

# **A Proposal to Study Multi-grade Teaching in Northern Areas of Pakistan and Chital**

## **Study Background and objectives**

Multi-grade schooling is a worldwide phenomenon in most of the rural areas. Multi-grade teaching is organized as a "necessity model" or as a "design model". In the necessity model groups of children varying in age and numbers are combined together under the supervision of a teacher or two teachers to be taught as a class. This model may be a result of financial constraints, non-availability of teachers or lack of resources. Multi-grade classes of this type are commonly found in sparsely populated areas in rural settings or in areas with high student population but few teachers. Multi-grade teaching is also planned as a design with a rationale to meet student's individual needs. In this model students are grouped together across ages in combinations most beneficial to their educational stimulation and success.

Multi-grade teaching is also common in almost all rural areas of Pakistan. This study will focus on the Multi-grade teaching in Aga Khan schools of Northern Areas of Pakistan and Chital. The Aga Khan Education Service manages and operates schools in areas where there is need for more schools especially for girls. It can be safely quoted that almost 90% of the primary schools in Northern Areas and Chital are multi-grade where either one teacher teaches a group of children ranging from 30-70 students or two teachers teach similar numbers.

Aga Khan Education Service believes in opening schools, as well as developing the teachers through in-service-programs. Some efforts are made to help teachers develop knowledge and skills to teach in multi-grade schools, and there are examples of some break through like the work done by PDTs in Ghizer, yet the problems of effective teaching in multi-grade are persistent. In order to address this, there is a need for a comprehensive study of the situation to find out the existing range and quality of Multi-grade teaching practices and to work in the field to plan intervention for improvement.

*This study, is an attempt:*

- to understand situation of multi-grade schooling in N/As & Chital
- to identify examples of effective/ineffective multi-grade teaching.
- to explore ways of improving the quality of multi-grade teaching

*This study raises the following questions*

- What are the current perceptions and practices of Multi-grade teaching in AKES Schools in the Northern Areas of Pakistan and Chital?
- What explains the current practices?
- How effective or ineffective are the practices?

How can they be improved?

*The outcomes of the study will be:*

A Research Report on the situational analysis  
Identification of needs and challenges in improving the current practices in sample schools.  
Production of Instruction materials/ models of how to improve multi-grade teaching.  
A state of Art paper on multi-grade teaching, from the field-based experiences and existing literature on multi-grade.  
Better-informed and skilled teachers as resource person to serve as role models for other AKES schools.

## **Methodology**

This study will be conducted in two phases:

Phase I will make an attempt to describe the current situation of teaching and learning in the sample schools. During this phase data will be collected through:

Structured Interviews with the stake holders (FEOs Teachers, Parents) to obtain their understanding of multi-grade teaching, their views on how it is taught, and why is multi-grade teaching effective or not. The data from the interviews would help understand stakeholder's perceptions about multi-grade teaching and would be useful in planning future interventions as well as preparing recommendations both for policy matters as well as school-community relation

Guided Observations (using an observation guide/ check list) to collect data on teaching objectives, practices, learning environment, grouping and Instructional material. The guided observation/ checklist will be helpful in describing the classroom interactions, role of teacher and learners and the potentials for making an intervention.

Document's review Text books, Examination Papers, report cards lesson plans prepared by teachers, any teacher training handouts and course work. Documents will guide the existing process of administrations, instructional material and assessment practices.

## **Data Analysis**

For phase I, a simple descriptive analysis will be undertaken from the data collected through interview questions, guided observation, checklists and review of the documents which will describe the existing practices and the reasons that explain the quality of multi-grade teaching. This analysis will also help identify needs of areas where support/ intervention is required.

## *Sample*

A total of 10-12 primary will be included in the sample for this phase. (5 from each district of Northern Areas while 2 from Chitral).

Selection of schools is crucial in this study. Following criteria is proposed. AKES input will be sought to further refine the criteria.

### *Variables*

- A school with 1 or 2 teachers
- Number of students under 50 and above
- School where some interventions are made to improve multi-grade teaching
- School with no interventions
- Accessibility to sites
- AKES opinion about schools as examples of good/poor multi-grade schools.

Since the criteria may pose challenges to select the best-fit sample, it is proposed to select schools representing two to three variables.

### **Phase II:**

#### **Methodology**

Action Research in 3 to 4 schools taken from the sample of phase one. Action Research method will help in planning, teaching and reflecting on the identified area needing improvement. A cyclic approach will allow locate the possibilities of improvement at each stage. The teacher in the sample will be a co-researcher in this phase and will be trained to plan, teach and reflect. The process of Action Research will be captured through a written journal as well as whenever possible through pictures, video and audiotape.

#### **Tentative plan of Phase II**

The principal researcher along with the support team member will co-plan, teach and reflect on the process from phase I. The area of concern will stem from the data and the research questions will be written accordingly. During this phase the schoolteacher can co teach and observe. The teacher will also be trained to carry out research later on her own. The teacher will be required to teach and share his/her reflections. Each cycle of the Action Research will pick up an issue of content, organization, instructional material. The new issues that would come about after implementation would be further improved and data will be collected on the usefulness of the new plan.

The joint work in this action research will require an extension of teacher's daily working hours at school during the intervention phase. The teacher may have to work with the researcher prior to teaching and after the teaching.

This phase of the research is both human and time resource intensive.

## Data Analysis

Phase II being an Action Research model will be analyzed through the cyclic approach of planning, teaching reflecting and re-planning.

### *Sample*

Out of the 10-to12 schools studied in phase I about 3-4 schools will be selected for phase II. Schools needing improvement in particular areas for effective Multi-grade teaching.

## The Research Team:

This research team will include:

- Principal researcher: Rana Nazir ali
- Co-researchers: Iffat Farah, Nauman Siddique
- A senior person from AKES,P
- Master trainer, PDTs, suggested names from PDCN (Shamshad, Safida Begum, Mehrunnisa, Karim Panah.
- Teachers from sample schools.

## Time line

The study will have two phases:

### Details of Phase I (August-March)

Proposal approval, sample selection (presentation in FRS)	August 2001
Data collection from the field	3rd & 4th weeks of September & October 2001
Data analysis and writing	November - December 2001
Final Report on Situation Analysis (Phase I)	January - February 2002
Reporting finding from Phase I & Literature review on Multi-grade Teaching	March 2002

### Details of Phase II (Action Research)

Preparation of resource materials and units for teaching	March-April 2002
First Cycle of teaching and reflection	April-May 2002

Writing	June-July 2002
Second Cycle of teaching and reflections	August-September 2002
Writing	October 2002

### **Role of AKES,P**

This study is a joint venture of AKU-IED and AKES,P. It is proposed to commit AKES,P to play a significant role in these areas.

Proposal improvement and approval

Sample selection and criteria setting

Sharing human resources like PDTs, FEOs, Master trainers from the Northern areas and Chitral.

Attending dissemination meetings.

Supporting the sample schools through community talks and asking for volunteers to participate in the data collection process of parents/community perceptions on Multi-grade teaching.

Identifying a Resource Person who will be involved right from the period of proposal approval to the study completion.

Preparing a follow up and dissemination process (as in the phase II of the study only 3-4 schools will be engaged. The remaining schools of Phase I will have to be kept involved and a mechanism of post study has to be planned by AKES, P and the research team for teacher development and Curriculum development.