and themes. This process has helped the researcher to organize and reorganize the data, identifying relationships and patterns between the different themes and concepts related to peer assessment in multigrade teaching.

Once the initial coding process was complete, the researcher moved onto selective coding, which involves identifying the core categories and themes that are central to the research questions. Through this process, the researcher has selected the most significant and representative codes to develop a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the integration of peer assessment in multigrade teaching.

## **III. Results and Discussion**

**Multigrade Teachers Concept of Peer Assessment.** From the interview conducted and its transcription, the researcher analyzes the corpus of data by thematic analysis following three coding systems. The following were generated:

Tool for Learning in Multigrade Classes. Yan & Boud (2022), stated that one of the most common assessment as learning strategies that has been widely employed in classroom settings is peer assessment (as cited in Yin, et al., 2022). Another study conducted by Wanner & Palmer (2018) supports other research showing that students tend to regard formative self and peer-assessment as beneficial for gaining more insights about the assessment process and for improving their own work. Participant # 5 said, *“Peer assessment is one of the techniques in showing to the learners how far they can go beyond as a learner. It is a valuable tool for learning especially in multigrade classes as it promotes deeper understanding on a specific competency.”* Participant response about his concept of peer assessment in multigrade teaching as a tool for learning often highlight its strength and advantages. Participants see it as an opportunity for multigrade learners to engage critically with their peers' ideas from other grade level, allowing for deeper understanding and reflection on their own work.

Collaborative Learning. As stated by Strijbos & Wichmann (2017), formative peer assessment and peer feedback are being used more and more as an approach to learning that is both collaborative and interpersonal. Participants give emphasis to the collaborative nature of peer assessment where multigrade learners could discuss and exchange ideas with their peers from other grade level. Participant #12 reflected on how peer assessment promotes the collaborative learning environment in multigrade, saying, *“Sa akon usa ini nga way para makabulig sini nga kabataan nga needs improvement so through siton mabuligan san mga madali makakuha san leksyon. So adi nga magluya pwede mabuligan dayun through san paghatag feedbacks kon diin niya mas maiimprove an iya output or performance”*.

Engaging and Motivating. Ephraim (2024) asserts that peer assessment is a powerful motivator that helps learners take responsibility for their own learning. Peer assessment in multigrade classrooms is seen by participants as an engaging and motivating activity. Participant #8 reflected on how peer assessment adds fun to her multigrade class, saying *“Nagiging enjoyable an lesson pag gin-aapply ko an peer assessment, nagiging catchy an lesson sa ira, oh mayda kit niyan i-aassess, namamati dayun sira. Kaysa san tudlo tudlo la diri sira nageenjoy sana.”* Participants observed that multigrade learners become more driven to perform well or engage in their class because they have an idea that their peers from other grade level will evaluate their output or performance.

Multigrade Teacher and Learners Role. Participants often mention how important it is for teachers to create clear goals, rules, and criteria for the peer assessment process in multigrade classrooms. Lopez (2019) asserts that the teacher takes on the role of a process facilitator, assisting and mentoring students to enable them to evaluate the work of their peers. Participant # 2 reflected on how multigrade teachers act as a facilitator while doing a peer assessment activity, saying, *“Dako an bulig san peer assessment kon baga ako nagsusupervise nala ak. I guide my multigrade learners through the process, para maabatan nira an purpose san peer assessment ngan pano maghatag constructive feedback. By providing clear guidelines and criteria for assessment, I make sure that students know exactly what to look for in each other’s work.”* Multigrade teachers are often seen as facilitators who must provide proper training on how to give constructive feedback and make sure that multigrade learners understand the purpose of peer assessment. This involves educating students on the importance of giving and receiving feedback, as well as how to do so in a respectful and meaningful way. On the other hand, multi-grade learners act as the assessor and assessee during peer assessment which lead to a rich and dynamic learning experience. Learners become more active in the learning process through peer assessment, because they are involved in the assessment process and understanding the learning achievement criteria (Kearney, 2013 as cited in Mumpuni et al., 2022). Participant 9 said, *“My idea of peer assessment as a multigrade teacher is that it is a process wherein students are given the opportunity to rate and give feedbacks and suggestions to the work of other learners from other grade level.”* Multigrade learners are encouraged to apply what they have learned more thoughtfully when they take on the position of assessor, which involves analyzing and evaluating someone else's work, output, or performance.

For the reason that multigrade learner views it from a variety of angles, it also increases their awareness of what is necessary for high-quality work. It helps learners in developing a deeper comprehension of a certain topic or objective. Conversely, when multigrade learners take on the role of the assessee, they receive insightful feedback about their own areas of strength and growth. Peer assessment in multigrade teaching fosters a sense of responsibility because multigrade learners know they'll be both giving and receiving feedback, which makes them more engaged and invested in the process. However, it can be a bit challenging, especially for younger or less experienced students. Participant #7 said, "*One of the challenges in peer assessment in multigrade classes, mayda iba nga bata nga nakukurian pag-assess san ira igkasi. Siguro tungod naalang sira kay mas bata sira or mayda gud bata nga diri pa kaya asya kailangan gud an guidance san teacher during san process.*" While some multigrade learners may be concerned about giving constructive criticism to their peers, others may not know how to apply the criticism they receive. But when properly guided, it leads to a deeper, more collaborative learning environment, where everyone has the chance to improve and learn from one another.

**Process of Conducting Peer Assessment in Multigrade Teaching.** Participants incorporate peer assessment regularly however it varies as to when they apply it in their respective multigrade classes. Some participants use peer assessment during group work, while others do so at other stages of lesson plan. Some use it during motivation, presentation, application, or evaluation. They believe it helps multigrade learners improve their critical thinking and interpersonal abilities. Peer assessment could be integrated in multigrade teaching at any stage of the lesson and in so many ways. It is determined by the desired outcome. Second participant stated, "*In my own style peer assessment can be conducted actually damo siya way pero para sa akon mas effective siya kon makuha mo ba an interest san bata. Uhm nakukuha ko siya through games, pwede lat siya by pair or by group*". For the most part, multi-grade learners really engage with the process because it allows them to see different perspectives about the task or activity, which deepens their understanding. Multigrade teachers usually provide clear rubrics, guidelines or checklist to make sure learners know exactly what they should be looking for when assessing their peers' work. Additionally, it guarantees that their criticism is constructive and grounded on objective standards rather than subjective judgments.

Preparation. What the multigrade teachers in their interviews did mention was that one of the most important steps to consider in organizing a peer assessment activity in a multigrade class is the preparation which includes identifying or defining the specific lesson objectives. The third participant interviewed stated, "*So I organize peer assessment activity in my class by preparing my lesson and identifying the objective, preparing instructional materials in order for me to have smooth delivery of my discussion in integrating peer assessment*". They make sure that objectives of the different grade levels should be aligned so that peer assessment can be integrated to the lesson. For peer assessment to be successful, inclusive and equitable in a multigrade classroom, it has to be well planned and prepared for. Preparation is crucial to fostering an environment where all multigrade learners can engage with the process, learn from their peers from other grade level,

and feel valued. They decide which portion of the session will use peer assessment after establishing the course goals. After defining the lesson objectives, multigrade teachers identify which part of the lesson will peer assessment be integrated. Participant no. 7 stated “*Usual gud kahuman san application kay an iba diri man gud nakakakuha dida ko ginsusulod an peer assessment sa application, evaluation na nagawas ira rating.*”

Orientation. Orientation is necessary when incorporating peer assessment into a multigrade classroom. It is beneficial to outline expectations, and make sure that every multigrade learner, regardless of background, feels at ease and confident with the process. Participant # 5 said, “*Gin-oorganize ko an peer assessment activity in my class, una, gin-orient ko sira. I inform the learners that there will be a peer assessment that is going to happen then after they will be the one to decide of what criteria.*” Participant # 6 said, “*Gin-orient or walk through ko sira kon pano sira magrurate labi na an paggamit san rubrics and by giving examples.*” A well-designed orientation helps to guarantee the peer assessment process is understood by all multigrade learners and can be applied in a way that is effective, inclusive, and productive.

Modifying Rubrics/ Checklist. Participants created a tool, such as rubrics, checklists or other materials, that will be used by the multigrade learner who will act as assessor to evaluate the work of their peers in other grade levels. Participant # 20 stated, “*I make used of personalized checklist.*” Participant # 6 said “*I used rubrics as my tool in integrating peer assessment*”. Participant # 1 said the tool or instrument I used in integrating peer assessment in my class is through rubrics. Participant # 17 mentioned about the importance of checklist, saying. “*Ginorient an kada grade level on what to do on how to assess the performance task other grade level, I let them use the checklist san pag assess nira during the performance, after gathering the checklist ginbibase ko na didto an ira performance san pagrurate siton nga grade level, mayda man nakaindicate nga points sa kada checklist.*” Modifying rubrics and checklists are crucial steps in the process of integrating peer assessment in the classroom, particularly in multigrade contexts. These procedures assist to explain expectations, assure impartiality, and direct multigrade learners in offering effective, constructive criticism.

Providing Clear Instructions & Objectives. When multigrade learners fully grasp the task and its purpose, they are more likely to engage meaningfully and assess fairly—especially in a multigrade classroom with diverse learning needs. Participant # 14 mentioned providing clear instruction as a crucial step before doing the peer assessment, saying, “*Naghahatag ak anay instruction based san ira activity, after san ira data ngan explanation dida na masulod an feedbacking san ira activity. Ginrerecord para maging aware sira tas ginca-call an ira attention.*”

Modeling the process. Modeling the peer assessment process helps multigrade learners grasp what is expected—not just what to look for in a peer's work, but also how to provide helpful and constructive criticism. This is especially crucial in a multigrade classroom, where learners have diverse degrees of experience with peer assessment and different cultural norms for providing and receiving comments.

Assigning Partners or Groups Strategically. Assigning peer assessment pairs or groups is more than just convenience or random selection; it is a purposeful effort to provide a friendly, inclusive atmosphere in which multigrade learners may learn from one another. In a multigrade classroom with learners of varying language competence, academic strengths, academic performance, and confidence levels, strategic matching can significantly improve the usefulness of peer criticism. Participant #15 said, *“So gin iidentify ko anay an level san Kabataan tas ginppipair ko sira san medyo antigo san lesson, pagkuhaman sana masulod na an peer assessment kon pano iton himuon.”*

Facilitating the Peer Assessment. This is the heart of the peer assessment process: multigrade learners exchange work, apply assessment criteria, and provide comments to one another. This stage should be carefully guided in a multigrade classroom to guarantee inclusion, productivity, and respect. Even well-prepared multigrade learner may struggle to provide valuable comments or feel uncomfortable sharing their work if they are not given adequate guidance during this stage.

Session Wrap-Up. As learners in a multigrade classroom benefit from guided reflection, an opportunity to absorb feedback, and a good feeling of closure, wrapping up the peer assessment process is just as essential as the activity itself.

Reinforcing. After each peer assessment activity, it is critical to reinforce the norms and expectations that a multigrade teacher want his learners to take forward. These norms are the behaviors, attitudes, and communication skills that enable successful peer assessment, particularly in a multigrade classroom where learners may have varying experiences with critique, collaboration, and communication. Participant # 4 said *“Pag nagsasadsana akon bata, di gad signgon nga bullying or at somepoint bagan sadsana an style pag negative na or hihimuon siya ng ana sunlog sunlog so igcocorrect san teacher an dapat iyayakan tas an words la nga appropriate la iyakan iton ba nga parang an imo ishishare la an strong points san imo classmate pwede lat negative pero not to the extent lat nga diri na maupay lat an statement dapat an paghatag lats an feedback parang dapat empowering diri lat degrading”*. Participant 5 said, *“I let them check their scores if given by their peers I ask them if they like it or not, because we need to reinforce positive comment kasi masakit yun sa damdamin ng bata, I encourage or motivate the learners, I ask other peers is this score valid for the work of your classmates, the I let that learner assess his peers.”* By revisiting these standards on a regular basis, a multigrade teacher can help create a classroom atmosphere that is safe, courteous, and growth-oriented, in which all multigrade learners feel included and empowered.

Multigrade teachers employed a variety of strategies and instruments for carrying out peer assessment in their respective classrooms, including rubrics and checklists. They develop criteria/processes for integrating peer assessment into their multigrade classrooms by adjusting rubrics based on the expected output, effort, or performance of multigrade learners. They ensure that the criteria or method are well-understood by multigrade learners, allowing them to ask

clarifying questions and providing teaching in a way that multigrade learners can grasp. Other multigrade teachers enable students to participate in defining the criteria. Multigrade teachers taught their learners how to assess others through teacher modeling, ample and varied examples, and exposure.

**Challenges in the Integration of Peer Assessment in Multigrade Teaching.** Based on the participants responses, there are several things to be considered in integrating peer assessment in multigrade teaching such as the bias, feedback quality, standardization of criteria, and peer resistance.

Bias. Integrating peer assessment in multigrade teaching can present challenges in motivating learners to take the activity seriously and provide thoughtful evaluations. Peer assessment is essential to the classroom setting for many teachers, particularly those who use Team Based Learning, since it serves as instrument for tracking team performance and guaranteeing responsibility. However, because of student biases, questions have been raised about how fair peer assessments are (Stonewall et al., 2018). Another participant expressed how favoritism and friendship affect the rating of their peers. Participant # 20 mentioned, *“There is a high risk of bias or favoritism, since they are influenced by personal relationships or other factors.”* There is also the risk of bias or favoritism in peer assessment, as multigrade learners may be influenced by personal relationships or other factors.

Standardization of Criteria. Another challenge is the standardization of criteria. Participant 12 mentioned that integrating peer assessment in multigrade teaching also has its drawback just like any teaching strategy such as making sure that the multi-grade learners use consistent criteria for rating their peers since they have not the same understanding and assessment skills. Making sure multigrade learners utilize consistent standards when assessing their peers' work is one of the difficulties in incorporating peer assessment. This might be challenging to do since multigrade learners may interpret and comprehend the evaluation criteria at different levels.

Feedback Quality. One of the difficulties in implementing peer assessment in a multigrade class is the quality of feedback provided by their peers. According to Hattie and Timperley, 2007 as cited in Double, McGrane, & Hopfenbeck, 2020, inexperienced learners typically give little feedback, while peers are frequently unskilled at offering constructive criticism. Participant 20 said, *“it’s pretty obvious that multi-grade learners do not have the same skills and ability due to their varying age and maturity.”* It can be difficult to guarantee that feedback from peers is of excellent quality and helps the receiver better their work. Without clear guidelines and examples of effective feedback, multigrade learners may struggle to provide meaningful and actionable feedback.

Peer Resistance. Peer assessment is a popular method for actively engaging students in writing instruction. However, students may be resistant to peer assessment at times (Zou et al., 2018). Participant 8 said, *“other multigrade learners don’t take seriously the assessment coming*

*from their peers. They sometimes think that they are just the same and feel that just like them, they are also inexperienced.*” Some multigrade learners may be averse to having their peers from other grade level examine their work or performance, either because they are concerned about their peers' knowledge or neutrality, or because they lack faith in the assessment process.

Reliability and Validity. A further difficulty is guaranteeing the validity and reliability of peer assessment. Peer assessment is frequently cited as being hampered by teacher and student concerns over its validity and reliability (Chang et al., 2011 as cited in Tong et al., 2023). Participant 15 said, *“In my multigrade class peer assessment plays an imperative role however one of the disadvantages of peer assessment is that there is a doubt in the reliability and validity. Because others rate their peers based on friendship or closeness. Sometimes, I just can't rely alone on their rating. I need to double check it or verify before recording their result.”* If multigrade learners are not given enough instruction or direction on how to give insightful and constructive criticism, there may be questions regarding the impartiality and accuracy of peer assessment.

To address these issues, multigrade teachers can provide clear guidelines and training for their learners on how to assess their peers from other grade level, establish transparent and consistent assessment criteria, and incorporate self-assessment and reflection to encourage multigrade learners to take responsibility for their learning and improvement. It is also critical to monitor the peer assessment process and offer assistance and direction as needed to guarantee its effectiveness.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, multigrade teachers integrate peer assessment into their respective classes because they believe that such assessment strategy offers a powerful opportunity to enhance student learning, foster collaboration, and develop critical thinking skills. However, just like any other instructional strategy, its successful implementation requires careful planning, continuous monitoring, and a supportive classroom culture. While challenges exist in multigrade teaching, the benefits of integrating peer assessment in developing student skills, promoting collaboration, and encouraging active learning far outweigh the obstacles. By embracing peer assessment thoughtfully and with flexibility, multigrade teachers school administrators can create a more dynamic and inclusive multigrade learning environment that empowers multigrade learners and prepares them for the demands of the 21st century.

## V. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

### 1. **Provide Professional Development**

Offer training sessions and resources to help multigrade teachers effectively implement peer assessment strategies, including managing diverse learners and fostering inclusive environments.

### 2. **Support a Collaborative School Culture**

Encourage sharing of best practices among teachers through workshops, peer observations, and collaborative planning time focused on peer assessment and multigrade teaching strategies.

### 3. **Allocate Resources and Time**

Ensure teachers have adequate time within the school schedule to plan, execute, and reflect on peer assessment activities, and provide materials or tools that facilitate effect

### 4. **Encourage Flexibility and Innovation**

Promote an open mindset toward adapting peer assessment approaches to fit the unique dynamics of each multigrade classroom, recognizing that flexibility enhances student engagement and learning outcomes.

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