

# Monitoring and Evaluation of Multi-grade Teaching in Namibia Schools

NO: 5



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1. The purpose of the study**

This study was conducted to monitor and evaluate the impact of training workshop in multi-grade teaching. This was essential to explore how the knowledge gained during the training was implemented and used to teach the combined grades using the curriculum designed for mono grades. Among the main objectives of the training programme was to evaluation of the training impact in order to determine the extent to which the training programme improved the teaching skills among the trained multi-grade teachers.

This study thus aimed at exploring the impact of the multi-grade training workshops into the teachers' competencies in teaching practices, management of teaching and learning, classroom organisation. Furthermore, the study aims at investigating the learners', parents', teachers' and the principals' perceptions toward multi-grade teaching. The study provides a baseline evaluation data that could be used to assess the impact of the multi-grade teachers' training in Namibia.

#### **1.1 Research questions**

- What were the teachers' perceptions of the multi-grade teaching?
- How did teachers use the current curriculum for mono-grade in the multi-grade classroom?
- How did the multi-grade teacher improve the teaching and classroom practices?
- What was the role of parents in multi-grade teaching?
- What were the views of the principals on the multi-grade teaching?
- What were the learners' perceptions and experiences of being in multi-grade classrooms?
- What was the impact of the training on teachers who were trained?

### **2. Research and sampling design**

#### **2.1 Sampling Procedures**

The sample consisted of 42 multi-grade schools, selected through clustering sampling procedure in exclusion of Kavango region. This constituted 10% of the schools in a cluster. However Otjozondjupa region did not participate in the study because teachers were not trained at the time of data collection. The method used to collect data included classroom observations, interviews with school principals, multi-grade teachers, learners and parents as well as the cumulative record cards where information on learners' progress was collected from.

### **3. Presentation of findings**

#### **3.1 The teachers' competencies on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment**

- The male teachers outperformed the female ones in lesson preparation, on the use of teaching strategies as well as on assessing learners. Moreover, many female teachers had updated lesson plans although the quality of the planned lessons was poor in all cases.
- The number of grades one is teaching has no influence on lesson preparation, selection of teaching strategies as well as on the way teachers assesses learners during teaching. Although lesson preparation is seen to be a core of teaching and learning, the result shows that some teachers had written lesson preparation while others not. It was also noticed that the grade combination has no much influence on the teachers' performance. However, the teachers with three grades combinations did much better in all categories than all groups.

Most of teachers across all grade combinations did not produce good assessment results. The majority of the teachers were rated between 'fair and 'very weak'.

- The less experienced teachers in multi-grade teaching had their lessons well planned. None of the 36-40 years of experience in multi-grade had lesson preparation. Similarly, the good performance was noted among the teachers with less than one year (< 1 year) teaching experience in multi-grade class on the selection and use of teaching strategies. The performance of teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching was appalling because only few of them were rated good to excellent. None of the teachers with 36-40 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching had assessment activities for his/her learners during teaching.
- In many cases, the ratings were very much clustered on 'very weak' to 'fair'. More explicit, under-qualified teachers performed poorly in all three competent areas, The results show that teachers' qualification has no influence on lesson preparation and assessment because teachers were rated 'very weak' to 'fair'. One expected teachers with B.Ed (Hons) to perform better than other due to the fact that they are well qualified, but this was not the case. Instead, a fraction of the teachers with BETD and those with diplomas received better ratings than the B.Ed. (Hons) graduates. The findings on teacher qualification versus their competence in using teaching strategies show that qualification has a positive impact on the use of teaching strategies. Generally the findings revealed teachers had problems in assessing their learners during teaching.
- The result in this category indicated the little impact which the multi-grade training had on teachers' performance on lesson preparation, selection of teaching strategies as well as on the way teachers assesses learners. The constant fair performance among the multi-grade untrained teachers was also observed. This gave an indication that teachers need to be trained for them to be able to cope with multi-grade teaching.
- Almost all regions performed poorly in these items, notably Caprivi the worst of all. Teachers in Hardap region outperformed others in all categories although their performance was also less than 25% in all cases. The teachers in Kunene region had no lesson preparation and they also failed to assess learners during their teaching. The result further demonstrates that teacher in Kavango and Hardap regions were more competent in lesson preparation compared to the remaining regions.
- The teachers with 11 – 15 teaching experience outperformed others in almost all categories, except in assessment where 100% of the longer serving teachers were rated excellent. However, teachers with less than a year in teaching profession also did well because they received a fair rating in lesson preparation as well as the good ratings in teaching strategies and assessment. The overall performance of other groups was highly concentrated in very weak to fair category. This gave an indication that the teaching experience does not play a big role in teachers' performance.

### **3.2 The teachers' skills in lesson presentation and classroom organisation**

- The female teachers were rated very weak while 14% of the male teachers received an excellent rating. However, the male teachers outperformed the female ones in all categories.
- The result on the experience in multi-grade teaching indicated that the longer the teacher serves, the more they poorly organise their classrooms as well as do an acceptable lesson presentation.
- Teachers with three grades combination as well as those who combined grade 5 and 6 outperformed others in classroom organisation and lesson presentation because 100% of them

received a good rating or better. The teachers with grade 2 and 3 as well as those with grades 3 and 4 did not do well in all cases.

- The result indicated that the higher the qualification, the better the teacher performed in classroom organisation and lesson presentation.
- The teachers that are trained by NIED and those that were trained by other institutions outperformed the ones that did not receive any training.
- Teachers in Khomas region demonstrated competence in lesson presentation followed by teachers in Karas, Kunene, Kavango, Oshana and Hardap regions. In classroom organisation, the teachers in Karas region had an excellent performance in classroom organisation, followed by Omaheke, Khomas, Erongo, Oshana, Kavango and Hardap teachers..
- Lack of skills in lesson presentation and classroom organization had a negative influence on the teaching and learning in multi-grade classroom. A good performance was noted among teachers with less than 20 years of teaching experience.

### **3.3 Teachers' competencies on using organisational approaches**

- The result indicated that teachers did not use the integrated day and subject grouping. Very few female teachers used subject staggering approach. Although female teachers were rated excellent on the use of common timetable approach, the male teachers still outperformed them.
- It is evident that teachers did not use Integrated Day and Subject Grouping approaches. Few teachers used subject staggering and many of them used Common Timetable approach..
- Many teachers used common timetable and those with less than a year to 20 years of multi-grade teaching experience had a better performance than other teachers. Few teachers used subject staggering and none of the teachers used integrated day or subject grouping.
- The results show that, in general, qualification had impact on the effective use of various organizational approaches. The B.Ed (Hons) and under-qualified teachers had a 100% rating 'good' and 'fair' respectively. In this case, teachers with B.Ed (Hons) performed better than teacher with other qualifications.
- Teachers who were not trained by NIED or received other training did not use any other approach than common timetable. The performance of teachers trained by other institutions varied. The teachers trained by NIED did well when compared to other groups on the use of Common Timetable as an organisational approach.
- Teachers from different regions scored differently on the use of Common Timetable. All teachers in all regions demonstrated competence in using common timetable.
- The teachers with 21-25 years of teaching experience demonstrated competence in subject staggering compared to other groups. The performance of teachers on the use of common timetable approach varied too.

### **3.4 The teachers' competencies on classroom management**

- The teachers' performance in classroom management was not impressive. Male teachers outperformed the female ones on teachers' and learners' dimension while the female teachers took a lead on classroom dimension.
- All teachers with Grade 5 and 6 combinations had a good performance in all categories of classroom management. About 20% of the teachers who combined Grades 1 & 2 were also excellent in each category.

- The inconsistent performance was noted among the longer serving multi-grade teachers with 36 – 40 years of multi-grade teaching experience. However, teachers with 1 to 10 years of multi-grade teaching experience outperformed other groups.
- Teachers with B.Ed (Hons) had a ‘good’ constant grading in all aspects of classroom management, followed by BETD teachers who were rated ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ in all dimensions compared other groups of teachers. The ratings of other groups differed in very weak, weak and fair.
- The teachers that went through the NIED multi-grade training outperformed others in all categories of classroom management, followed by those who were trained by other institutions..
- Teachers in different educational regions performed differently in classroom management. In classroom dimension, Khomas and Karas regions were rated good while Kunene and Hardap had excellent ratings. In learners’ dimension, Khomas, Kunene, Erongo, Karas regions had a ‘good’ rating while Kunene and Hardap regions were rated ‘excellent’. Hardap region was the only one with an excellent performance in classroom dimension while Khomas, Karas and Erongo regions had a ‘good’ rating.
- Teachers with less than 16 years in teaching profession outperformed other teachers. The teachers with 11 – 15 years in teaching had an ‘excellent’ performance in all categories, while those who taught for less than a year had a constant ‘good’ performance in all categories.

### **3.5 Views expressed by teachers, principals, learners and parents on multi-grade teaching**

#### **3.5.1 Teachers’ views**

Many teachers did not have experience in teaching multi-grade, but they appreciated the knowledge they got from the NIED multi-grade workshop. Teachers experienced difficulties to comprehend and implement other organisational approaches compared to common timetable. More support was noted at school level but minimal support is gained from the regional offices. In addition, learners in multi-grade classes assist teachers in managing classes because they support each other. However, more time is spent on disciplining learners than teaching.

Teachers’ perception about the conduciveness of the learning environment varied due to uneven distribution of teaching materials and dilapidated infrastructures in schools. They were also not innovative to try other teaching strategies apart from the one listed in the manual. Teachers experience problems in conducting assessment activities due to time limit. In addition, parents are also unable to assist their children in school work.

#### **3.5.2 Principals’ views**

The flexibility in assisting teachers was noted among the principals who have knowledge on multi-grade. However, some principals not flexible to allow teachers to implement what they have learned in the workshops, especially the timetabling and the teaching approaches. The lack of teachers in some schools also led to the wrong combination of classes especially with Grade 1.

#### **3.5.3 Learners’ views**

Learners indicated their dislike to sit in multi-grade classrooms. Their reasons includes: getting less attention from teachers, shyness to sit with the juniors, noise from lower grades, dishonouring of timetable, the use of common exercise which was taken from one grade book and the teachers’ incompetence of conducting assessment in multi-grade classes. However, some learners enjoyed multi-grade teaching because they learn more things when the teacher teaches another grade. The advance learning was noticed when learners in lower grade learned what the teacher taught the higher grade.

### **3.5.4 Parents' views**

Majority of the parents opposed the multi-grade teaching, as teachers did not give proper attention to learners in such combinations. The combination of grades 1 and 2 arouse many questions in parents, feeling that the Grade 1 learners do not receive strong foundation in this case.

Positive opinions on multi-grade were noted among few parents who were well informed on the policies and requirements of teacher-learner ratio and perhaps those who went through multi-grade teaching during their schooling time. However, many parents would like to be involved in education of their children. They also want to have detailed information on how their children are doing at school than being involved in issues that had little to do with the children scholastic progress.

## **4. Recommendations on multi-grade teaching**

### **4.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education**

- The Ministry of Education needs to sensitise parents and make them understand the concept of multi-grade;
- Provide more classrooms and hostels or to relax staffing norms as to rule out multi-grade teaching and also to avoid over crowdedness in multi-grade classrooms.

### **4.2 Recommendations to NIED**

In collaboration with the regions, NIED should:

- Develop curriculum and syllabuses for multi-grade teaching.
- Conduct multi-grade teaching workshops annually and also train teachers as facilitators of multi-grade teaching.

### **4.3 Recommendations to Curriculum developers**

Curriculum developers need to:

- Understand the multi-grade practice and its challenges in the subject areas.
- Recognise the existence of multi-grade teaching during the workshop presentations.
- Stress the essence of avoiding the combination of grades 1 and 2 and the combination of grades 3 and 4 in multi-grade teaching.
- Develop the subject specific guidelines and/ or manuals to assist teachers in teaching each subject confidently.
- Develop through consultation a thematic scheme of work for mostly combined grades to reduce the work load.
- Involve multi-grade teachers in curriculum development activities for them to give directions on how best multi-grade teaching can be handled.

### **4.4 Recommendations to Continuous Professional Development**

- NIED needs to re-emphasise the training on multi-grade teaching specifically the teaching approaches such as subject grouping, subject staggering and integrated day which teachers did not use during classroom visits and how to assess learners in multi-grade settings.
- Training model should deviate from traditional cascade training model to capacity building whereby school based practical training should be offered by a trained teacher and co-facilitated by NIED and Advisory Teachers.
- Workshop facilitators need to consider multi-grade teaching during subject related workshops.

- Provision of multi-grade related Continuous Professional Development is essential for improving teaching and learning in multi-grade classrooms. Consider offering on-site CPD with demonstration (model lessons) to teachers.
- The multi-grade training need to be conducted once a term than once a year

#### **4.5 Recommendations to the Regional offices**

- The regional office need to prioritise the facilitation of activities in multi-grade school, in terms of teaching and learning materials and the provision of infrastructure.
- The multi-grade schools are located at the outskirts of many regions and meeting with other teachers in the same region become a challenge. It is therefore very essential for the regional office to give permission to teachers to meet with colleagues from neighbouring schools although from different regions to discuss and assist each other in multi-grade related activities and alternate or share the cost of these activities.
- Due to the thin differences between multi-grade teaching and teaching learners with different abilities, all regions should emphasise Multi-grade teaching to be part of discussions in different platforms such as principal meetings, teachers' workshops and other regional meetings to inform other educators that multi-grade teaching exist. This will help schools with multi-grade related problems to use the same method of teaching. It is also recommended that schools make internal arrangement to cope with the situation where teachers have to stay away from school for a period due to illness.
- In addition to the NIED Multi-grade Committee, there is a need to establish multi-grade committees in each region where multi-grade issues are discussed. This will give chance for regions to assist the multi-grade schools basing on the report of the multi-grade committees. Schools should be informed by sending a copy of the activities done or the regional office plans on multi-grade teaching.
- Regional office need to establish the multi-grade committees in each circuit. This committee should be equipped with resources necessary to assist multi-grade teachers.
- The regional office should take note that the trained multi-grade teachers should not be transferred to a school where there is no multi-grade classes.
- The Inspector of Education need to assist schools in involving parents in school activities.
- The regional officials that are responsible for multi-grade teaching should avail themselves to teachers who have problems with multi-grade teaching and they should arrange demonstrations of different teaching strategies in class.
- The regional office need to organise awareness programmes for parents, to inform them about the importance of multi-grade teaching and their involvement in the children's education.
- The regional office need to recruit more advisory teachers to cater for multi-grade teaching instead of using the existing Advisory Teachers who are already occupied and overloaded with other tasks. Also one Advisory teacher is not enough as regions are too vast. Alternatively, some region needs to be divided into two regions because of vastness.
- The regional office need to appoint the temporary teachers to help schools which have overcrowded classes. This will reduce over-crowdedness in some multi-grade schools.
- The regional office need to invite all schools to attend multi-grade workshops instead of inviting few teachers from few schools.

#### **4.6 Recommendations to School managers**

- The provision in the National Curriculum for Basic Education that Grade 1 and 2 learners should not be grouped together, should be adhered to. The management also need to avoid the combination of lower primary classrooms as indicated in the National Curriculum for Basic Education.

School managers need to:

- be accommodative, supportive and flexible. They also need to be trained on multi-grade teaching to be at par with teachers in order for them to understand the multi-grade practices and its challenges and be able to support teachers.
- ensure that teachers have done their lesson plan and preparations.
- provide teachers' flexibility to manipulate the timetable. This needs to be followed up properly to make sure that teachers compensate the time utilised from another subject.
- make sure that teachers that are not teaching multi-grade assist others morally, materially and in prevention of noise.
- ensure that cluster centre principals are trained so that they can have knowledge of what is going on in multi-grade schools and assist teachers or schools in their clusters.
- as a tentative measure, convince parents to construct huts as community hostels to avoid learners travelling for long distances to and from school on every day basis.
- make certain that the work of the multi-grade teachers is reduced, especially lower primary teachers teaching upper primary classes in the afternoon.

#### **4.7 Recommendations to teachers**

Teachers need to:

- plan properly beforehand and arrange with others in case the blocking of timetable is needed.
- motivate the learners to be positive towards multi-grade teaching.
- be given multi-grade syllabus to help them teaching.
- motivate parents and explain to them about multi-grade teaching during the parents' meeting.
- use the knowledge and materials obtained from the workshops during the teaching and learning process.
- decide beforehand on the approach to be used to teach a specific topic considering the nature of the topic. Teachers should identify the learners' abilities.
- ensure that all practicing teachers are trained on how to teach in multi-grade classes. The training should be done twice in a term.
- share multi-grade teaching information with others at school, cluster and circuit level. Resources given during the workshops should be shared.

#### **4.8 Recommendations to parents**

- Parents should increase their participation in their children education and school matters.
- The literate parents and retired teachers need to assist multi-grade teachers in presenting the cultural related content in forms of stories to the learners on voluntary basis or when requested.
- The parents should attend parents meetings for them to be informed about multi-grade issues.

#### **4.9 Recommendations to teacher education institutions**

- Teacher training institutions need to include multi-grade teaching in teacher training courses as an area of specialisation and module in a general course.
- The teacher training institutions need to conduct a tracer study, visit and monitor graduates to assess the impact of multi-grade teaching in schools.

## SECTION ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO MULTI-GRADE TEACHING

#### 1. Background for multi-grade teaching

The Namibian government strives to provide accessible, equitable, democratic and quality education for all (Namibia, Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, [MBESC], 1993). Despite such noble aims, the educational system is faced with many challenges. One of these challenges is the provision of quality education to all, including the teaching of learners in sparsely populated areas; more specifically the remote areas in a number of regions. In some of the sparsely populated regions and pastoral embedded communities; moving for greener pastures seasonally is a norm. In such areas, the numbers of learners in schools are very low (Namibia, Ministry of Education, 2005). The obligation of the government is to ensure that the notion of education as a right to all children is provided accordingly; as a constitutional right (Namibia, Republic of Namibia, 1990). The Ministry of Education obligation is to ensure that learning opportunities suited to learners' circumstances and that permits children to enter the formal educational system, when that becomes possible, are provided conveniently (MBESC, 1993). The combination of grades is necessitated by aforementioned circumstances in addition to the implementation of curriculum requirements and teacher/learner ratio restrictions as stated in the staffing norms directives.

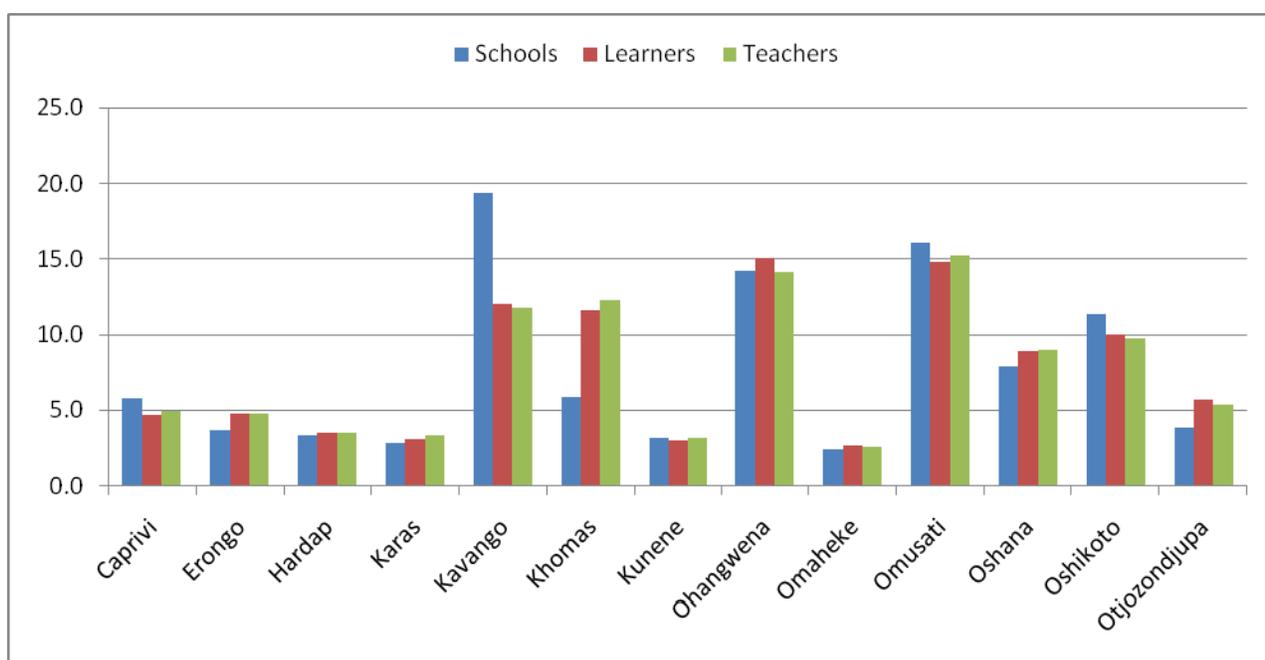
The international term which Namibia adapted for combined grades is called "multi-grade teaching" (Birch & Lally, 1995, p.1). This practice (Multi-grade teaching) has been in Namibia since the introduction of formal education. It became more prominent after independence when the reform proposed it to be a norm (Namibia, Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, [MBESC], 1996, p. 30). Currently, about 40% of schools in Namibia have one or more multi-grade class (Namibia, Ministry of Education [MOE], 2006). Most of these schools are located in isolated, low income rural areas.

Schafer (1999) identified the need for in-service and pre-service teacher education in catering for multi-grade teaching and offer support, advice and training in coping with an approach which is fundamentally different from the traditional single grade. Despite large numbers of multi-grade classes in the country, most of the teachers teaching in these classes were left alone to find their way in terms of delivering the content to more than one grade at the same time. Most of the teachers teaching in multi-grade classes gained experience through practice (Birch & Lally, 1995, p. 59). A few of teachers in Kunene Region were trained by NAMAS. The teacher education institutions in Namibia had no provision for separate training for multi-grade teaching. Hence the training of Multi-grade teachers was considered during the revision of the Education Theory and Practice (ETP) course for Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD). The biggest challenge lies with teacher educators who need to be knowledgeable in multi-grade teaching, in order for them to prepare teachers adequately.

As Hammond (2007, p. 3) observed, "Teaching well is a complex process". It requires a teacher to understand how to present ideas by adapting different learning styles. Kilpatrick et al., (2001) also argued that good teachers should know instructional practice, the subject content as well as the

knowing his/ her learners. Hammond (2007) therefore suggests intern teachers to work collaboratively with experienced ones. Being in isolated, under-resourced schools which lack infrastructures in many cases, the distances sometimes made it impossible for multi-grade teachers to meet to share information on a regular basis as it is done in some clusters. Most of them rely solely on the ministry to supply teaching materials and support (Schafer, 1999, p. 86). This indicates the need of continuous professional development which relates to the needs of the multi-grade teacher in the classroom and the contextual resources which they face in everyday life (Aikman & Pridmore, 1999). Teachers need to be trained to design their teaching materials from locally available resources. This is also challenging because it requires teachers to be creative and innovative. In many cases, the multi-grade teachers are the source of information especially in rural communities where parents participate very little in their children’s education (Patrick, 1998). This task can be very challenging if one is not guided on how to cope with multi-grade teaching.

### 1.1 Schools, learners and teachers in Namibia: EMIS 2009



**Figure 1: The proportional number of schools, learners and teachers in Namibia**

Figure 1, presents the percentage of schools, learners and teachers in Namibia. As shown in figure 1, Kavango region had the highest number of schools (19%), followed by Omusati region with 16% while Omaheke region had a smallest percentage (2%) of the schools. Hardap, Karas and Kunene regions had an equal percentage (3%) of schools.

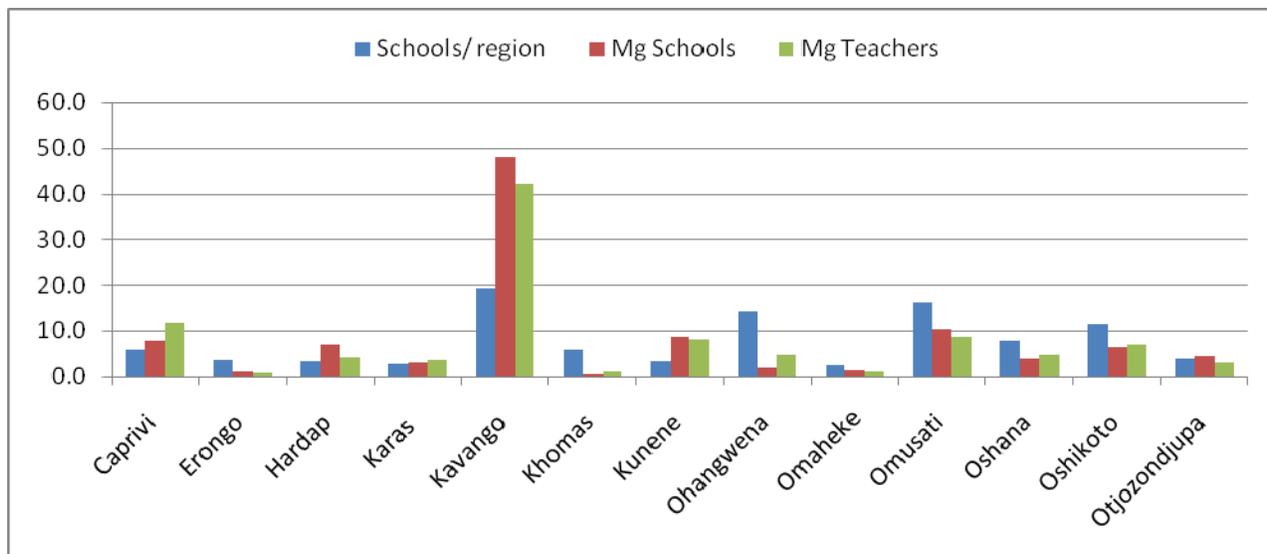
Although Kavango had a highest percentage of schools in the country than Khomas region, the percentage of learners attending school differed by 0.4% only. It is interesting to note that Ohangwena region had the highest percentage (15%) of learners in Namibia despite the minimal percentage of schools. Kunene region had the lowest percentage (3%) of learners and schools compared to other regions.

Furthermore, the figure shows that Omaheke region had the lowest percentage (2.6%) of teachers, followed by Kunene (3.2%), Karas (3.4%) and Hardap (3.6%). Omusati region had the highest

percentages of teachers (15.3) compared to regions which have many schools such as Kavango and highest number of learners such as Ohangwena. This indicates an unequal distribution of resources in the regions. We could infer from these figures that despite the vastness of some regions such as Karas, Kunene, Hardap and Erongo the harsh conditions are not favourable for living resulting into scarce population and so is the percentage of schools, learners and teachers.

## 1.2 The number of schools, multi-grade schools and multi-grade teachers in Namibia

In 2009, Namibia had 1677 schools. Among these 503 schools offered multi-grade teaching amounting to 16.4% of schools in the country offered multi-grade teaching.



**Figure 2: The proportion number of schools in relation to multi-grade schools and multi-grade teachers in Namibia.**

Figure 2 presents the combined statistics of Namibian schools, multi-grade schools and the number of teachers teaching multi-grade schools. As shown in figure 2, Kavango region had the highest percentage (48.1%) of multi-grade schools and a highest percentage (42.1%) of teachers teaching in multi-grade schools in Namibia. The lowest percentage of multi-grade schools was noted in Khomas (0.6%) while Omaheke and Erongo regions had 1.4% and 1.2% respectively.

## 1.3 Training of multi-grade teachers in Namibia

The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) formed a committee working on multi-grade teaching issues. This committee developed the manual for teachers in collaboration with the consultant, the process was funded by Basic Education Support (BES) III project. Upon completion of the manual, the training was conducted to the advisory teachers in order equip them with knowledge and skills necessary for assisting the multi-grade teachers in the regions. This training was followed by regional teachers training where the NIED committee members twinned up with the advisory teachers to train the teachers using the manuals which were developed for multi-grade teaching. The training for the six northern regions where BES III was operating was also funded by BES III project.

The following topics were emphasised during the multi-grade teaching training:

1. definition of multi-grade teaching and the need for its existence
2. advantages and challenges for multi-grade teaching
3. the organisational approaches in multi-grade teaching
4. the teaching and learning strategies
5. classroom organisation and management
6. assessment in multi-grade teaching

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of training workshop in multi-grade teaching was essential in order to explore how the knowledge gained during the training was implemented and used to teach the combined grades using the curriculum designed for mono grades. This study will help the Ministry to:

- identify some of the problems and successes related to the teaching and learning in multi-grade classes
- inform future curriculum development activities (syllabus revision) by making it more useful to teachers teaching in multi-grade classes
- inform the regions to come up with strategies of assisting teachers teaching in multi-grade settings to improve their teaching and learning strategies
- help teachers teaching in multi-grade settings to overcome some of their challenges

#### **1.5 Statement of the problem**

Training of multi-grade teachers had been conducted by donors in the few regions. The formal training of the multi-grade teachers' country wide started in 2007 under the ETSIP program. NIED supported by the BES III project developed the manual and conducted training to Advisory Teachers and teachers in the regions. Evaluation of the training impact to determine the extent to which the training program improved the teaching skills among the trained multi-grade teachers was one of the main objectives of the training program. The evaluation focused on exploring the benefits, outcomes and perceptions of the teachers, learners and parents in the community on the multi-grade teaching. The evaluation further intended to assess the teachers' competencies in teaching multi-grade classrooms vis-à-vis the training modules and use the outcomes for improving future training program for multi-grade teachers.

#### **1.6 Aim of the study**

This study thus aimed at exploring the impact of the multi-grade training workshops into the teachers' competencies in teaching practices, management of teaching and learning, classroom organisation. Furthermore, the study aims at investigating the learners' parents', teachers' and the principals' perceptions toward multi-grade teaching. The study developed a baseline evaluation data that could be used to assess the impact of the multi-grade teachers' training in Namibia.

#### **1.7 Research questions**

- What were the teachers' perceptions of the multi-grade teaching?
- How did teachers use the current curriculum for mono-grade in the multi-grade classroom?
- How did the multi-grade teacher improve the teaching and classroom practices?
- What was the role of parents in multi-grade teaching?

- What were the views of the principals on the multi-grade teaching?
- What were the learners' perceptions and experiences of being in multi-grade classrooms?
- What was the impact of the training on teachers who were trained?
- What challenges did the trained teachers face?
- What was the perception of teachers about multi-grade teaching?
- How did teachers implement multi-grade teaching subsequent to the training?
- What were the teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching in multi-grade classrooms?
- How did these teachers use the current curriculum for mono-grade in their multi-grade practice?
- What was the impact of teachers training on multi-grade teaching?
- What was the role of parents in multi-grade teaching?

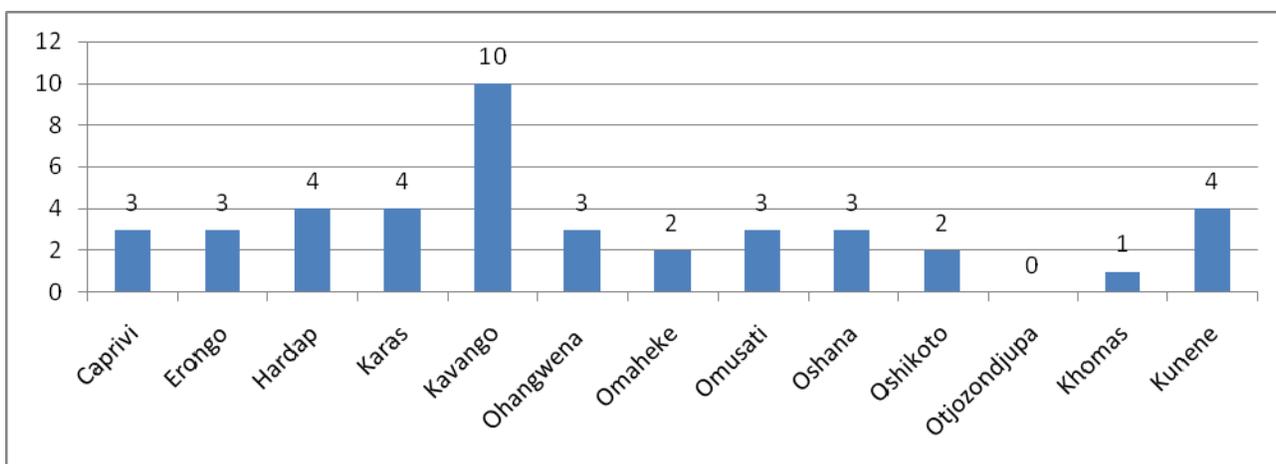
## SECTION TWO

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2. Research design

##### 2.1 Population and sampling

The clustering sampling procedure was used to cluster the regions. Then the total number of schools practicing multi-grade teaching per cluster was identified. Finally, 10% of the schools in a cluster were selected. This selection procedure did not apply to Kavango region as there were many schools practicing multi-grade teaching; hence ten schools were selected in the Kavango region. Figure 3 shows the number of the sampled schools in the regions.



**Figure 3: The graph indicates the number of schools participated in the study per region**

As shown in figure 3, 3 schools were sampled in Caprivi, Erongo, Ohangwena, Omusati and Oshana, 4 schools in Hardap, Karas and Kunene regions, 10 schools in Kavango region and one school in Khomas region. No school was taken from Otjozondjupa region because teachers were not trained at the time of data collection.

##### 2.2 Data collection

Data was collected through classroom observations, interviews with school principals, multi-grade teachers, learners and parents. Data on learners' progress was collected from the classroom records such as cumulative record cards.

##### 2.3 Research instruments

The following research instruments were used for collecting data from the schools.

##### Observation schedule form

The observation schedule was developed by the multi-grade committee at NIED. This form adapted the National Standard Classroom Observation Instrument (COI4) for promotional subjects with

additional sections of organisational approaches that were used in multi-grade teaching. The forms also contained the list of teaching strategies which teachers used during teaching. Following are the categories used in the classroom observation instrument.

### ***Lesson preparation***

Teachers were expected to plan lessons based on the basic competencies in the syllabus, plan the lesson which catered for learners with different abilities, prepared relevant teaching and learning materials and planned the lesson that included various components such as: introduction, presentations, assessment activities, teaching aids, conclusion as well as homework, as per the National Standard for Schools.

### ***Selection and use of teaching strategies***

Furthermore, teachers were assessed on the way they used the teaching strategies considering the understanding of strategies and the appropriateness of using the specific teaching strategies during the observed lessons.

### ***The use of organisational approaches***

The multi-grade teachers were trained on how to use the four organisational approaches to teach multi-grade lessons. These were: Subject Staggering, when a teacher is teaching different basic competencies in different subjects to individual grade groups including the activities, resources and also keep all the grades engaged on different tasks throughout the lesson; Common Timetable: when the teacher teaches the same subject, same topic, to different grade groups with different activities for different grades to all grades and keep all grades involved throughout the lesson; Subject Grouping: when a teacher teaches different subject but with common topics, giving different topics to different grades but keeping all grades engaged on different tasks throughout the lesson; and Integrated Day: when a teacher involves learners in selecting/ gives permission for learners to decide on the content they are interested to learn and also to make sure that independent learning is taking place during the lesson presentation.

### ***Lesson presentation***

The lesson presentation section included the interaction of the teacher with the learners, the language issues such as clarity of information given and the teachers' proficiencies and the homework management. The section also looked at the quality of given summaries and the teachers' ability to integrate the numeric and literacy skills (reading, writing, spelling and speaking skills) in the content they taught.

### ***Classroom organisation***

The section on classroom organisation was based on the organisation of issues and various section of the classroom, including the arrangement of resources and learners. It also concentrated on how different materials were displayed around the classroom.

### ***Classroom management***

The classroom management consisted of three areas namely: teachers' dimension, classroom dimension and learners' dimension. These three areas are elaborated below.

### ***Teachers' dimension***

The management of the lesson on teachers' dimension requires the teacher to be a facilitator of learning, walking around the classroom to give special help to those who need it; to make sure that all learners are attended to and to have a control of the class during the lesson presentation. This area also looked at how teachers manage their classroom activities, how they organize and plan their work to meet the learners' need while covering the content. Teachers were required to

consider the learners pre-knowledge, to acknowledge that learners have varied interests and to consider their views when they provided additional information. Teachers were required to have a proper monitoring of learning, have a mutual relationship with learners and also to ensure that the learning was taking place during their lessons.

### ***Classroom dimension***

The classroom dimension looked at the environment, physical condition, furniture, textbooks teaching and learning space and the storage space. If the listed areas were in place, and were in good condition, teachers were expected to facilitate favourable teaching and learning environment in multi-grade classrooms.

### ***Learners' dimension***

The learners were expected to participate effectively in teaching and learning process. They were expected to have a healthy relationship which fosters positive behaviour and attitudes towards teaching and learning. Learners were required to learn how to collaborate with others so that they can be able to work diligently to complete classroom tasks, display appropriate behaviour, act responsibly and also play a role in helping the teacher to manage the classroom.

### ***Assessment***

Assessment forms an integral part of teaching in both mono and multi-grade classrooms. It is important for each teacher in whatever setting to be able to tell whether syllabus objectives have been met or not. Good assessment enables a teacher to measure the recent knowledge or skills that learners had acquired. It was against this background that teachers teaching multi-grade classroom were observed and evaluated on the manner in which they assessed learners. The focus of the observation was on the relationship between assessment and the basic competencies taught on the observed lesson, the application of knowledge and skills, the use of high order and critical thinking skills and the opportunity given to learners to work with other learners.

## **2.4 Data Collection Instruments**

### ***Interviews***

The instruments used during the multi-grade interview schedules for teachers, learners parents and principals were developed in consultation with the multi-grade teachers' guide.

### ***Interview schedule for teachers***

The instrument on teachers' interview aimed to find more information on the teachers' knowledge about multi-grade teaching, whether they benefited from the training taking into consideration the use of knowledge obtained during the training in multi-grade classroom teaching practices. Teachers were also requested to share their perceptions on multi-grade teaching, experiences in teaching multi-grade, advantages of multi-grade teaching and the challenges they faced in multi-grade teaching.

Teachers were also requested to indicate how they used the mono-grade syllabus in multi-grade teaching; how they involved parents in their children's education and the way they assessed learners in multi-grade classrooms using the assessment criteria for mono-grade teaching. There were also questions on the aspect of training in which they needed to be re-trained.

### ***Group Interview schedule for learners***

Learners' interview questionnaire consisted of five questions which focused on perception towards multi-grade teaching and learning. Learners were also asked to comment on the way teachers taught and the way they sat in multi-grade classrooms.

### ***Interview schedule for parents***

Parents' perception towards multi-grade teaching was a focal point of discussion taking into consideration the involvement in multi-grade teaching. Parents were also asked if they wanted their children to be in multi-grade classes or not, and to give reasons for their selections.

### ***Interview schedule for the principals***

The principals' interviews focused on the perception and experience in multi-grade teaching. They were also asked to show their flexibility in allowing teachers to manipulate the timetable during multi-grade teaching, the support they gave to multi-grade teachers and the effectiveness of multi-grade training.

## **2.5 Data analysis**

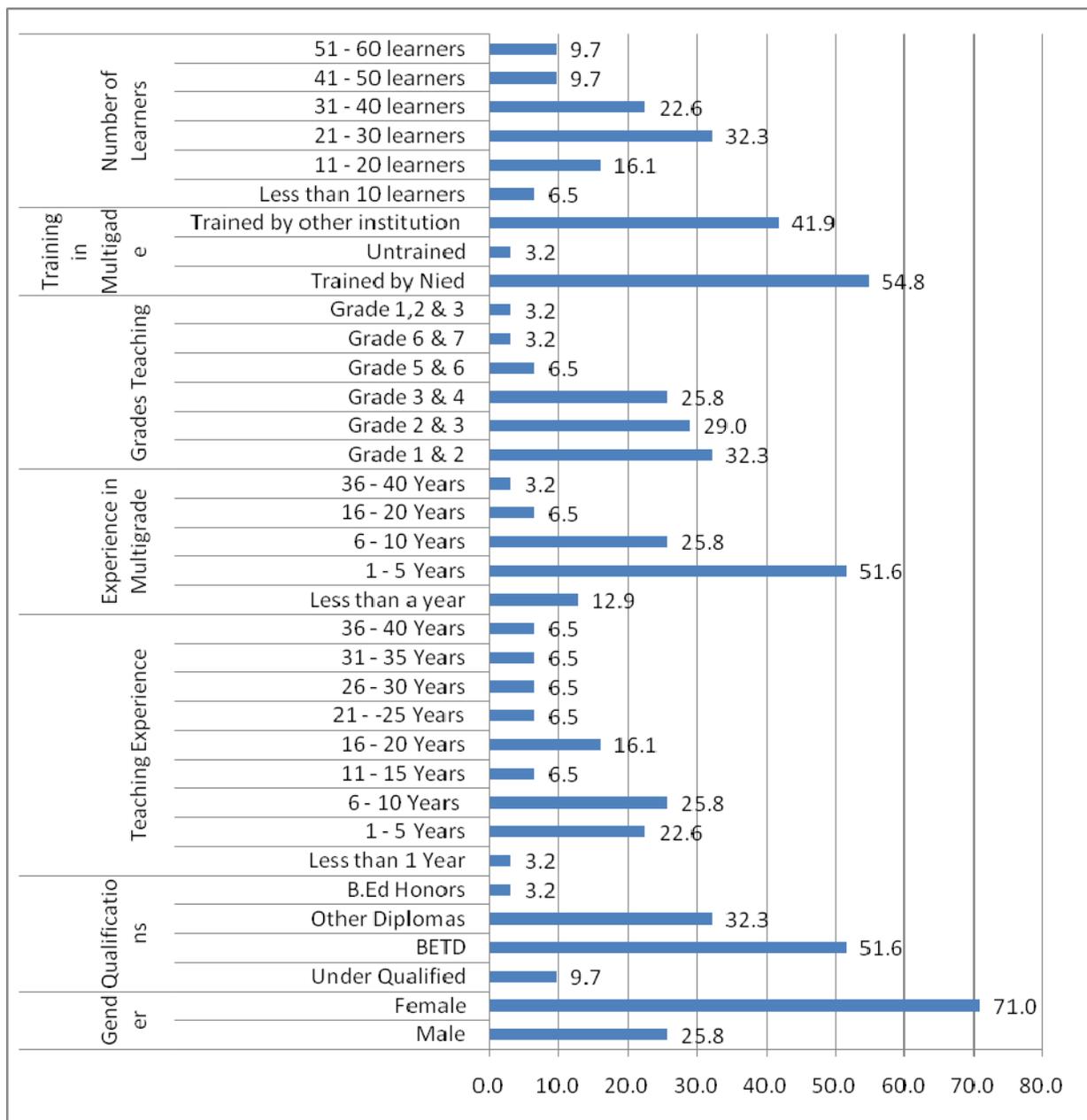
Frequencies and percentages were computed by SSPS and used to analyse the level of teachers, and principals on the multi-grade teaching and the impact of the training programme on teachers' competencies in teaching multi-grade classes. Qualitative data were content analysed to determine the pattern on teachers' responses. Direct quotations were used to support teachers', parents', learners' and principals' views on multi-grade teaching.

## SECTION THREE

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 3. Teachers' background information

Figure 1 presents the profile of teachers who were observed in this study. The study was conducted in multi-grade schools that were randomly selected. The classroom observations were done to complement the information collected from learners, parents, school managers and teacher interviews.



**Figure 4: The profile of multi-grade teachers**

The profiles of multi-grade teachers presented in figure 4 shows that 25.8% of the teachers were males and 71% were female. This shows that Multi-grade classes were taught by female than males teachers. A fraction of multi-grade teachers (9.7%) was under qualified. Slightly more than half of the population (51.6%) had BETD. A third (32.3%) had other qualifications in addition to BETD and 3.2% of the teachers had B.Ed. (Hon).

The teaching experience ranged from less than a year to 40 years. About a quarter (25.8%) of the teachers had 6 to 10 years teaching experience, 22.6 % of the teachers who had 1 – 5 years, 16.1% of teachers had 16 – 20 years. An equal distribution of 6.5% was noted in the groups of 11 – 15; 21 – 25; 26 – 30; 31 – 35 and 36 to 40 years of teaching experience. Only 3.2% of the teachers had less than a year teaching experience.

Furthermore, the results show that 51.6% of the teachers had taught in multi-grade classes for 1 – 5 years, followed by 25.8% who had 6 – 10 years teaching experience, and 6.5% had 16 – 20 years of teaching experience. Only 3.2% of the teachers taught multi-grade classes for 36 – 40 years and a fraction of the teachers (12.9%) was less experienced in teaching multi-grade classes.

The National Curriculum of Basic Education discourages a combination of grade 1 with other grades. However, 32.3% were a combination of grades 1 and 2. 29% were a combination of grades 2 & 3, 25.8% were combined of grades 3 & 4, 6.5% were a combination of grades 5 & 6 and the equal distribution of teachers 3.2% had a combination grades 6 & 7 and grades 1, 2 & 3 respectively. Although most of grades combination consisted of two grades, 3.2% of the participants had combined three first grades of schooling.

More than a half (54.8%) of the teachers had attended the NIED training offered to multi-grade teachers while 3.2% were not trained. It is important noting that 42% of the participants indicated that they were trained by other institutions which they did not mention.

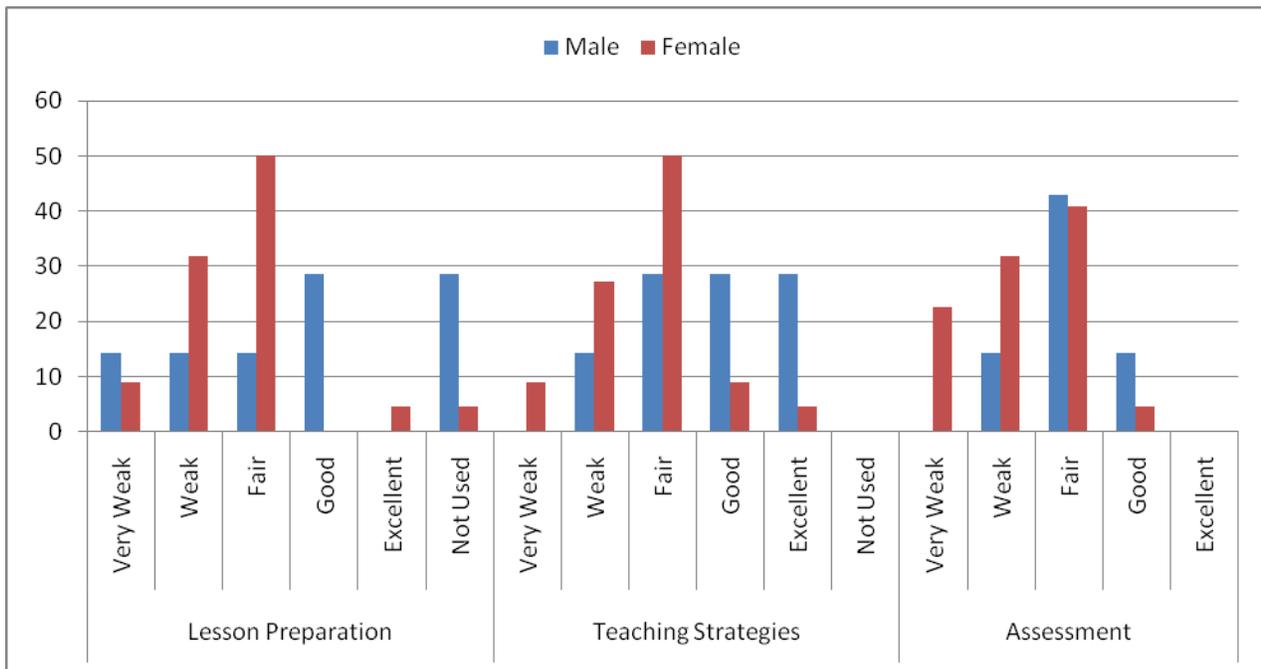
Although teachers combined different grades, a number of them were teaching grade groups with less than 35 learners which is required numbers of learners in upper primary multi-grade classroom per teachers. A third of the teachers (32.3%) had 21 – 30 learners in their combined classes, close to a quarter (22.6%) of the teachers had 31 – 40 learners, 16.1% of teachers had 11 – 20 learners. Only 6.5% of teachers had only less than 10 learners in their combined grades compared to an equal distribution of 9.7% of teachers who teaches 41 – 50 and 51 – 60 learners respectively.

### **3.1 Teachers' competencies on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment**

#### **3.1.1 Comparing gender with lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment**

This section presents findings of the influence of teachers' gender on lesson preparation, the use of teaching strategies and assessment. These findings were based on observation of lesson plan and preparation, teaching strategies and assessment of different subjects within the syllabus that teachers used in multi-grade.

Figure 5 portrays the influence of gender on the performance of teachers in lesson preparation, the use of teaching strategies as well as the way they conducted assessment.



**Figure 5: Teachers' competencies in lesson preparation, the use of teaching strategies and assessment by gender**

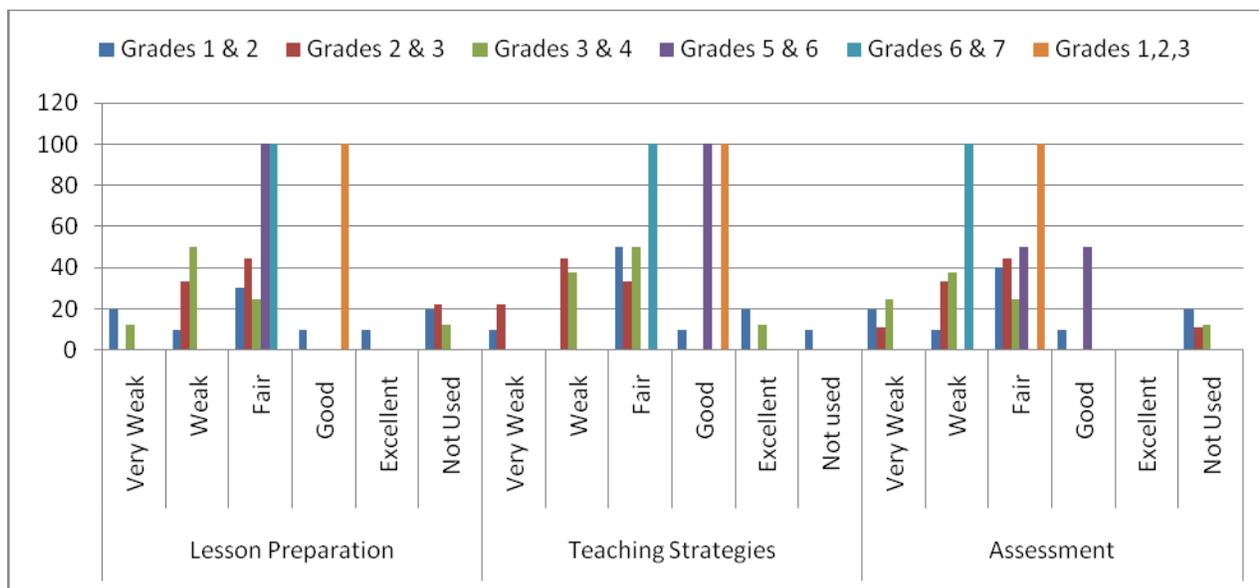
The findings show that female teachers were in possession of written lesson plan compared to male teachers though quality of written lesson preparation according to the observation for both teachers was not impressive. More explicit, the results show that 9% of the female were rated “very weak” compared to 12% male compatriots. Above a third (32%) of the female teachers were ‘weak’ compared to 12% of the male teachers. A half (50%) of the female teachers were rated “fair” compared to 12% male teachers. Close to three third (29%) of male teachers were rated “good”. Only 5% female teachers were rated ‘excellent’.

On the use and understanding of teaching strategies, the male teachers performed better compared to female teachers because 29% were rated ‘excellent’ and 28% were rated ‘good’ respectively compare to female teachers who were rated 5% ‘excellent’ and 9% ‘good’. Half (50%) of the females were rated ‘fair’ compared to 29% of the males. About 28% of female teachers were rated ‘weak’ compared to 14% of the male teachers. 9% of the female teachers were rated very weak in the use and understanding of teaching strategies. It was observed that in general the use of teaching strategies was poor thus jeopardise the quality of teaching in multi-grade classes.

In general, female teachers had problems in assessing learners during the lesson. Only 5% of them were good in assessing learners compared to 12% male teachers. About 41% of the female teachers were rated ‘fair’ compared to 43% of the male teachers. More than third (32%) of the female teachers were rated ‘weak’ compared to 14% of the male teachers. Although 22% of the female teacher were rated ‘very weak’ and the male teachers none, both categories of teachers did not do well in assessing learners.

### 3.1.2 The influence of grade combinations on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment

Figure 6 presents intends to compare whether grade combinations have influence on teachers competencies on lesson preparation, selection and the use of teaching strategies and assessment of learners. As mentioned earlier in the teachers profiles, teachers combined grades 1 & 2; 2&3; 3&4; 5&6; 6&7 as well as 1, 2&3. Figure 3 portrays the findings of classroom observation.



**Figure 6: Teachers’ skills on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment by grades teaching**

#### *Lesson preparation*

Although lesson preparation is seen to be a core of teaching and learning, the result presented in figure 6 shows that some teachers had written lesson preparation while others not. It was noticed that 20% of those who combined Grades 1 & 2, 22% of the teachers Grades 2 & 3, as well as 13% of those who combined Grades 3 & 4 did not write lesson preparations. Furthermore, the result indicated a fair rating of 100% of teachers who combined Grades 5 & 6 as well as those who had a combination of Grades 6 & 7. Another 100% rating of good performance was observed among the teachers who combined Grade 1, 2 & 3. The performance of teachers combines Grades 1 & 2 was equally distributed with 10% rating on weak, good and excellent. The rating of 30% was observed on ‘fair’ and an equal distribution of 20% ratings on ‘very weak’ and those who did not prepare lessons. None of the Grades 2 & 3 or Grades 3 & 4 teachers was rated ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. The Grade 2 & 3 teachers were rated 33% ‘weak’ and 44% fair while the Grade 3 & 4 teachers were rated 13% ‘very weak’ 50% ‘weak’ and 25% ‘good’.

#### *Teaching strategies*

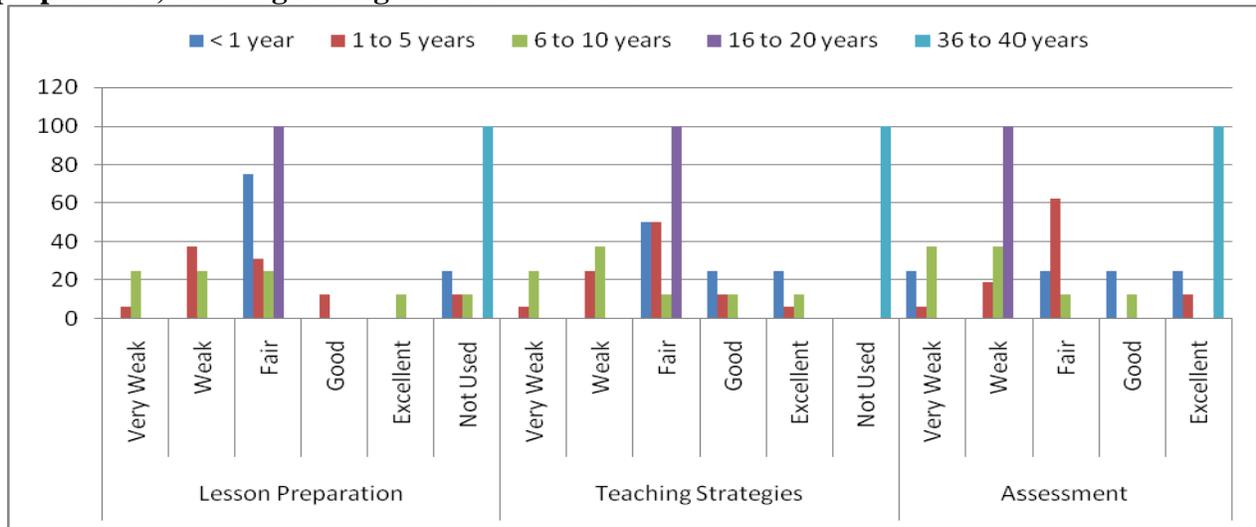
The result in figure 6 show that the teachers who combined the grades 1, 2 &3 as well as those who combined Grades 5 & 6 were rated better on the selection and use of teaching strategies during their teaching compared to the remaining combination of grades. These teachers were rated 100% ‘good’ in this the selection and use of teaching strategies. However, 20% of the teachers who combined Grades 1 & 2 as well as 13% of teachers who combined Grades 3 & 4 were rated ‘excellent’. Moreover, the teachers who combined Grades 2 & 3 were rated ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’ implying that none of them were ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. The teachers who combined Grade 6 & 7 were rated ‘fair’.

**Assessment**

Most of teachers across all grade combinations did not produce good assessment results. The majority of the teachers were rated between ‘fair and ‘very weak’ except for a Grade 5 & 6 combination whereby 50% were rated ‘good’ while the remaining half (50%) of the teachers in this category were rated ‘fair’.

The performance of teachers in Grade 5 & 6 (upper primary) combination was constantly better compared to other grade combinations. Teachers who taught the combination of Grades 1, 2 and 3 (lower grades) did equally better in conducting assessment. From this outcome, one can conclude that the way grades were combined influenced the nature of assessment tasks designed. However, this outcome might be misleading; one cannot be explicitly sure about the influences to which the grade combinations of the lower grades or upper primary that exert more influence on teachers competencies in conducting assessment of learners.

**3.1.3 Teachers’ teaching experience in multi-grade class and the impact on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment**



**Figure 7: Teachers’ competencies on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment by experience in teaching multi-grade**

**Lesson preparation**

Figure 7 presents teachers’ teaching experience and the influence on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment. The results show that 75% of the teachers with less than 1 year were rated ‘fair’ implying that a quarter (25%) did not have lesson preparation. Teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience in multi-grade did not perform well because only 13% of them were rated ‘good’ compared to 82% of them who were rated ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’. Only few teachers (13%) with 1 to 5 teaching experience in multi-grade did not have lesson preparation that day. An equal distribution of 25% was noted among the teachers with 6 to 10 years of teaching experience in multi-grade were rated ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’ giving a total of 75% of teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience in multi-grade classes. A fraction of 13% of these teachers was rated ‘excellent’ while 13% did not have lesson preparation written out. All teachers (100%) with 16 to 20 years of experience were rated ‘fair’ while none of the 36-40 years of experience in multi-grade had lesson preparation. From this results, one can conclude that the more the teaching experienced, the lesser they were engaged in lesson preparation.

### Teaching strategies

The results in figure 7 show that 100% of the teachers with 16-20 and 36-40 years of experience in multi-grade teaching were rated ‘fair’. The good performance was noted among the teachers with less than one year (< 1 year) teaching experience in multi-grade class because 100% of them were rated ‘fair’ to ‘excellent’, with an equal distribution of 25% ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ and a ‘fair’ rating of 50% of the teachers. The distribution of the 6-10 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching ranged from ‘very weak’ to ‘excellent’ with a performance of 25% of the teachers being ‘very weak’, 38% ‘weak’ and an equal distribution of 13% in ‘fair’, ‘good’ and ‘excellent’. The performance of teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching was appalling because 81% of them were rated ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’ (6%, 25% and 50%) compared to 18% of them who were rated ‘good’ to ‘excellent’. Only 13% of them were ‘good’ and 5% of the teachers were rated ‘excellent’.

### Assessment

The shifting down of teachers with 16-20 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching was noticed from ‘fair’ in lesson preparation and the use of teaching strategies to ‘weak’ in assessment. All teachers (100%) with 36-40 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching retained the high rating of not assessing learners during teaching. Most of the teachers (63%) with 1-5 teaching experience in multi-grade were rated ‘fair’, 19% were ‘weak’ and 6% were ‘very weak’. This gave a total of 88% of teachers who were rated ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’. Only 13% of these teachers were rated ‘excellent’. None of the teachers with < 1 year of teaching multi-grade was rated ‘weak’. An equal distribution of 25% was noted among this group of teachers on ‘very weak’, ‘fair’, ‘good’ and ‘excellent’. The teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience in multi-grade teaching had an equal distribution of 38% ‘very weak’ and ‘weak’ as well as an equal distribution of 13% on ‘fair’ and ‘good’. None of them was rated ‘excellent’ in assessing learners during multi-grade teaching.

#### 3.1.4 The impact of teachers’ qualification on competencies in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment

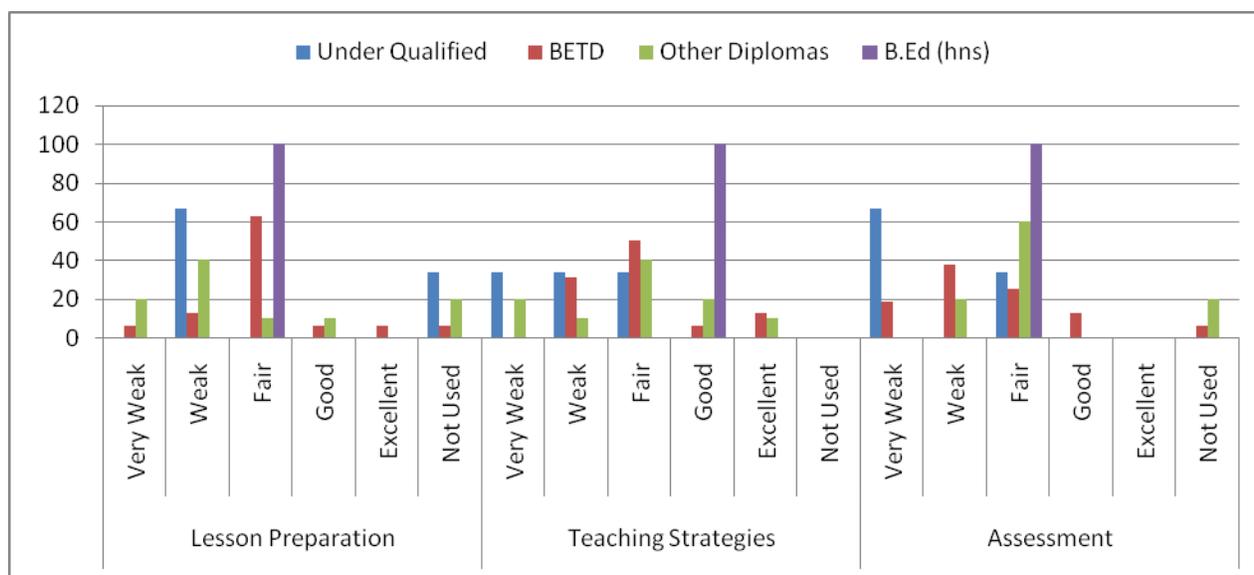


Figure 8: Competencies on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment by teachers’ qualification

### ***Lesson preparation***

The results figure 8 shows that teachers' qualification has no influence on lesson preparation because teachers were rated 'very weak' to 'fair'. A fraction of the teachers (6%), with BETD were rated 'good' and 'excellent' respectively. Furthermore, 10% of the teachers with other diplomas were rated 'good'. A total of 70% of teachers with other diplomas did not do well in lesson preparation because they were rated 'very weak' (20%), weak (40%) and 'fair' (10%) respectively. The majority of the under qualified teachers were rated 'weak' (67%) on lesson preparation implying that 33% of teacher in this group did not have written lesson preparations. It is expected that teachers with high qualification to be 'competent in writing out their lesson preparation because the intensive teacher preparation they had received. This was proved not to be the case in multi-grade teaching. All (100%) of the teachers with B.Ed. (Hon) were rated 'fair'.

### ***Teaching strategies***

The findings on teacher qualification versus their competence in using teaching strategies show that qualification has a positive impact on the use of teaching strategies since 100% of the teachers with B.Ed. (Hon) were rated 'good'. An equal distribution of 33% of the teacher with other qualifications were rated 'very weak', 'weak' and 'fair'. This implied that a total of 99% of teachers with other qualifications were not competent in writing up lesson preparation.

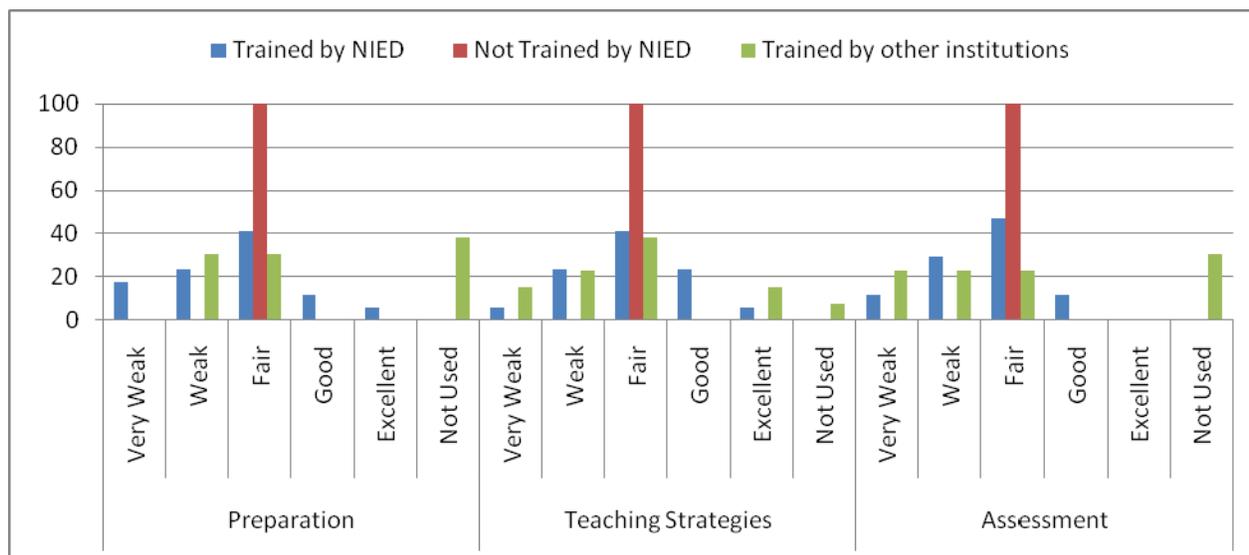
### ***Assessment***

The result in figure 8 shows that teachers' in all groups of qualifications were 'excellent' in assessing learners during multi-grade teaching. The decrease on performance among teachers with B.Ed. (Hon) rated 'fair' (100%) was noted compared previous ratings on the selection and use of teaching strategies. The under qualified teachers did not do well either because 67% of them were rated 'very weak' and 33% were rated 'fair'. A total of 80% of teachers with other diplomas were rated 'weak' (20%) to 'fair' (60%). The remaining 20% of these teachers did assess learners' activities during teaching. Similarly, 82% of the teachers with BETD qualification were rated 'very weak' (19%), 'weak' (38%) and 'fair' (25%). Only 13% of the teachers with BETD were good and while 6% did conduct assessment of learners' activities.

By looking at the teachers' performance among the three qualification categories against the competent areas in figure 8, one could notice that the ratings were clustered on 'very weak' to 'fair'. More explicit, under qualified teachers performed poorly in all three competent areas thus implying that the lower the qualification the lower the competence in lesson preparation, selecting and using of teaching strategies and ability to conduct effective assessment of learners' activities in a multi-grade setting.

### **3.1.5 The impact of NIED training on teachers' skills in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment**

The multi-grade teachers were trained by the members of NIED multi-grade committee in collaboration with Lower Primary Advisory Teachers who attended the training of facilitators. The results of the teachers' performance with regard to the training they received are reflected on figure 9.



**Figure 9: Teachers' skills in preparation, teaching strategies and assessment by training institution**

***Lesson preparation***

The teachers that attended the NIED training were rated ‘very weak’ (18%), ‘weak’ (24%), ‘fair’ 41%, ‘good’ (12%), and ‘excellent’ 6% in lesson preparation. The total rating of 81% fell on ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’ compared to the total of 18% rating which fell good and excellent. These findings implied that the training of teachers on writing a lesson preparation was not effective. The findings further shows that 100% ‘fair’ ratings were evident among teachers who did not receive any training on multi-grade teaching. An equal distribution of ratings of 31% fell on ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ among the teachers that received multi-grade training from other institutions. More than a third (38%) of the teachers did not have written lesson preparations. There were no indications of the institution through which the other training apart from NIED was done.

***Teaching strategies***

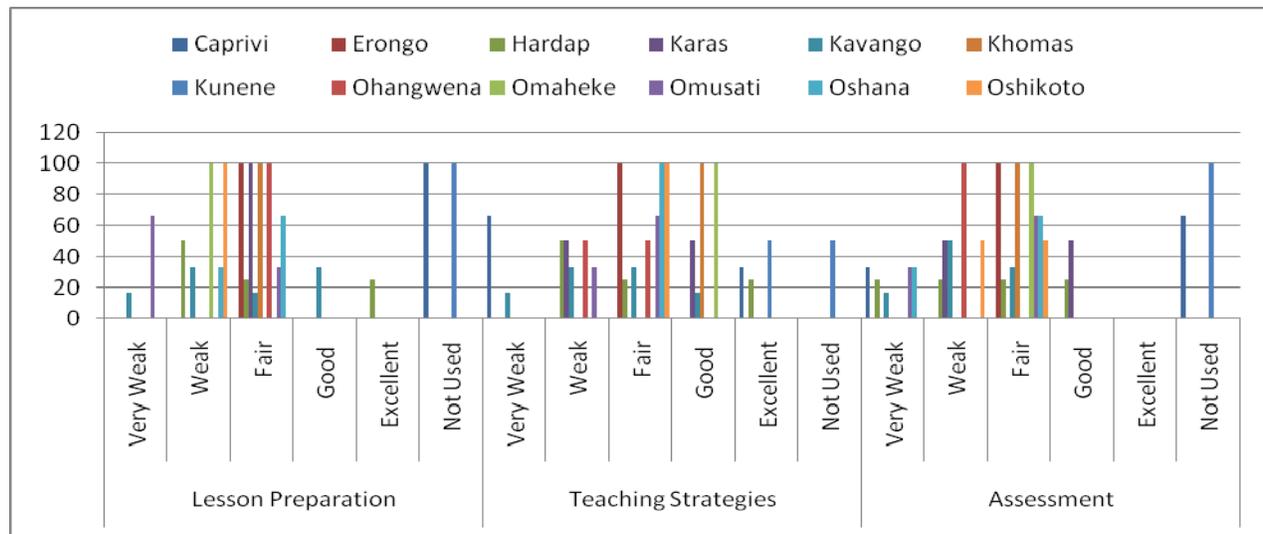
All (100%) teachers who did not receive any training on the teaching of multi-grade were rated ‘fair’ on the selection and use of teaching strategies. Teachers that were trained by NIED did not perform impressively since they were rated ‘very weak’ (6%), ‘weak’ (24%), ‘fair’ (41%) respectively. There was an increase on the rating of ‘good’ (24%) compared to the 12% rating on ‘good’ in lesson preparation. Only 6% of teachers who did not receive training were rated ‘excellent’ under this competence. The teachers who received training through other institutions were rated 15% ‘very weak’, 23% ‘weak’, 38% ‘fair’ and 15% ‘excellent’ on the selection and use of teaching strategies. Even though, 8% of the teachers in this category did not use any teaching strategies.

***Assessment***

In this category, an equal distribution of 23% was noted in ‘very weak’ to ‘fair’ among teachers that received training from other institution, and 31% of these teachers did not use any assessment activity during the lessons. Teachers that were trained by NIED did not do well. The ratings of the NIED teachers were 12% ‘very weak’, 29% ‘weak’, 47% ‘fair’ and 12% ‘good’. None of the teachers in all groups was rated ‘excellent’ in assessment.

### 3.1.6 The Regional influences on teachers' skills on lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment

The training of teachers in regions was conducted by different facilitators. The training took place in different settings. Some of the workshops were successful while others were not because not all invited teachers attended the workshops. In addition, there were trainings venues such as Kavango which were attended by many teachers as the number of schools in this region are many thus making the training ineffective because the facilitators could not attend to all participants effectively. Teachers in Otjozondjupa did not receive training on multi-grade teaching; hence, the region did not participate in the study. The results of the 12 regions that participated in the study are shown in figure 10.



**Figure 10: Teachers' competence in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment by regions**

#### *Lesson preparation*

The results in figure 10 show that none of the teachers in Caprivi and Kunene had lesson preparation written out the time the classes were observed. Regions such as Erongo, Khomas, Karas and Ohangwena had 100% were rated 'fair', while Oshikoto and Omaheke regions were rated 'weak (100%)'. The only regions which had a better ratings were Hardap with 50% 'weak' and an equal distribution of 25% 'fair' and 'excellent'. Kavango region was rated 17% 'very weak', 33% 'weak', 17% 'fair' and 33% 'good'. Omusati region was rated 67% 'very weak' and 33% 'fair', while Oshana region rates were 33% 'weak' and 67% 'fair'. The result further demonstrates that teacher in Kavango and Hardap regions were more competent in lesson preparation compared to the remaining regions.

#### *Teaching strategies*

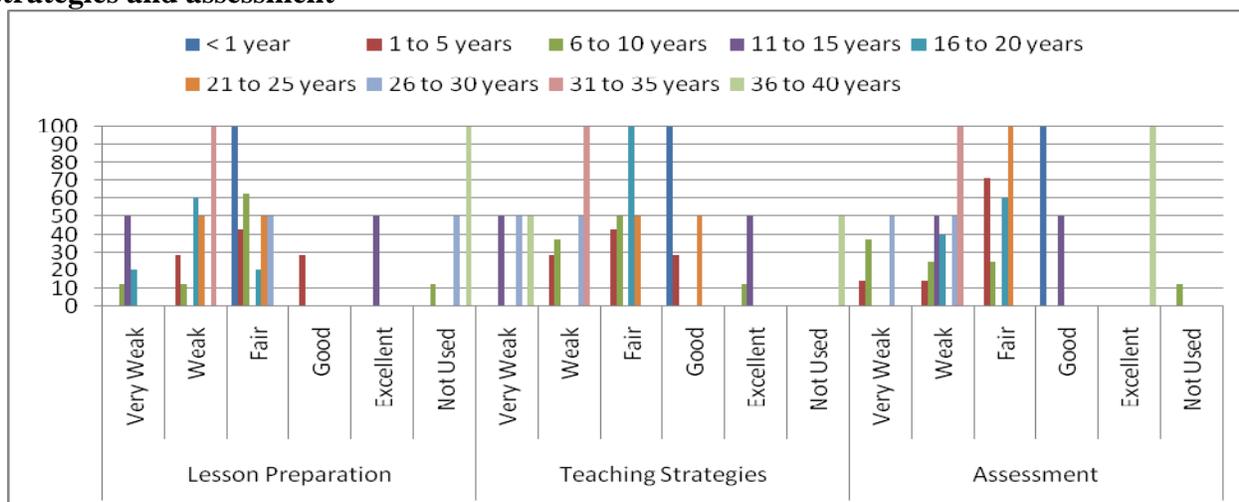
The effective use of teaching strategies portrayed in figure 10 shows that 50% of the teachers in Kunene region did not use the teaching strategies effectively while 50% were rated 'excellent'. Although teachers in Caprivi were rated 'excellent' (33%), rating of 67% on very 'very weak' was alarming. Regions such as Erongo, Oshana and Oshikoto were rated 'fair' (100%), while Khomas and Omaheke regions were rated 'good' (100%). About a half (50%) of the teachers in Hardap region were rated 'weak' while an equal distribution of 25% 'fair' and 'excellent' was noted. Teachers in Karas region had an equal distribution ratings of 50% on 'weak' and 'good'. Omusati

teachers had 33% ‘weak’ and 67% ‘fair’, Ohangwena and Karas region score 50% ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ respectively. Kavango region was rated ‘very weak’ 17%, and equal ratings of 33% ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ and 17% ‘good’ on the selection and use of teaching strategies.

### Assessment

As it is indicated on figure 10 above, none of the teachers in all the regions was rated ‘excellent’ on assessment. The satisfactory performances were observed among teachers from Karas with 50% (good) and 50% ‘weak’. Although teachers in Hardap were rated 25% good, the equal distribution of 25% was also noted on ‘very weak’, ‘weak and ‘fair’. A 100% of ‘weak’ rating was observed among teachers in Ohangwena while teachers in Erongo, Khomas and Omaheke were rated 100% ‘fair’. All teachers (100%) in Kunene region had no assessment activities planned for their multi-grade lessons. Similarly, 67% of teachers in Caprivi did not have assessment activities and 33% of them were rated ‘very weak’. Teachers in Omusati and Oshana had an equal rating of 33% ‘very weak’ and 67% ‘fair’. The ratings of teachers in Kavango region fell on ‘very weak’ (17%), ‘weak’ (50%) and ‘fair’ (33%). Oshikoto region scored ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ (50%) respectively.

### 3.1.7 The impact of teaching experience on teachers’ skills in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment



**Figure 11: Teachers' competencies in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment by teaching experience**

#### Lesson Preparation

Figure 11 presents the findings of the influence the teachers’ teaching experience had on the ability to prepare their lessons in a multi-grade setting. As the graph shows, teaching experience had little influence on teachers’ lesson preparation. As evidenced above, majority of teachers were rated either weak or fair and a reasonable number of them were noted of not using lesson preparation at all. Half (50%) of the teachers that had 11-15 years of experience, had their lesson well prepared compared to equally the same percentage of teachers whose lessons were poorly prepared. Though not impressive, (100%) of the teachers that had less than one year teaching experience had lessons fairly prepared. Teachers with teaching experience in the following brackets 26 to 40 years did not prepare their lesson as one would have expected. In those who had 26-30 years teaching experience, 50% of the teachers fairly prepared their lesson and equally the same percentage of teachers in the same category did not use lesson preparation. 100% of the teachers who had 31 to 35 years of teaching experience, were rated ‘weak’ in lesson preparation and equally the same percentage of teachers who had 36 - 40 years in the teaching profession did not use the lesson preparation.

### ***Teaching strategies***

The study explored the impact of teachers' teaching experience on applying teaching strategies in a multi-grade classroom. As figure 11 suggests, majority (100% 'good') of teachers who had less than a year teaching experience impressively applied the right teaching strategies in a multi-grade classroom. Equally, teachers who had 16-25 years of teaching experience applied the teaching strategies compared to those that had 16-20 years of teaching experience who were rated 'fair'; 21 - 25 years of experience who were rated 50% 'fair' and 50% 'good'. Teachers who had 11-15 years of teaching experience been rated 50% 'very weak', and equally the same percentage of teachers were rated 'excellent'. The general outlook on the results in figure 8 shows teachers of less than one year of teaching experience and those who had 1-5 years of teaching experience, outperformed the more experienced teachers who had 26-40 years of teaching experience. Astonishingly, the most experienced teachers who had 31-35 years of teaching experience demonstrated poor competence in the use of the right teaching strategies in a multi-grade class as majority (100%) of them were rated 'weak'. Half (50%) of the teachers that had 36-40 years of teaching could not use the right teaching strategies compared to 50% of the group of teachers who were rated 'very weak' in the use of teaching strategies.

### ***Assessment***

The teachers' teaching experience had an influence on teacher's ability to design assessment activities that based on the basic competencies. As shown in figure 11, teachers with 26-40 years of teaching experience did not demonstrate competencies in assessment of learners' activities as one would have expected. None of the teachers in this group including those who had 16-20 years of teaching experience were rated 'good' or 'excellent on competence to assess learners in a multi-grade teaching. All (100%) teachers who had 31-35 years of teaching experience were rated 'weak' while those that had 36-40 years teaching experience did not conduct assessment at all. Though not that impressive, competencies in assessment of learners were observed from teachers who had 21-25 years of teaching experience. All (100%) teachers who had 21-25 years of teaching experience were rated 'fair'. Competencies in assessment of learners were observed from teachers who had less than one year teaching experience as 100% of teachers in this category were rated 'good'. Half (50%) of teacher who had 11-15 year of teaching experience were rated 'good' and the remaining half (50%) were rated 'weak'.

### **3.1.8 Conclusion on teachers' competencies in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment**

The performance of teachers in the lesson preparation, the use of teaching strategies and assessment varied. It was found that female teachers were in possession of written lesson plan compared to male teachers though the quality of written lesson preparation for both teachers was not impressive. The male teachers were more competent on the use and understanding of teaching strategies compared to female teachers. It was further observed that the use of teaching strategies was poor, thus jeopardise the quality of teaching in multi-grade classes. Both male and female teachers were not competent in assessment though female teachers demonstrated more incompetence compared to male teachers.

Most of teachers across all grade combinations demonstrated little competence in lesson preparation, teaching strategies and assessment. The majority of the teachers were rated 'fair', 'weak' and 'very weak'. It was also found that the teaching experience in multi-grade teaching had no influence on lesson preparation and the use of teaching strategies. In many cases less than third (30%) of the teachers were rated good and excellent. However, teachers with 36 to 40 years of

teaching experience demonstrated satisfactory competence in assessment. It is expected that teachers with high qualification to be competent in all aspects of teaching and learning because of the intensive teacher preparation they had received. This was proved not to be the case in lesson preparation, the use of teaching strategies and assessment.

The NIED training had a little impact on preparation, the use of teaching strategies and assessment. However, only few teachers that had attended the NIED training were competent in preparation, teaching and assessment of learners' work. The rating teachers that did not attend the NIED training concentrated heavily on 'very weak' to 'fair'. The performance of teachers in different regions varied. Kavango and Hardap regions were rated "good" in lesson preparation; Omaheke, Khomas, Karas and Kavango were rated 'good' on the use of teaching strategies while Caprivi, Kunene and Hardap regions were rated 'excellent' on the use of teaching strategies. In assessment, only Karas and Hardap regions were rated "good". None of the teachers in Caprivi and Kunene had lesson preparation, and all Kunene teachers and many teachers in Caprivi had no assessment activities either. Otjozondjupa region did not participate in the study because teachers were not trained.

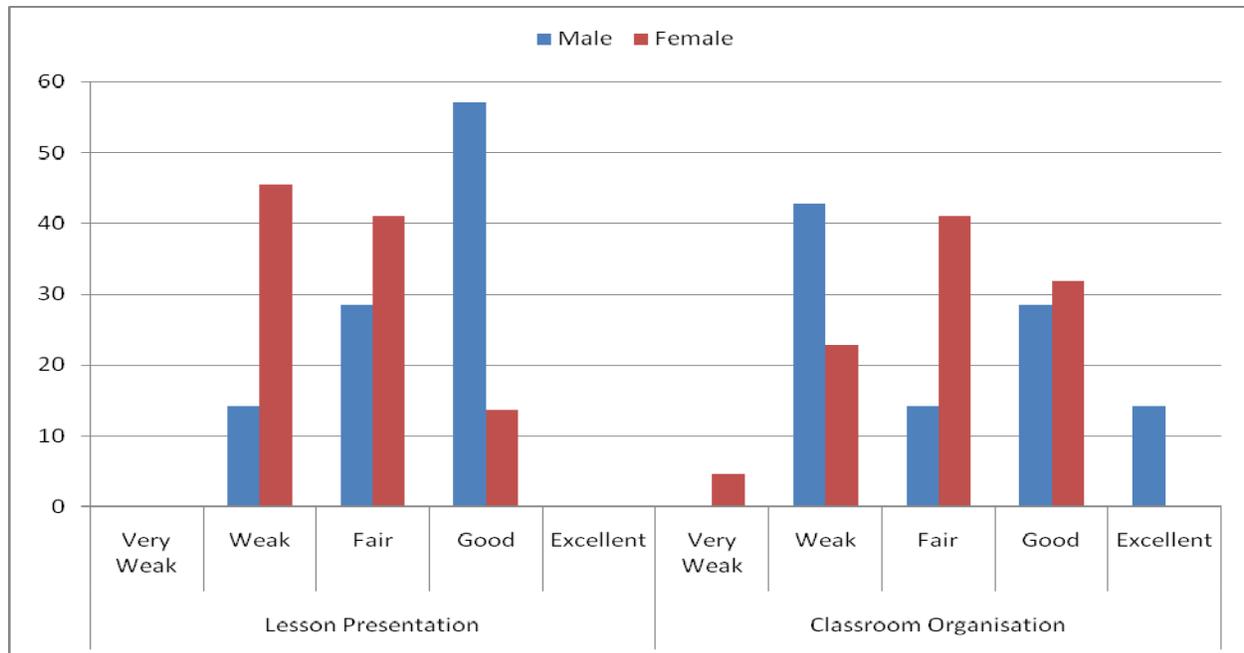
The teachers with 11 to 15 years and those with less than a year of teaching experience performed better than others in all three categories while those with 31 to 35 years performed weakly in all three competence areas. An excellent performance was noted among the longer serving teachers with (36 to 40) years of teaching experience on the use of teaching strategies and assessment indicating that experience enhances teaching and assessment competencies.

Although lesson preparation is seen to be a core of teaching and learning, the result shows that some teachers had written lesson preparation while others not. It was noticed that the grade combination has nothing to do with the preparation because teachers with more grades did well in lesson preparation than those who have two combined grades. Hence the lesson preparation depends on individual teachers due to different characters. School managers are therefore supposed to make sure that teachers have done their lesson preparation.

### 3.2 The teachers' competencies on lesson presentation and classroom organisation

#### 3.2.1 Gender influence on teachers' competencies in lesson presentation and classroom organisation

This component includes the lesson presentation and classroom organisation.

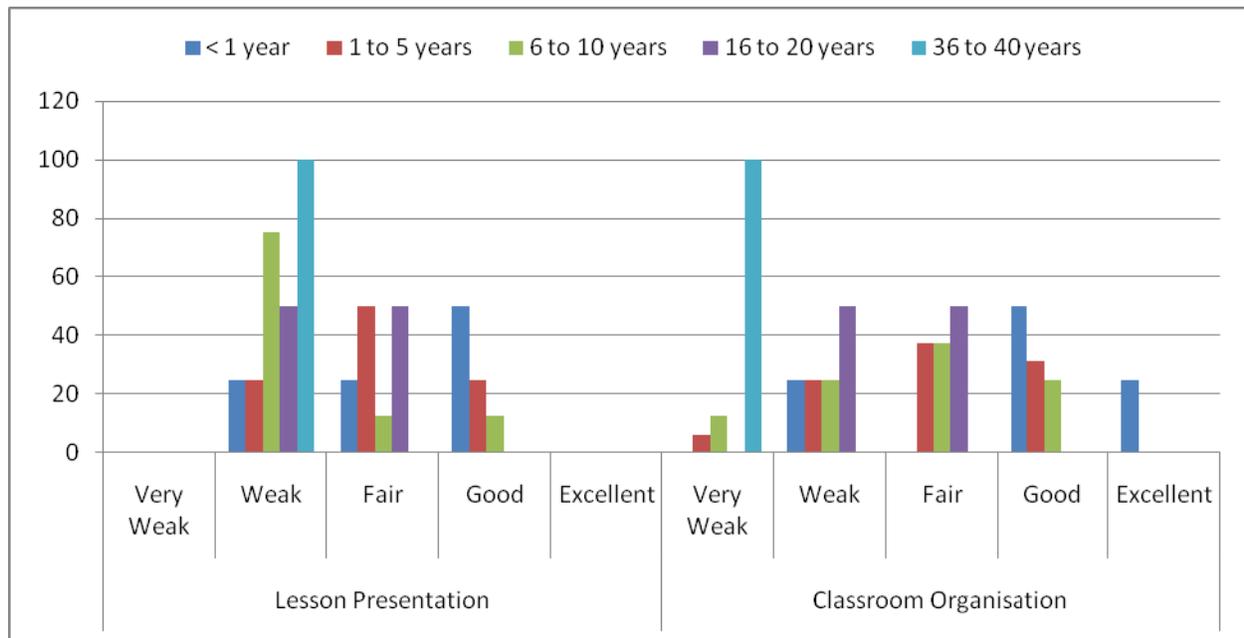


**Figure 12: Teachers' competencies in lesson presentation and classroom organisation by gender**

The figure 12 presents how teachers presented lessons and the way they arranged their classrooms. The result shows that the rating of lesson presentation lies between 'weak' and 'good'. This means that none of the male or female teachers were rated 'very weak' or 'excellent' in lesson presentation. The male teachers were rated (good) slightly higher (57%) compared to female teachers (14%) in lesson presentation. More than three quarter of the female teachers (86%) were rated 'weak' to 'fair'. Close to a half (43%) of the male teachers were rated 'weak' to fair, compared to female counterparts.

On classroom organisation, it is evident that female teachers outperformed the male teachers. As seen in figure 12, the total of 28% of the female teachers was rated 'very weak' to 'weak' compared to 43% of the male teachers who were 'weak' in classroom organisation. None of the male teachers was rated 'very weak'. Although none of the female teachers was rated 'excellent'. The result show that 85% of the female teachers were rated 'fair' to 'good' compared to 57% of males teachers who were rated 'fair' to 'excellent'. In this case, a number of female teachers did better compare to male teacher classroom organisation.

### 3.2.2 The influence of teaching experience on teachers’ skills in lesson presentation and classroom organisation



**Figure 13: The influence of teaching experience in multi-grade on teachers’ skills in lesson presentation and classroom organisation**

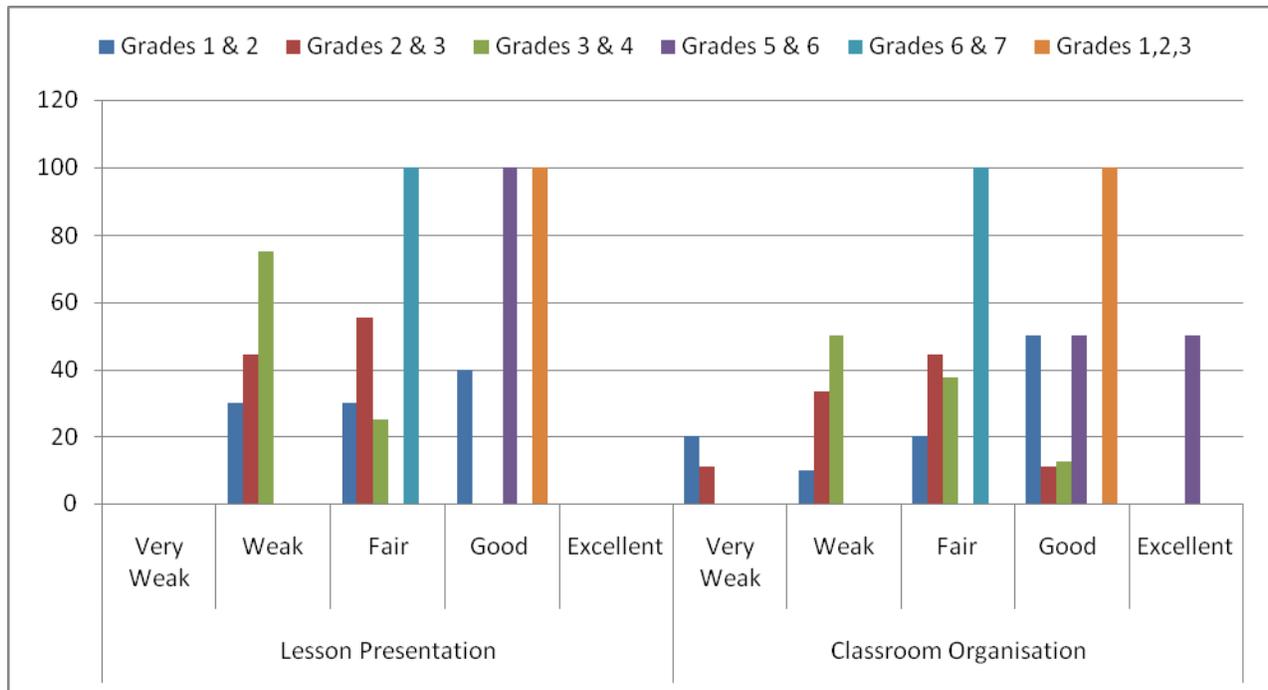
#### *Lesson presentation*

Figure 13 presents the findings of the influence of teachers’ teaching experience in multi-grade classes on competencies in presenting a lesson in a multi-grade and classroom organisation. The results in figure 13 suggests that majority of the teachers under different teaching experience groups demonstrated unsatisfactorily competencies in lesson presentation. Majority of the teachers were rated either ‘weak’ or ‘fair’. Half (50%) of the teachers who had less than one year of teaching experience in multi-grade class were rated ‘good’. All (100%) teachers who had 36-40 years of teaching experience were rated ‘weak’; indicating that they demonstrated incompetence in teaching multi-grade classes.

#### *Classroom organisation*

The results on classroom organisation show that more than three quarter (75%) of the teachers who had less than one year of teaching experience in multi-grade were rated ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ in classroom organization. Majority of the teachers in all experience categories demonstrated unsatisfactorily competencies in classroom organization as they were rated either ‘weak’ or ‘very weak’, with most (100% ‘weak’). Teachers who had 36-40 years of teaching experience lacked skills in classroom organisation. A satisfactory competence in classroom organization in a multi-grade classroom was shown by teachers whose teaching experience fell between 1-10 years. This group of teachers were rated 38% ‘fair’.

### 3.2.3 The influence of grades taught on teachers’ skills lesson presentation and classroom organisation



**Figure 14: The influence of grades teachers taught on lesson presentation and classroom management**

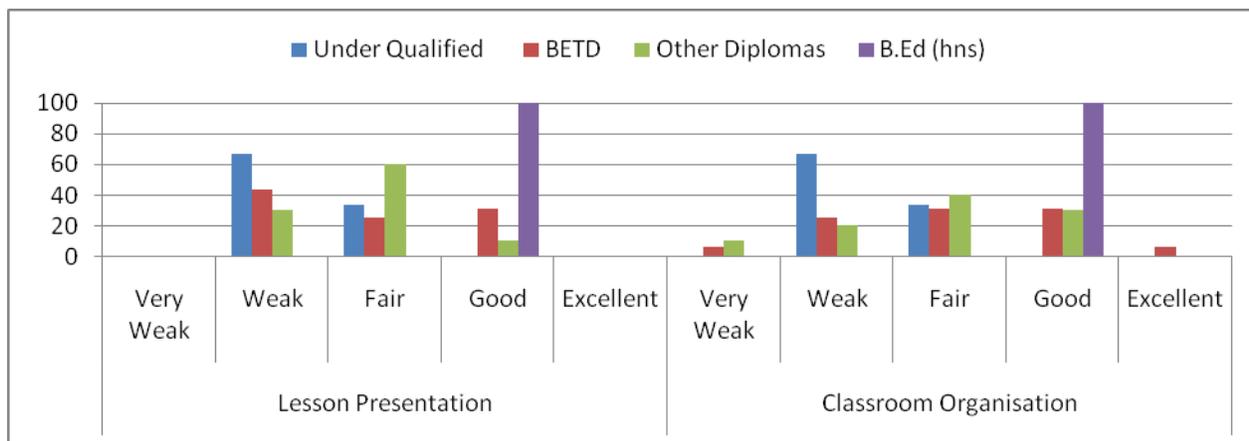
#### *Lesson presentation*

Differences were observed on teachers’ influence of grades they taught versus lesson presentation and classroom organization. The majority of the teachers were rated ‘weak’ and ‘fair’, except for those who taught Grades 1, 2, and 3, and Grades 5 and 6 combinations whereas 100% of teachers were rated ‘good’ on their competence in lessons presentation. All (100%) of the teachers who had a combination of Grade 6 and 7 were rated ‘fair’ in lesson presentation. Alarming lack of competence in lesson presentation was noted among teachers who had a combination of Grades 2 and 3, and 3 and 4. None of these teachers was rated ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

#### *Classroom organisation*

Classrooms with a combination of Grades 5 and 6 and Grades 1, 2 and 3 where well managed and organized as 100% of the teachers were rated either ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Competences in classroom organization were observed in Grades 1 and 2 combinations where 50% of teachers were rated ‘good’ indicating an average ability of classroom organisation. Unsatisfactory competence in classroom organization was noted in Grades 2 and 3; and Grades 3 and 4 class combinations where 11% and 13% respectively were rated ‘good’. As with the teachers’ ability to present lesson in Grades 6 and 7; equally the same number (100%) were rated ‘fair’ in classroom organization.

### 3.2.4 The influence of qualification on teachers' competencies on lesson presentation and classroom organisation

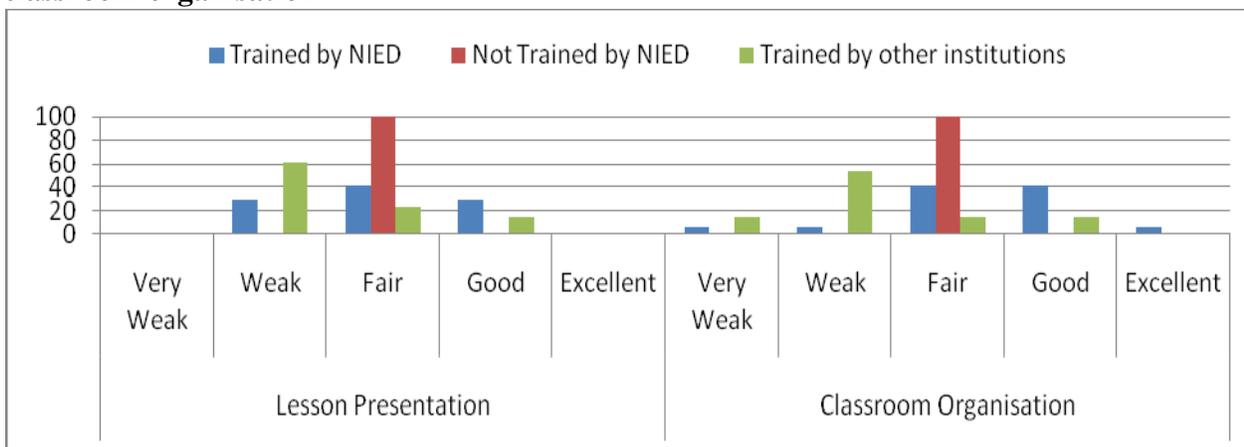


**Figure 15: Teachers' skills on lesson presentation and classroom organisation by qualifications**

#### *Lesson presentation and classroom organisation*

Figure 15 shows the teachers' qualifications and its influence on the quality of lesson presentation and classroom management. As shown in figure 15 unqualified teachers were not competent in both lesson presentation and classroom management. More than a third (33%) of teachers in this category was rated 'fair' in both competencies. Whereas, more than a half (67%) of the teachers in both lesson presentation and classroom organization were rated 'weak'. The BETD graduates did not demonstrate satisfactory competence in lesson presentation and classroom management as one would have expected take in account the nature of their training. All (100%) teachers who were observed were rated 'weak' in lesson presentation, and equally the same percentage (100%) were rated 'very weak' in classroom organisation. A fraction of teachers (10%) who had other diplomas were rated 'good' thus demonstrated satisfactory competence in lesson presentation while a third (30%) were rated 'good' in classroom organization. All Teachers (100% rated 'good') with B.Ed. (Hon) degree were competent in lesson presentation and classroom organization. This imply that the high the qualification the higher the competence in classroom management and organization.

### 3.2.5 The impact of NIED training on teachers competencies on lesson presentation and classroom organisation

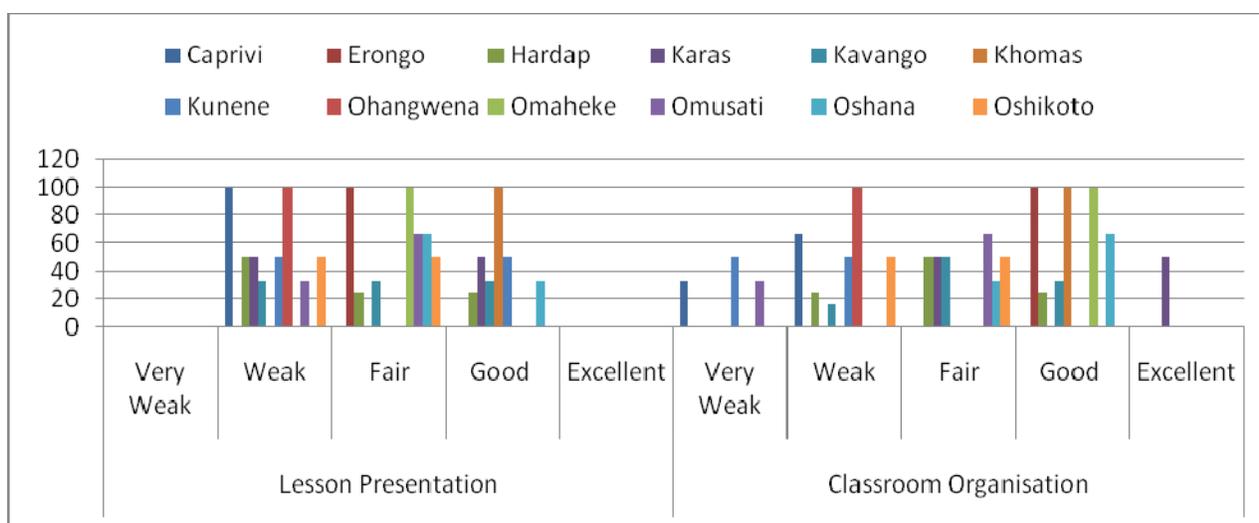


**Figure 16: The impact of NIED training on lesson presentation and classroom organisation**

**Lesson presentation and classroom organisation**

The study also explored and compared the competencies of teachers that were trained in multi-grade by different service providers. The results in figure 16 show that 41% of the teachers who were trained by NIED were rated ‘fair’ and 25% were rated ‘very weak’ and 29% were ‘good’ in both lesson presentation. A slight improvement was however observed in NIED trained teachers’ ability to organize the classroom 41% were rated ‘good’ and 6% ‘excellent’. Teachers who were trained by other institutions did not perform satisfactorily in both lesson preparation and classroom organisation. A total of 15% of the teachers trained by other institutions were rated ‘good’ in lesson presentation and classroom management respectively. Surprisingly, 100% of the teachers who were not trained by NIED were rated ‘fair’ in both lesson presentation and classroom organization. The results infer that the NIED training was slightly effective compared the training offered by other institutions.

**3.2.6 The influence of regions on teachers’ competencies in lesson presentation and classroom organisation**



**Figure 17: The teachers’ competencies in lesson presentation and classroom organisation by regions**

**Lesson presentation**

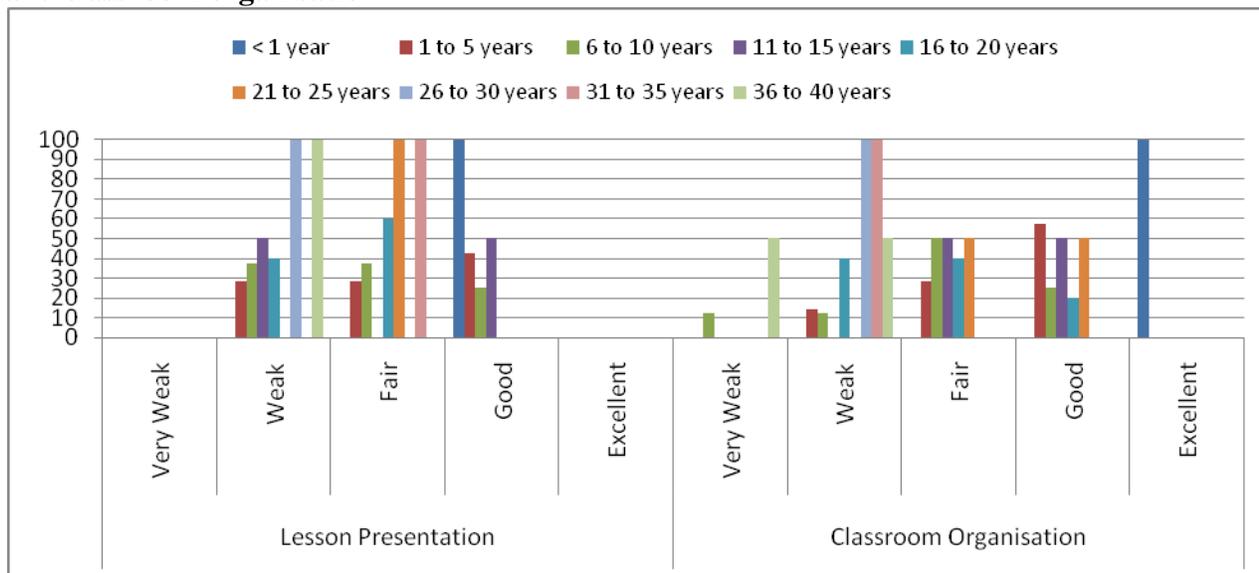
Figure 17 compare the regions versus teachers’ competencies in lesson preparation and classroom organization. Teachers in Khomas Region demonstrated competence in lesson presentation compared to teacher in other regions. All (100%) of the teachers in Khomas, were rated ‘good’ in lesson presentation and classroom management. Half (50%) of the teachers in Karas and Kunene Regions were rated ‘good’ in lesson presentation. Caprivi, Hardap, Ohangwena, and Oshikoto Regions were rated ‘weak’. The remaining regions were rated ‘fair’ with Erongo region and Omaheke region rated 100% ‘fair’.

**Classroom organisation**

Teacher in Khomas, Omaheke and Erongo Regions demonstrated competence in classroom organization compared to the remaining regions. All (100%) of the teacher in these regions were rated ‘good’. Close to three quarter (67%) of the teachers in Oshana region demonstrated satisfactory competence in classroom organisation. Majority (100%) of the teachers in Caprivi Kunene and Ohangwena Regions were rated ‘weak or very weak respectively in classroom organization. The remaining regions scored ‘fair’ of which Omusati was 67% ‘fair’ and 50% ‘fair’

the remaining regions. These results infer that there were variations between regions on teachers' competencies in lesson preparation and classroom organization.

### 3.2.7 The influence of teaching experience on teachers' competencies in lesson presentation and classroom organisation



**Figure 18: The teachers' teaching experience versus lesson presentation and classroom organisation**

Figure 18 shows the findings on the influence that teachers' teaching experience had on lesson presentation and classroom organisation. As shown in figure 18, teachers of less than one year teaching experience showed competence in lesson presentation compared to those that had more years of teaching experience in multi grade classes. A total of 100% of teachers who had less experience in teaching multi grade were rated good. Half (50%) of the teachers who had 11-15 years of teaching experience were rated 'good' compared to 50% who were rated 'weak' in lesson presentation. More than a third (43%) of the teachers who had 1-5 years of teaching experience was rated 'good' in lesson presentation. Teachers that had 26-30, and 36-40 years of teaching experience did not demonstrate competence in classroom organization. More precisely, 100% of the teachers who fell between 26-40 years of teaching experience were rated either 'weak' or 'very weak' while 45% of those who had 16-25 years of teaching experience were rated 'fair' in classroom organisation. This is a precarious situation since lesson presentation and classroom organization are important aspects in teaching and learning and teachers were expected to be competent. Lack of these skills endanger the teaching and learning in multi-grade classroom. It appears according to these results not to be the cases that experience in teaching in multi-grade have impact in mastering the two competencies.

### 3.2.8 Conclusion on teachers' competencies on lesson presentation and classroom organisation

The male teachers outperformed the female on lesson presentation and classroom organisation. Female teachers were slightly competent in classroom organisation compared to male teachers. It was noted that teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience were more competent in lesson presentation and classroom management compared to those with more than 10 years of teaching experience.

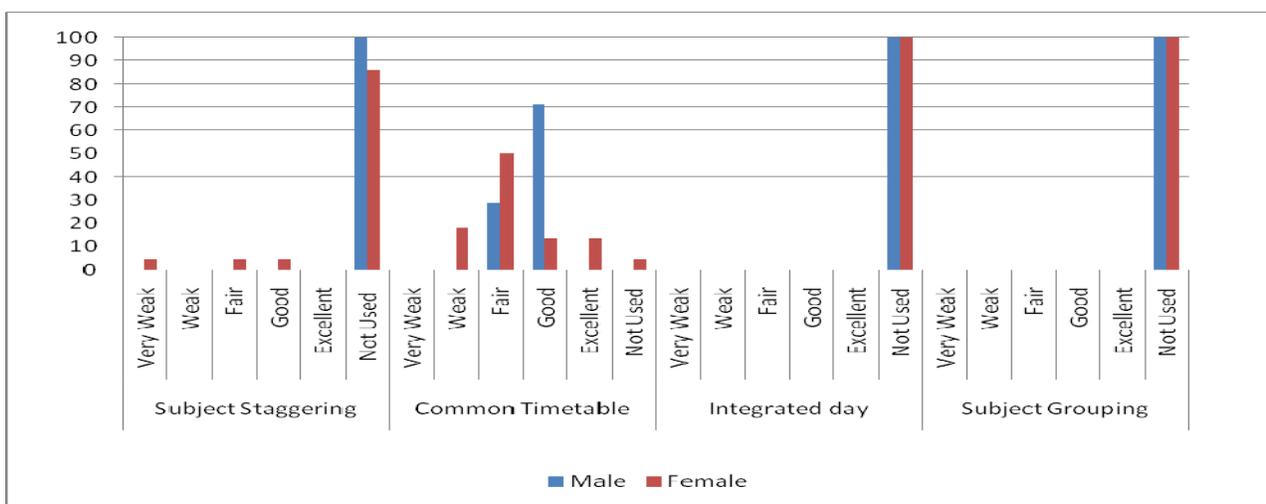
Differences were observed between grades they taught versus lesson presentation and classroom organisation. Competencies among teachers in lesson preparation were observed among teachers who taught the combinations of Grades 1, 2 & 3 and Grades 5 & 6 compared to teachers who taught a combination of Grades 1 & 2, 2 & 3, 3 & 4 and 6 & 7. Impressively, slight improvement among all groups was noted in classroom organisation.

The under-qualified teachers performed similarly on ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ in lesson presentations and classroom organisation. The teachers who did not state their qualification did not do well in tested competencies. The performance of teachers with BETD and those with other diplomas was better than the fore mentioned teachers. However, teachers with B.Ed. (Hons) were more competent in lesson presentation and classroom management compared to the remaining categories of teachers. The teachers trained by NIED were more competent in lesson presentation and classroom management compared to those trained by other service providers; indicating that NIED training had impacted on teachers competencies in lesson presentation and classroom management. .

The performance of teachers in the regions alternated between very weak, weak and fair ratings. Omaheke, Oshana, Khomas, Karas, Erongo and Kavango regions performed better in lesson presentation and classroom organisation while Caprivi, Ohangwena and Kunene regions performed weakly. Considering the teachers qualifications, the performance in both competencies concentrated on weak, fair and good. The satisfactory performance was noted among teachers with less than a year of teaching experience.

### 3.3 The teachers’ competencies on organisational approaches

#### 3.3.1 Gender influence on teachers’ competencies in organisational approaches



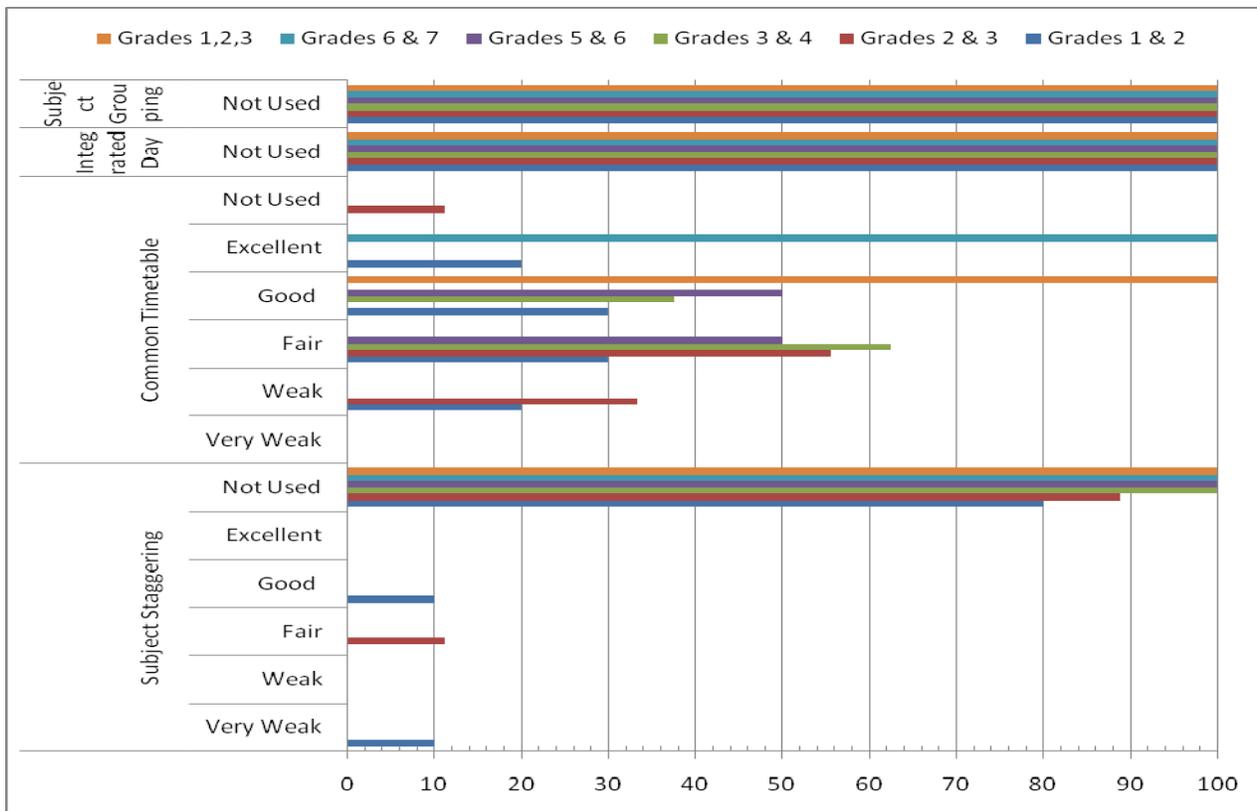
**Figure 19: The teachers’ competencies in using organisational approaches by gender**

As it is indicated in the figure 19, none of the male teachers used Subject Staggering. This approach was observed among 5% of the female teachers who were rated ‘very weak’, ‘fair’ and ‘good’ respectively. Male teachers did not use this approach. More than three third (86%) of female teachers did not use this approach. On the use of Common Timetable, 71% of the male teachers were rated ‘good’ compared to 13% of the females teachers while ‘fair’ rating was higher (50%) among female teacher than male teachers. Impressively, 14% of the female teachers were rated

‘excellent’ while 19% were rated ‘weak’; the opposite of the former results. Surprisingly, none of the teachers used Integrated Day and Subject Grouping approaches during the lesson presentation; implying that the two strategies might not be well understood during the teacher training. Lack of using the two strategies affects negatively the quality of multi-grade teaching.

### 3.3.2 Grades level, combination of grades and the way they influence teachers skills in organisational approaches

The number of grades accommodated in one classroom can influence the selection of organisational approach during multi-grade teaching. The result in figure 20 demonstrates how the combination of different grades influenced the selection of organisational approaches in multi-grade teaching.



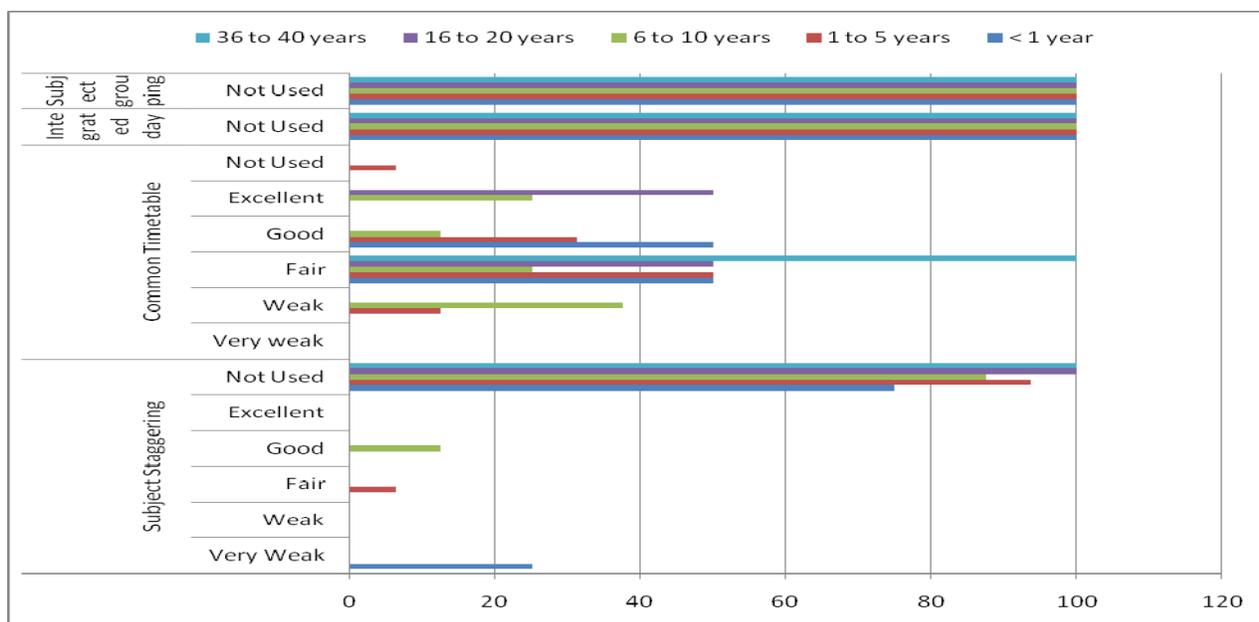
**Figure 20: Teachers’ skills on using organisational approaches by grades taught**

It is evident that teachers did not use Integrated Day and Subject Grouping approaches. Few (11%) teachers who had a combination of Grades 2 & 3 who did not use Common Timetable were rated ‘good, 56% of were ‘fair’ and 33% were ‘weak’. Although a fraction of teachers did not use Common Timetable, this approach was used by many teachers. According to the observation, teacher performed better in this approach compared to the remaining approaches. A 100% excellent rating was obtained by the teachers with a combination of Grades 6 & 7 and also 100% of the teachers teaching the combination of three grades, Grades 1, 2 & 3 were rated ‘good. Most of teachers combined Grades 3 & 4 (63%) was rated ‘fair’ while 38% of them scored ‘good’ on this competence. An equal distribution of 20% was noted on ‘excellent’ and ‘weak’ ratings among the teachers with a combination of Grades 1 & 2, as well as the equal distributions of 30% noted on ‘good’ and ‘fair’ among the same teachers. The Grades 5 & 6 teachers had an equal distribution of 50% ‘good’ and ‘fair’ performances.

On the use of Subject Staggering as an organisational approach, most teachers did not use this approach. The 100% rating of those who did not use it was noticed among teachers with combinations of Grades 1, 2 & 3, Grades 6 & 7; Grades 5 & 6 and Grades 3 & 4, while 89% of Grades 2 & 3 teachers and 80% of the Grades 1 & 2 did not use this approach. A fraction of the teachers (10%) rated at ‘good’ and ‘weak’ that used this approach was observed among teachers with a combination of Grades 1 & 2. Few teachers (11%) with a combination of Grades 2&3 were rated ‘fair’.

### 3.3.3 The influence of teachers’ experience in multi-grade teaching on using skills organisational approaches

As indicated on the first section of the teachers’ profiles, there are teachers who taught multi-grade classes since they started with their teaching profession. This was evident because some of the teachers had 16-40 years of experience in teaching multi-grade classrooms. The teaching experience in multi-grade was analysed by looking at how the teachers experience in teaching multi-grade can influence the selection of organisational approaches. The results are shown in figure 21.



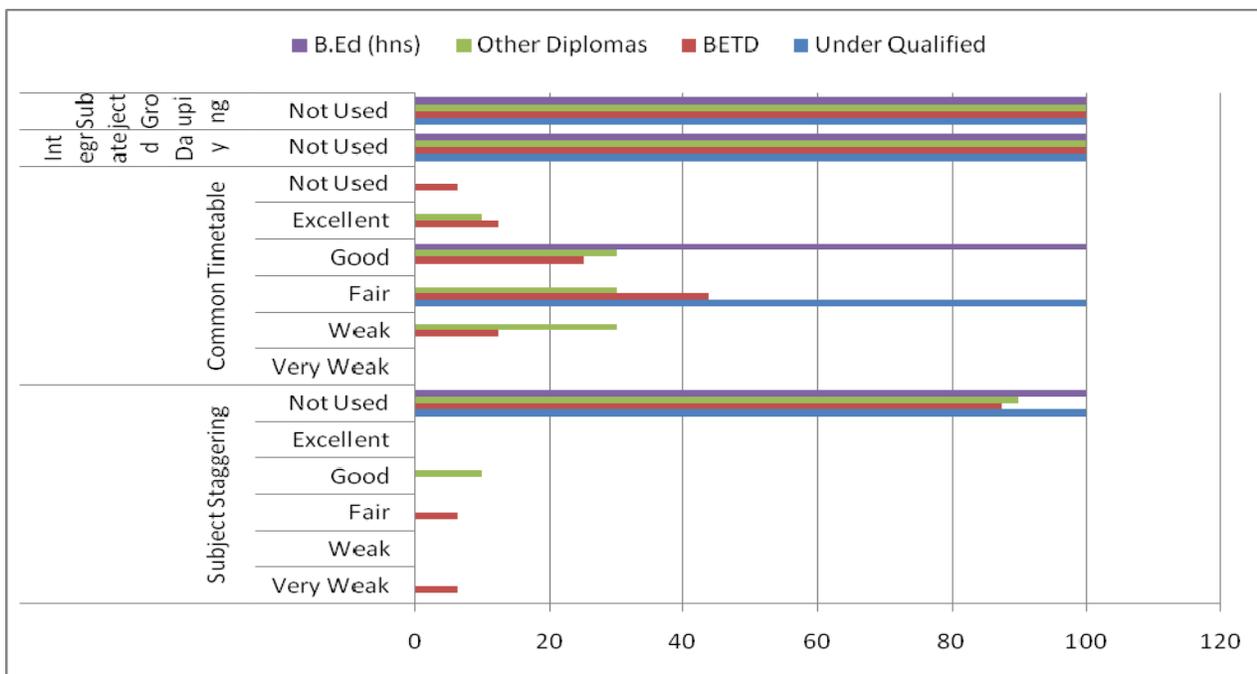
**Figure 21: Teachers’ skills on using organisational approaches by teaching experience in multi-grade**

As shown in figure 21 above, none of the teachers used the Integrated Day or Subject Grouping. Most of teachers (100%) with 36-40 years of teaching experience and 16-20 years of experience did not use Subject Staggering. In addition to this, 88% of teachers with 6-10 years’ experience, 94% of teachers with 1-5 years and 75% of teachers with less than one year did not use Subject Staggering approach. A small number of teachers with 6-10 years of experience were rated ‘good’ performance, 1-5 years of experience had 6% ‘fair’ and 25% of teachers with less than one year were ‘very weak’. The performance of teachers in the use of Common Timetable which required teachers to teach the same subject to different grade was observed with a 100% fair rating of teachers with 36-40 years of teaching experience. An equal performance of 50% ‘excellent’ and ‘fair’ ratings were noted among teachers with 16-20 years of teaching experience, as well as among the teachers with less than one year who were rated ‘good’ and ‘fair’. Teacher with 1-5 years of

teaching experience had 50% 'fair', 13% 'weak', 31% 'good' and 6% of them did not use Common Timetable approach.

Although the performance of teachers with different teaching experience in multi-grade varied in some cases, more especially on the use of Common Timetable, a constant pattern of 100% was observed among teachers with 36-40 years of teaching experience. However, the teachers in this category did not have an impressive performance because their highest rating was 100% 'fair' on Common Timetable which was the only approach they had used.

### 3.3.4 The influence of teachers' qualifications on using organisational approaches



**Figure 22: Teachers' competencies in using organisational approaches by qualification**

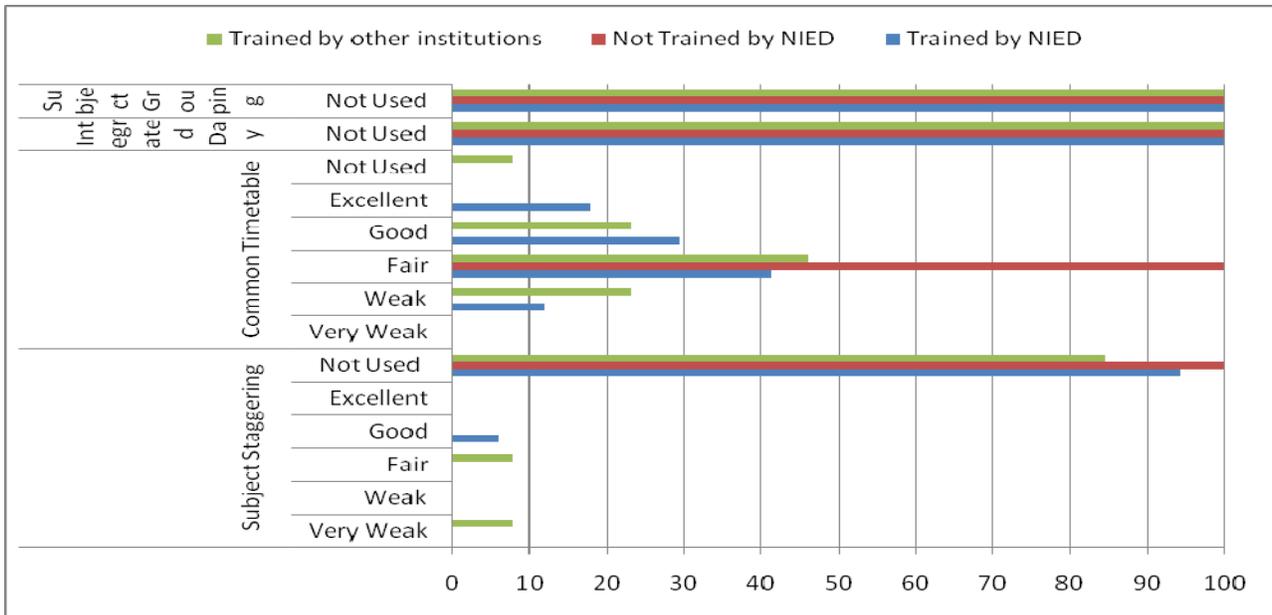
Figure 22 shows the influence of teachers' qualification on the selection of organisational approaches. The results show that in general qualification had impact on the effective use of various organizational approaches. None of the teachers used the Integrated Day or Subject Grouping in multi-grade lessons. However, the Common Timetable was used by many teachers, hence; the distribution of the ratings. The Common Timetable was not used by 6% of teachers with BETD although, 13% of these teachers were 'excellent', 25% were 'good' 44% were 'fair' and 13% of these teachers were 'weak' on the use of Common Timetable. In addition, a distribution of scores was noted with 10% 'excellent' an equal distribution of 30% on 'good', 'fair' and 'weak' among teachers with other diplomas. The B.Ed. (Hon) and under qualified teachers had a 100% rating 'good' and 'fair' respectively. In this case, teachers with B.Ed. (Hon) performed better than teacher with other qualifications.

Many teachers did not use Subject Staggering (100%) of B.Ed. (Hon), 100% of under qualified, 90% of teachers with other diplomas and 88% of those with BETD qualification. Among the teachers who used this approach were the teachers with BETD with an equal distribution of 6%

‘very weak’ and ‘fair’ as well as the teachers with other Diplomas who scored 10% ‘good’ in this category.

### 3.3.5 The impact of NIED training on teachers’ skills in using organisational approaches

The training conducted by the Multi-grade Committee in collaboration with the regional Advisory teachers consisted of different sections, but includes the explanation of different organisational approaches which teachers could use during multi-grade teaching. Figure 20 below indicates the result on how the teachers that were trained by NIED, by other institutions or that were not trained at all, selected and used the organisational approached during the multi-grade lessons. The training offered by other institutions was not specified.



**Figure 23: Teachers’ use of organisational approaches by training institutions**

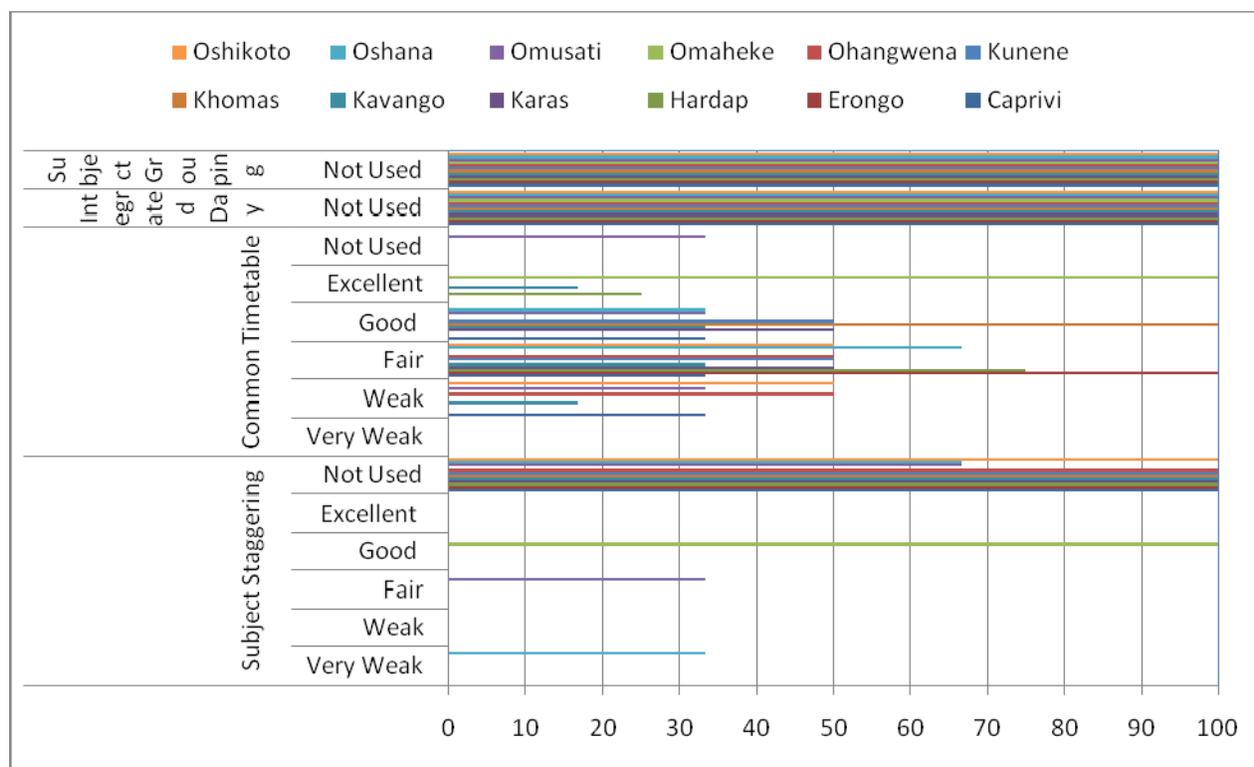
By looking at figure 23 above, it is evident that none of the teachers used Subject Grouping and Integrated Day. Few teachers used Subject Staggering and most of them used common timetable approach.

It was noted that teachers who were not trained by NIED or received other training did not use any other approach than common timetable, where they were rated 100% ‘fair’. The rating of the teachers that were trained by other institutions was distributed among different ratings. They were equal distributions of 23% ‘good’ and ‘weak’ ratings. Close to a half (46%) of the teachers were rated ‘fair’ on the use of common time table. Only 8% of the teachers in this group did not use the common timetable as an organisational approach. The teachers trained by NIED did well compare to other groups on the use of Common Timetable as an organisational approach. Teachers trained by NIED were rated with 18% ‘excellent’, 29% ‘good’, 41% ‘fair’ and 12% ‘weak’. None of the groups was rated very weak in using common timetable.

Most of teachers did not use Subject Staggering during teaching. These findings were evident among 85% of the teachers that were trained by other institutions, 100% of teachers that were not trained in multi-grade teaching and 94% of the teachers trained by NIED. Although few teachers used subject staggering, the result was not impressive either, because the ratings were very low. The

teachers that were trained by NIED were rated 6% ‘good’ while an equal distribution of 8% on ‘very weak’ and ‘fair’ were evident among teachers that were trained by other institutions.

### 3.3.6 Regional influence on teachers’ skills to use organisational approaches



**Figure 24: Teachers’ ability to use organisational approaches by regions**

The result on figure 24 shows that none of the regions used the two organisational approaches (Subject Grouping and Integrated Day). Moreover, teachers from different regions scored differently on the use of Common Timetable. Only few regions were rated with 100%, which means all teachers in all regions demonstrated competence in developing common timetable. The regions with a 100% rating on the use of common timetable were Omaheke rated ‘very good’, Khomas rated ‘good’ and Erongo rated ‘fair’.

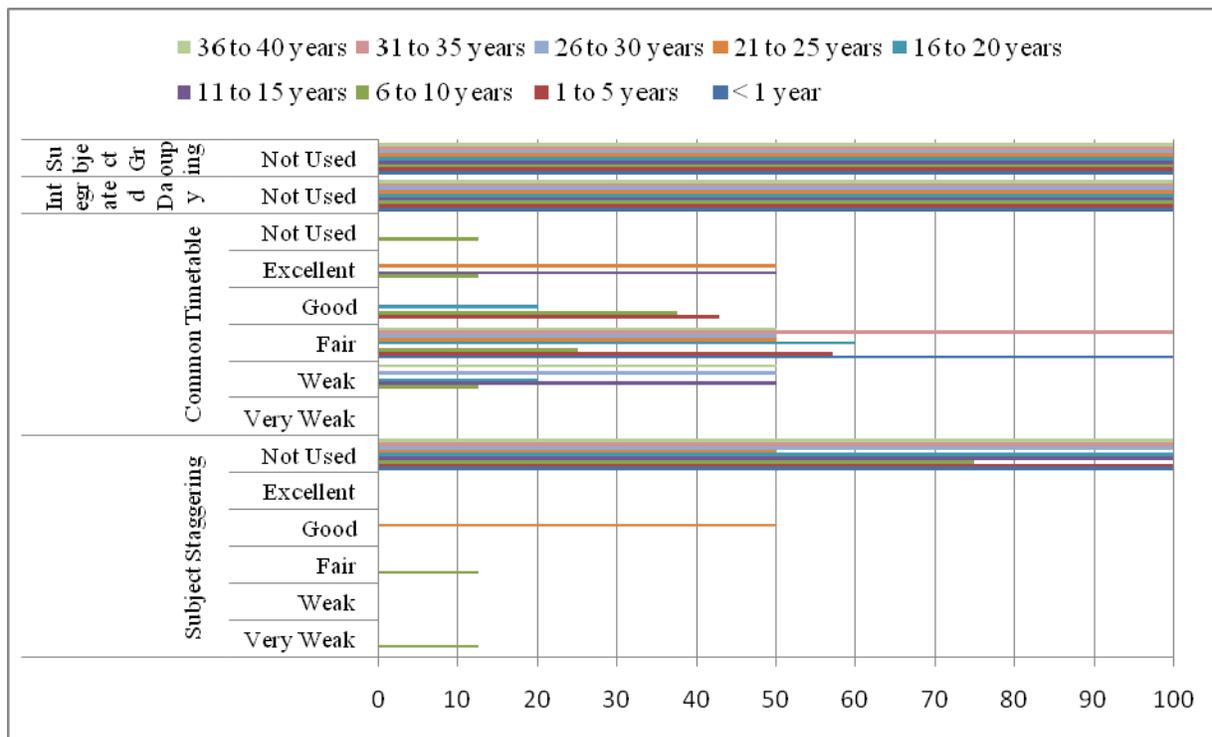
Interestingly, most of regions shared equal ratings. These were: Karas and Kunene regions with an equal distribution of 50% rating on ‘good’ and ‘fair’, Oshikoto and Ohangwena with an equal distribution of 50% rating on ‘fair’ and ‘weak’. Although Omusati and Caprivi had an equal distribution of 33%, the performance categories differed. Omusati scored 33% on ‘good’ and ‘weak’ and 33% of the teachers in this region did not use the common timetable. Caprivi region had scored 33% rating on ‘good’, ‘fair’ and ‘weak’. Kavango scored 17% rating on ‘very good’ and ‘weak’ and equal distribution of 33% on ‘good’ and ‘fair’. Hardap region was rated 25% ‘good’ and 75% ‘fair’ while Oshana region was rated with 33% ‘good’ and 67% ‘fair’.

Most of the regions did not use of subject staggering approach. The score of 100% was evident in Oshikoto, Kavango, Caprivi, Karas, Hardap, Ohangwena, Kunene, Erongo and Khomas regions. Omaheke was the only region that scored 100% ‘good’ on the use of subject staggering approach. More than half of the teachers (67%) in Omusati and Oshana regions did not use the subject

staggering approach. The scores differed since 33% of the teachers in Omusati were rated ‘fair’ while 33% of the teachers in Oshana were rated ‘weak’.

### 3.3.7 Teaching experience and the selection of organisational approaches

Teachers’ general experience was analysed by looking at how it can influence the selection of organisational approaches. The findings are presented in figure 25.



**Figure 25: The influence of teaching experience on teachers’ choices of organisational approaches**

As seen on figure 25, 50% of the teachers with 21-25 years of teaching experience were rated ‘good’ in the use of subject staggering. These teachers demonstrated competence in subject staggering compared to other groups. Few (13%) of the teacher with 6-10 years of teaching experience who used this approach were rated ‘very weak’ and ‘fair’ while 75% of these teachers did not use this approach. It amazing to note that teachers that had < 1 year; 1-5, 11-15, 16-20, 26-30, 31-35’ and 36-40 of teaching experience did not use subject staggering approach.

Apart from 13% of the teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience who did not use the common timetable approach, an equal distribution of 13% was noted on ‘excellent’ and ‘weak’, 38% ‘good’ and 25% ‘fair’. Other teachers with different teaching experiences used the common timetable approach whereby 31-35 years of teaching experience and teacher that had < 1 year teaching experience scored 100% ‘fair’ on the use of this approach. Some groups of teachers that had other years of teaching experience had equal ratings in common timetable. A 100% (rated fair and weak) score was noted among the teachers that had 26-30 years of experience, 21-25 years of teaching experience were rated ‘excellent’ and ‘fair’, 11-15 years of teaching experience were rated ‘excellent’ and ‘weak’. Few teachers (20%) that had 16-20 years of teaching experience rated ‘good’ 60% ‘fair’ and 20% ‘weak’ while those that had 1-5 years of teaching experience had 43% ‘good’ and 57% ‘fair’.

### **3.3.8 Conclusion on teachers' competencies to use organisational approaches**

None of the teachers used integrated day or subject grouping. Few of the female teachers used subject staggering. The male teachers were competent in organisation approaches although few of the observed female teachers were excellent on the use of common timetable. On the grade level and combination, the teachers' performance was distributed among weak, fair, good and excellent. Satisfactory performance was noted among teachers with Grades 6 & 7 and Grades 1 & 2, Grades 1, 2, & 3; grades 5 & 6; grades 3 & 4 and grades 1 & 2. Teachers with more than 20 years' experience in teaching multi-grade did not do well. A better performance was noted among teachers with experience of less than one year to 20 years. Few teachers with the BETD qualification and higher, performed better than the under qualified teachers on the use of common timetable. The NIED training has influenced the performance of teachers compared to teachers who were trained by other institutions or not trained at all.

The competence on the use of common timetable differed among the regions. The satisfactory performance was noted in Omaheke, Hardap and Kavango region Khomas, Kunene and Karas and Oshana, Omusati, Caprivi and Kavango regions had an equal performance. Omaheke region outperformed all regions on the use of subject staggering.

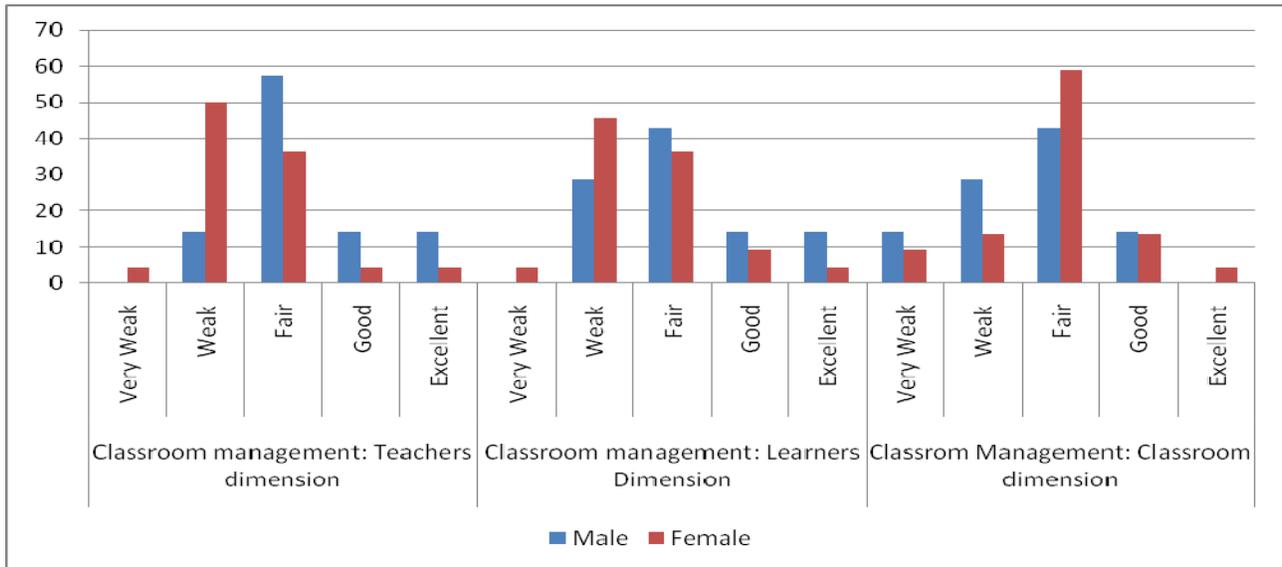
Some teachers demonstrated excellent performance on the use of common timetable. These were teachers with 6–10, 11–15 and 21–25 years of teaching experience. Teachers with 21 to 25 years of teaching experience were more competent in using subject staggering compared to other categories. It was amazing noting that teachers with 26 to 40 years of teaching experience did not do well organisational approaches.

The fact that teachers did not use other organisational approaches than Common Timetable indicates that they were not well versed or they needed training to understand and use all organisational approaches when teaching. The Subject Grouping and Subject Staggering seem demanding than other approaches as they require the teacher to really understand the contents of two or more subjects for them to be able to link the basic competencies when planning. This should be easier for lower primary teachers due to class teaching and the thematic approach whose focal point is to teach themes across all subjects in a grade. It is not surprising that upper primary teachers experience problems using other strategies than Common Timetable, because at this level, subject teaching is practised, hence teachers are only responsible for the subject allocated to them. However, team planning would enable them to plan together and identify common themes.

## **3.4 The teachers' competencies on classroom management**

### **3.4.1 Teachers' gender influence on classroom management**

The teachers were observed on the way they managed their classrooms, considering the teachers dimension, learners dimension as well as classroom dimension. The three areas are described below.



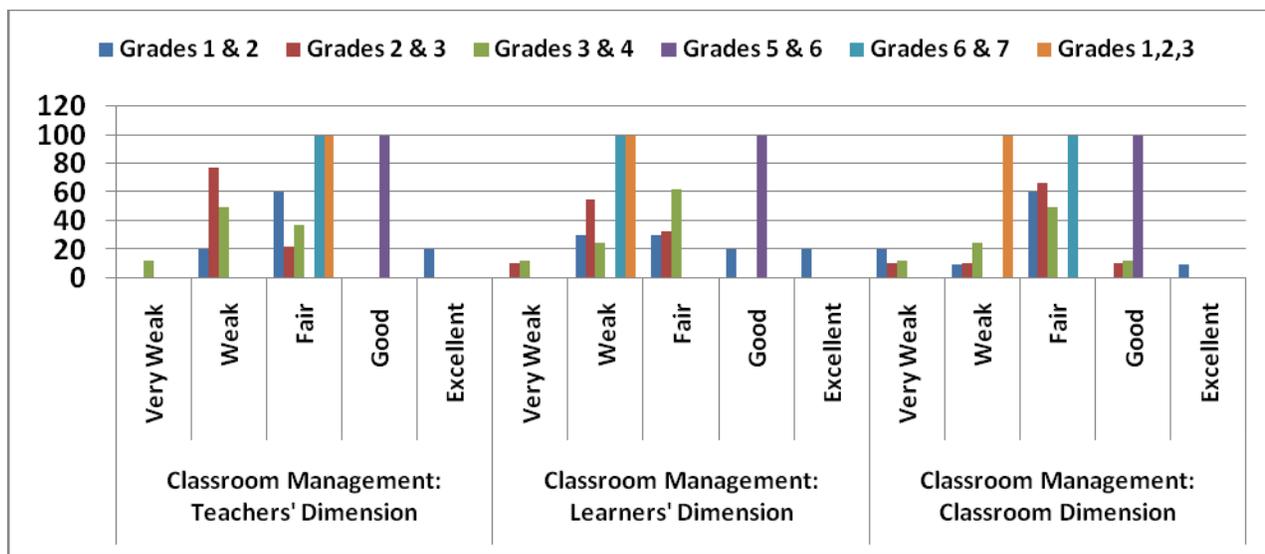
**Figure 26: The gender influence on teachers' classroom management**

The findings presented in figure 26 show that teachers' performance in classroom management not impressive. Male teacher were rated higher on 'excellent' (15%), 'good' (15%), 'fair' (58%) and 'weak' (15%) compared to female teachers in classroom management: teacher dimension. These results implied that male teachers demonstrated competence in classroom management: teacher dimension compared to female teacher.

The results on classroom management: learners dimension place the male teachers higher compared to female teachers. Male teachers were rated 'excellent' (15%), 'good' (15%), 'fair' (43%) and 'weak' (29%) compared to female teacher who were rated 'excellent' (5%), 'good' (9%), 'fair' (37%), 'weak' (45%) and 'very weak' (5%).

Female teacher demonstrated better competencies in classroom management: classroom dimension compared to male teachers. Female teachers were rated above male teachers on 'excellent' (5%), and 'fair' (59.5%). The ratings on 'weak' (15%) and 'very weak' (9%) below the male counterparts infer that they were better equipped with skills in classroom management: classroom dimension than male teacher.

### 3.4.2 The influence of grades teaching on classroom management



**Figure 27: The grades teaching influence on classroom management**

#### *Teachers' dimension*

Figure 27 presents findings on the way teachers managed multi-grade classrooms considering the combination of the grades taught. The results show that teachers' competencies in classroom management in the three dimensions were not impressive. Majority of the teachers (100%) were rated 'fair' in classes which combined Grades 6 and 7 and Grades 1, 2, and 3. Teachers who showed satisfactory competence in facilitating learning, walking around the classroom to give special help to learners, and to make sure that all learners were attended to be those who were observed teaching Grades 5 and 6 together, as 100% of the teachers were rated 'good'. Teachers who taught in Grades 2 and 3 and Grades 3 and 4 did not show competence in managing their classrooms as 78% of the Grades 2 and 3 combinations were rated 'weak' or 'very weak' while 22% of teachers of the same grades combination were rated 'fair'. More than a third (38%) of the teachers who taught Grades 3-4 combination were rated 'fair' in this aspect compared to 63% of them who were rated 'weak' or 'very weak' respectively.

#### *Learners' dimension*

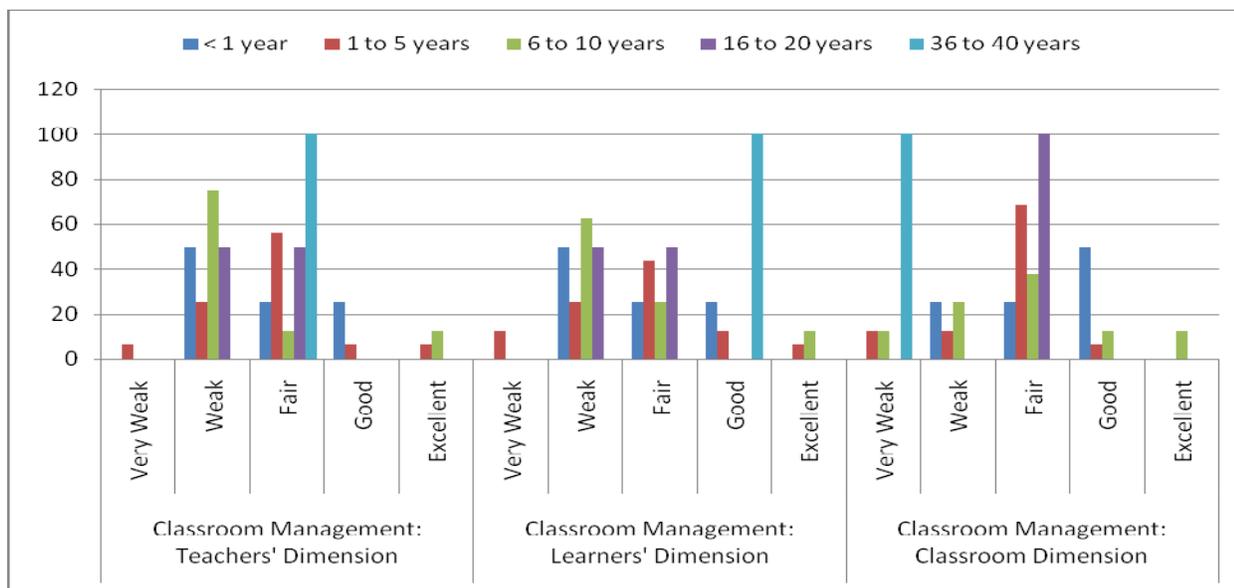
In the figure 27, 100% of teachers who taught a combination of Grade 5 and 6 were rated 'good' on learners' dimension. More than a third (40%) of the teachers who combined Grades 1 and 2 were rated 'good (40%) or excellent (40%), thus, demonstrated competence in learners' dimension while 30% were rated 'fair' indicating that teachers were able to make learners to work diligently, complete tasks assign to them and display appropriate behaviour in a multi-grade setting. Classes with a combination of Grades 1, 2 and 3, and Grades 6 and 7, did not demonstrate competence in learners' dimension as 100% of these teachers were rated 'weak'. Poor management of learners affects learning and teaching processes. More than half (63%) of teachers teaching the combination of Grades 3-4 were rated 'fair' while 38% were rated 'weak' or 'very weak'.

#### *Classroom dimension*

Classroom environment in multi-grade teaching just as in mono grade teaching should be conducive to learners. By definition, this environment includes physical condition of the classroom, furniture, textbook availability, teaching and learning space and storage space. It appears from figure 27 that

majority of the multi-grade classrooms that were observed did not have a conducive classroom environment that fitted the description above. Majority of the classrooms were rated ‘fair’ with an exception of classes that combined Grades 5 and 6 that were rated 100% ‘good’. Those that fell short were the classrooms that hosted combined Grades 1, 2, and 3 where 100% of the teachers in these grades were rated ‘poor’.

### 3.4.3 The influence of experience in multi grade teaching on classroom management



**Figure 28: The experience in teaching multi-grade versus skills on classroom management**

#### *Teachers' dimension*

As shown in figure 28, teachers' experience in multi-grade did have much impact on the three dimensions of classroom management. Only teachers of less than 1 year teaching in multi-grade managed to maintain a reasonable classroom management as 25% of the teachers were rated ‘good’ and ‘fair’ respectively. Half (50%) of the teacher who had 16-40 years of teaching experience who were regarded as more experienced were ‘fair’. Comparably, teachers who had 16 to 20 years of teaching experience were rated 50% ‘fair’ while 100% of the teachers who had 36 to 40 years of teaching experience were rated ‘fair’ respectively. Teachers with teaching experience of 6-10 were not competent in managing the multi-grade classroom as a majority (75%) were rated ‘weak’ and a fraction (13%) were rated respectively ‘fair’ and ‘excellent’.

#### *Learners' dimension*

Figure 28 present the findings on classroom management learners' dimension. As shown in the figure, teachers who had 36-40 years of teaching experience were competent in managing learners as 100% were rated ‘good’. Satisfactory skills on learners' management were portrayed by teachers who had less than 1 year of teaching of which 25% of the teachers were rated ‘fair’ and ‘good’ respectively though 50% of the teachers were rated ‘weak’. Half (50%) of the teachers who had 16-20 years of teaching experience rated ‘weak’ in classroom management while (50%) were rated ‘fair’. These results implied that teachers were not competent enough in classroom management and that experience does not impact on the teachers' competence in managing learners in the classroom.

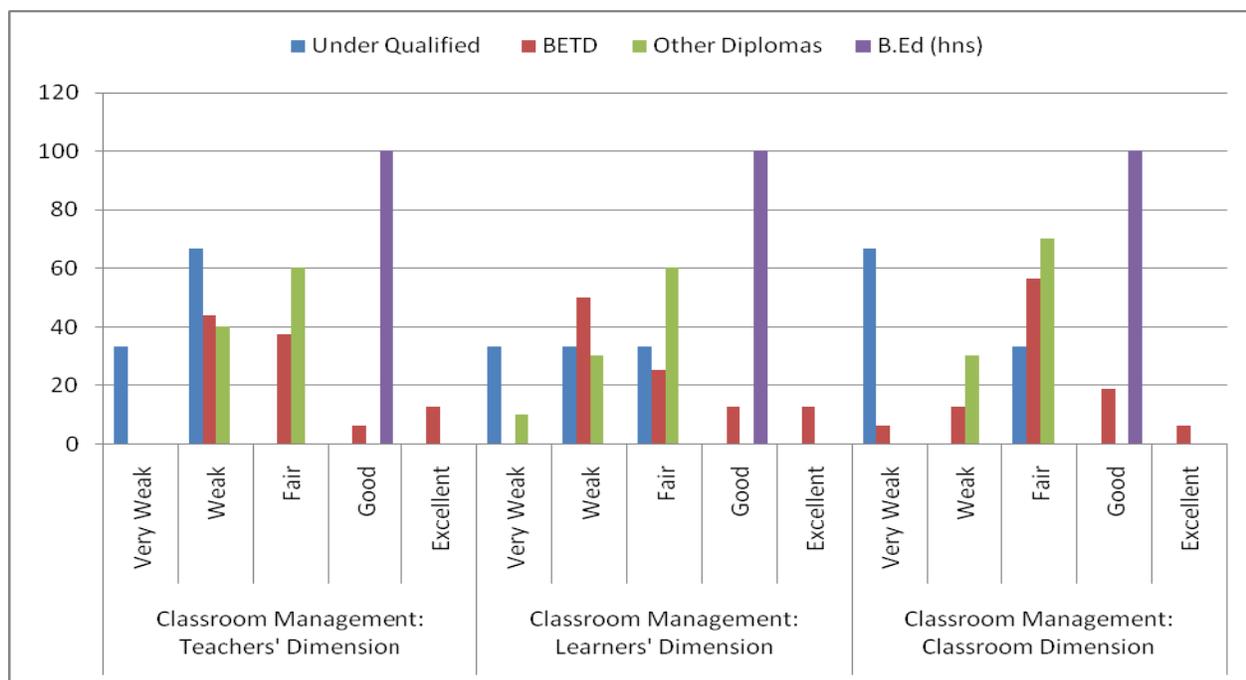
### ***Classroom dimension***

The results shown in figure 28 show that majority of the teachers in their different teaching experience categories were not competent managing their classrooms. Most of the teachers in the various categories were rated either ‘weak’, ‘very weak’ or ‘fair’. This shows that teachers’ teaching experience had little influence on teachers’ competent to manage the multi-grade classrooms. As the figure shows, teachers with teaching experience of less than 1 year showed satisfactory competence in managing classrooms compared to the experienced teachers.

More precise, 50% of these teachers with less than 1 year teaching experience were rated ‘good’ while 25% were rated ‘fair’. Those of 1-5 years of teaching experience were rated 69% ‘good’ and 26% ‘weak’ or ‘very weak’ respectively. All teachers (100%) who had 36-40 and 16-20 years of teaching experience were rated ‘very weak’ and ‘fair’ respectively. More than a third (38%) of the teachers in 6-10 years of teaching experience were rated ‘weak’ or ‘very weak’ respectively. There remaining (26%) of the teachers were rated ‘good or very weak,’ and 38% were rated ‘fair’.

### **3.4.4 The impact of teaching qualification on classroom management**

Classroom management, this is a core competency in mono and multi-grade of teaching. The results on figure 29 portray the influence of teachers’ qualification on classroom management.



**Figure 29: The effect of teaching qualification on classroom management**

### ***Teachers’ dimension***

Teachers with B.Ed. (Hons) were rated ‘good’ (100%) in classroom management: teacher dimension compared other groups of teachers. Furthermore, the ratings of teachers that had BETD (44% ‘weak’, 38% ‘fair’ 6% ‘good’ and 13% ‘excellent’) were better than those that had other diplomas (‘fair’ 60%, ‘weak’ 40%) and the under qualified teachers (33% ‘very weak’ and 67% ‘weak’). These findings infer that qualification play a role in classroom management: teacher dimension.

**Learners' dimension**

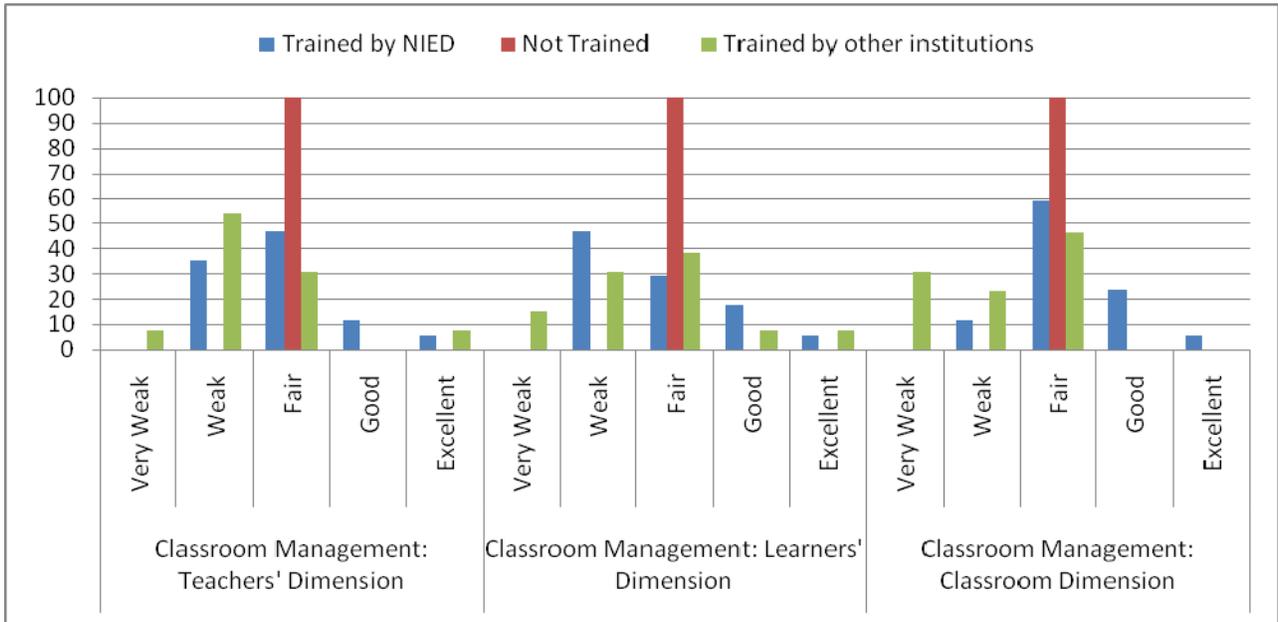
B.Ed. (Hons) teachers demonstrated competency in classroom management: learners' dimension compared to the rest of qualification categories. Comparing the ratings of the four qualification categories vis-à-vis the classroom management: learners dimension, teachers that had B.Ed. (Hon) were rated 100% 'good', BETD holders were rated 50% 'weak', 25% 'fair' and 13% 'good' and 'excellent, the under qualified teachers were rated 33% on 'very weak', 'weak' and 'fair'. teachers with other diplomas were rated 10% 'very weak', 30% 'weak' and 60% of them were 'fair, .

**Classroom dimension**

Teacher with B.Ed. (Hons) were impressively rated (100% 'good'). The teachers with BETD performed with 6% 'very weak', 13% 'weak', 56% 'fair' 19% 'good' and 6% of them were rated 'excellent'. The BETD ratings were better compared to the remaining qualification categories whose ratings were slightly lower. Further results show that the under qualified teachers were rated 67% 'very weak' and 33% 'fair', teachers that had other diplomas were rated 30% 'weak' and 70% 'fair'. These finding implied that the higher the qualification the more competent the teacher were in all classroom management dimensions.

**3.4.5 The influence of NIED training on teachers' competencies on classroom management**

Intensive training is believed to improve the teachers' classroom management skills. Figure 27 compare the training that teachers received versus management of multi-grade classroom under the three dimensions namely teachers, learners and the classroom itself.



**Figure 30: The impact of NIED training on teachers' classroom management skills**

**Teachers' dimension**

The results in figure 30 indicates that the management of classroom on teacher' dimension was not effective. This was evident from teachers' ratings which were heavily clustered on 'very weak' to 'fair'. In comparing the findings, 100% rating on 'fair' was noted on the teachers who did not receive any training on multi-grade teaching. The teachers that attended the NIED training were rated with 35% 'weak', 47% 'fair', 12% 'good' and 6% were rated 'excellent'. The teachers who

received training from other institutions were rated 8% 'very weak', 54% 'weak', 31% 'fair' and 8% 'excellent'. The findings further show that teachers that received NIED training were more competent in classroom management compared to training offered by other serve providers.

**Learners' dimension**

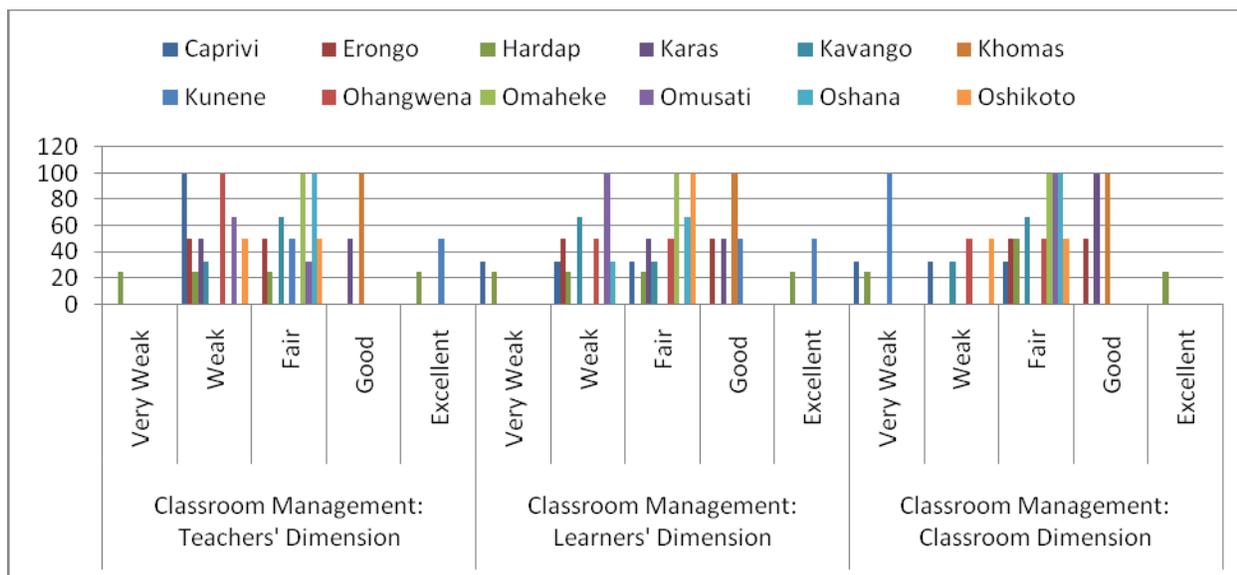
All (100%) teachers who did not receive any training on the teaching of multi-grade were rated 'fair'. The teachers trained by other institution performed were rated 'very weak' (15%), 'weak' (31%), 'fair' (38%) and equal distribution of 8% on 'good' and 'excellent'. Teachers trained by NIED faired comparatively satisfactorily compared to those trained by other training providers. NIED's trained teachers were rated 47% were rated 'weak' 29% 'fair', 18% were 'good' and 6% were 'excellent' on managing the learners' dimension in their multi-grade classrooms.

**Classroom dimension**

Regarding the classroom management: classroom dimension, teachers who were not trained by NIED in multi-grade teaching were rated 100% 'fair'. Those who were trained by NIED were rated 12% 'weak', 59% 'fair', 24% 'good' and 6% 'excellent'. The teachers that were trained by other institutions were rated with 31% 'very weak', 23% 'weak' and 46% were rated 'fair'.

**3.4.6 The regional influence on teachers' competencies in classroom management**

The performance of teachers in different region is shown in figure 31



**Figure 31: The regional influence on teachers' classroom management skills**

**Teachers' dimension**

As seen in figure 31 teachers in different educational regions performed differently. Some regions were rated 100% 'fair' while other comparatively low. Caprivi and Ohangwena regions were rated 'weak' (100%), Oshana and Omaheke were rated 'fair' (100%) and Khomas region was rated 'good' (100%) on classroom management: classroom dimension. Interestingly, 25% of the teachers in Hardap region were rated 'very weak', 'weak', 'fair' and 'excellent'. Some such as Erongo and Oshikoto regions were rated 50% 'weak' and 50% 'fair' despite the different geographical

proximity. Teacher in Karas and Kunene regions were rated 50% ‘weak’ and ‘good’. Kavango was rated 33% ‘weak’ and 67% ‘fair’ and Omusati ratings were 67% ‘weak’ and 33% ‘fair’.

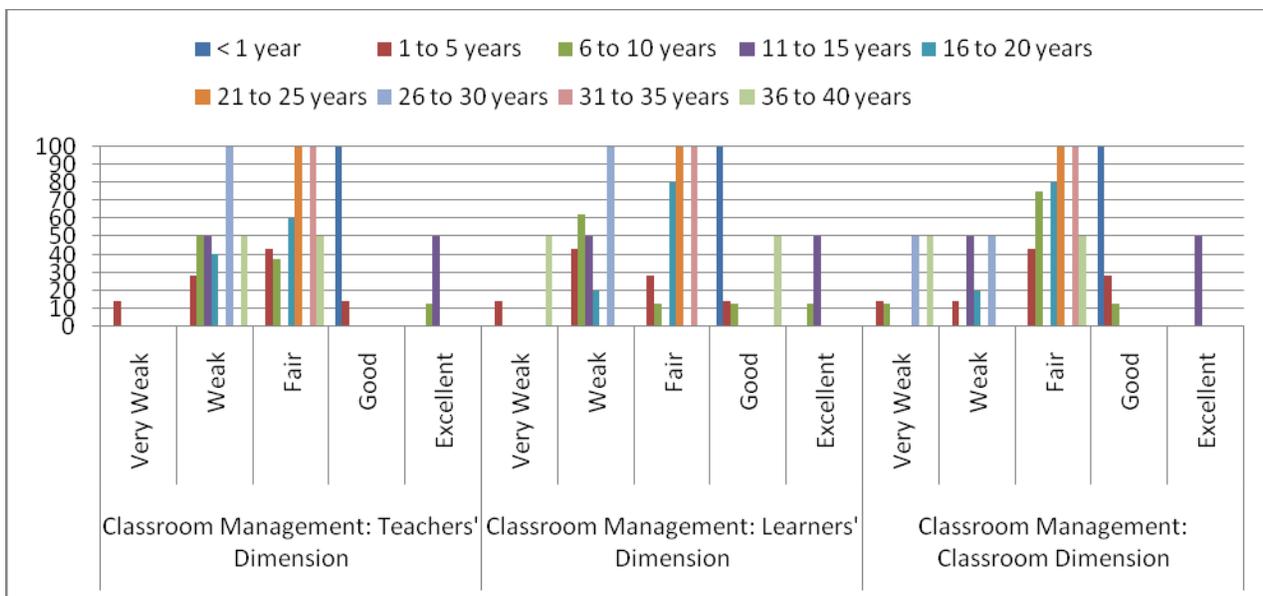
**Learners’ dimension**

The performance of regions on classroom management: learners dimension show that Omaheke and Oshikoto regions were rated 100% ‘fair’ Khomas region had 100% ‘good’ while Omusati region scored 100% ‘weak’. Half of the teachers (50%) in Ohangwena and Erongo regions were rated ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ respectively. Teacher in Karas region were rated 50% ‘fair’ and ‘good’, Kunene region scored 50% ‘good’ and ‘excellent’, respectively. Kavango was rated 67% ‘weak’ and 33% ‘fair’ while Oshana regions scored 33% ‘weak’ and 67% ‘fair’. Hardap maintained region 25% in ‘very weak’, ‘weak’, ‘fair’ and ‘excellent’ concurrently.

**Classroom dimension**

Khomas and Karas were rated 100% ‘good’, Omaheke, Oshana and Omusati regions were rated 100% ‘fair’ while Kunene region was rated 100% ‘very weak’. Teachers in Oshikoto and Ohangwena regions were equally rated 50% ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ while Erongo region had 50% ‘fair’ and ‘good’. A Concurrent rating of 33% ‘very weak’, ‘weak’ and ‘fair’ was noted in Caprivi. Kavango region was rated 33% ‘weak’ and 67% ‘fair’ and Hardap region had 25% ‘very weak’, 50% ‘fair’ and 25% ‘excellent’ in the classroom management: classroom dimension. In essence, teacher in the regions did differ much on classroom management: classroom dimension. Most probable, multi-grade settings do not differ.

**3.4.7 The impact of teachers’ teaching experience on competencies in classroom management**



**Figure 32: The influence of teaching experience on classroom management**

**Teachers’ dimension**

As shown in figure 32, teachers with teaching experience above 15 years did not demonstrate competence in classroom management compared to those who had below 15 years of teaching experience in general. More specifically, 100% of the teachers who had 26–30 years of teaching experience were rated ‘weak’ in managing the multi-grade classrooms. Furthermore, 100% of the

teachers who taught between 21–25 years, and 31–35 years were rated ‘fair’. Teachers with 36–40 years of teaching experience were rated 50% ‘very weak’ and ‘fair’ respectively. Satisfactory competencies were observed among teachers with less than one year teaching experience of which 100% of the teachers were rated ‘good’.

### ***Learners’ dimension***

The results on teaching experience versus classroom management: Learners’ dimensions are presented in figure 32. Teachers with less than 1 year of teaching experience were rated ‘excellent’ in classroom management: learners’ dimension. Half (50%) of the teachers who had 11-15 and 36-40 years of teaching experience were rated ‘excellent’ and ‘good’ respectively. About a quarter (26%) of the teachers who had 6-10 years of teaching experience were rated ‘good’ and ‘excellent’. The performance of those who had 26–30 years of teaching experience was relatively poor in fostering good management of learners. All (100%) teachers in this category rated ‘weak’. Teachers who had 21–25 years, and 31–35 years of teaching experience were rated fair (100%) in classroom management: learners’ dimensions.

### ***Classroom dimension***

All (100%) of the teachers who had less than one year of teaching experience were rated ‘good’ on classroom management: classroom dimension in terms of learning space, and maintaining control on the furniture and textbooks. Close to a third, (29%) of teachers who had 1-5 years of teaching experience were rated ‘good’ and 43% were rated ‘fair’. Satisfactory performance was observed among teachers who had 11–15 years of teaching experience of which 50% of the teacher were rated ‘excellent’ on managing classrooms dimensions. Surprisingly, 100% of the most experienced teachers who had 26-30, years of teaching experience where ‘weak’ or ‘very weak’. Those who had teaching experience of 6-10, 16–20, 21–25, and 31–35 years were rated ‘fair’. This might imply that new and middle grouped teachers mastered the content of the multi grade training or could read the training manual, comprehend the content and use the knowledge and skills in managing the multi-grade classroom.

### **3.4.8 Conclusion on teachers’ competencies in classroom management**

The male teachers outperformed the female teachers in classroom management: teachers’ and learners dimensions while the female teachers were competent in classroom dimension. Teachers with Grades 5 & 6 and grades 1 & 2 combinations were competent in classroom management compared to those teaching other combinations of grades especially those who combined three grades. This gave an indication that the more grades you have, the difficult it is to manage the class. It was observed that different language of instruction contributed to the poor performance in classroom management because teachers teaching grades 3 & 4 experienced difficulties teaching.

Teachers who had 6–10 years of teaching experience in teaching multi-grade showed competence in all areas of classroom management compared to those that had longer teaching experience. One would have expected that the longer serving teachers in multi-grade, the better the higher competencies in classroom management. This was not the case because teachers who had 36–40 years performed unsatisfactorily.

Satisfactory performance and competency in classroom management was noted among teachers with B.Ed. (Hon) followed those with BETD. These finding implied that the higher the qualification, the more competent the teachers were in classroom management dimensions. The under qualified teachers did not do well in classroom management. Intensive training is believed to

improve the teachers' classroom management skills. Although all teachers performed poorly, the teachers trained by NIED and by other institutions were competent, compared to those who did not attend multi-grade training.

Regions performed differently. Khomas region performed better than other regions in all areas of classroom management, followed by Hardap and Kavango regions where a fraction of teachers were rated excellent in some areas of classroom management. All teachers in Kunene region did not do well in classroom dimension while the rest of the regions were rated 'weak' to 'fair'. In terms of teaching experience, teachers with 11-15 years of teaching experience were competent in classroom management while a fraction of those with 6-10 years of experience did well in teachers and learners dimensions. Teachers with less year of teaching experience were rated "good" in all areas of classroom management.

## SECTION FOUR

### VIEWS EXPRESSED BY TEACHERS, PARENTS AND LEARNERS ON MULTI-GRADE TEACHING

#### 4.1 Teachers' views on multi-grade teaching

##### *Reasons for establishing multi-grade at schools*

Multi-grade emanated from the low enrolment of learners specifically in rural schools and implementation of staff norms that require a ratio of 1/35 teacher to learners. In typical pastoral communities such as the Ovahimba in Kunene region, multi-grade in the form of mobile schools form the most convenient way of ensuring that education as a human right is provided to all citizens. Another typical cultural and traditional oriented community like the San, the way of living confines the families into small communities on which the number of school going children become too low to form a class. In such setting, multi-grade becomes tantamount.

##### *The combination of multi-grade classrooms in schools*

Multi-grade teaching is common at Lower Primary Phase. Circumstantially, there were combination of classes of Lower Primary and Upper Primary. Analysis of the teachers' profiles revealed the combination of three grades (Grades 1, 2 & 3). Furthermore, these findings showed that the interviewed teachers were mostly taught Grades 1 & 2 (60%), Grades 2 & 3 (17%), Grades 3 & 4 (25%) and 8% of them taught a combination of Grades 5&6. Although there were slight differences between the information from the interviewed and observed teachers, the representation of teachers interviewed in terms of combined grades was not very different from the information from the observed teachers' profiles where the highest representation was observed on the combination of grades 1 & 2 and least representation was observed on the combination of Upper Primary grades.

##### *Professional experience to teach multi-grade*

Multi-grade teaching is not popular especially in urban schools. The concept rather than practice is introduced in teacher training program as a module within the ETP course. There is scant data pertaining to multi-grade schools and classes within the EMIS statistics the lack popularity and emphasis of multi-grade teaching within the teacher program resulted into teachers teaching in multi grade classes without training. Teachers in all phases have been attending the subject related workshop since the reform of education. Educational reforms did not emphasise the training of multi-grade teachers. As such, multi-grade teachers were left to practice 'try and error' and personal intuition in handling the multi-grade classroom. Most of teachers in the visited schools indicated that they trained by NIED in 2008 while some attended workshops organised by the Advisory Teachers in their circuits. Furthermore, there were those who indicated that they read books to get more information on multi-grade teaching although none was asked to give the name of the books they read to get the information:

*I get information at the workshop that I attended, read books which I received from the workshop on how to teach multi-grade.*

*It is my own knowledge about multi-grade teaching. I was not exposure to multi-grade teaching during my teacher training programme. The November training workshop was the first one I attended.*

#### **4.1.1 The benefits of the NIED training**

##### ***The most useful part of the training***

The most useful information teachers received during the multi-grade training was classroom organization, Timetabling, Organizational approaches, Lesson planning (co-planning, designing the activities, working with learners to plan the lesson), the presentation skills, more especially how to present a multi-grade lesson, how to teach learners in two grades and the distribution of work among multi-grade learners. Teachers also learned different teaching and learning methods as well as how to assess learners in multi-grade teaching.

Even if teachers identified the organisational approaches as one of the useful part of the multi-grade training; the result from the survey indicated that most teachers opted for one component of organisational approach namely common timetable during the teaching. Although teachers claimed to use the common timetable approach, they seemed not to understand what the approach entailed:

*It was the lesson planning. They invited learners from other schools and they give lessons to the learners. That is why we see how these teachers are working with learners. The video show, which portrayed how other teachers handle multi-grade teaching in South Africa.*

*The presentation, how to teach the learners in the two grades. Because sometimes, we as teachers don't know how to cope with two grades at the same time. At the workshop the facilitators showed us how to teach two grades at the same time.*

*One of the things was how to divide work among learners, and also how to teach learners at different levels of understanding that is, what content to teach to learners in lower grade and what to teach to learners in a higher grade. Assessment was one of the most useful components of the workshop.*

##### ***The influence of the training on teachers' teaching practice***

The training offered by NIED in collaboration with the Advisory Teachers in various regions had positively influenced the performance of teachers teaching in multi grade classroom. Teachers used skills learned from the NIED workshops to teach multi grade classes. They were able to work with different learners because the training changed the approach to teaching and organization of the classrooms. Teachers indicated changes in assessment approaches of which they used group work during teaching and improved on time management.

*When I entered, the first time, in those class, I don't know what to do because the learners were too many and don't how to handle them. When I go to those workshops, I listened and hear and people tell me how to organize learners, how to let them sit, and that helps me. It also helps me improving the teaching styles, where they teach us, the time table also helps me. If take English, I must do it for both classes at the same time.*

*The presentation of my lesson has changed. I used to divide my periods into 20/20. For the first 20 minutes, I will stick with the grade 2s and give work for them and the other 20*

*minutes I will stay with grade 3. I put the grade 3 in front and work with grade 2 alone. And I have divided the chalkboard in half.*

It was observed during the classroom visits that there were evidences of positive competencies on the use of the mono-grade syllabus in planning, the handling of two or more grades at the same time and the use of time scheduled. Some teachers faced difficulties in teaching multi-grade classes:

*I can manage my time now. I learned at the workshop to have more activities and to make use of groups. Because when we work with groups, I can have may be one group of reading instead of the whole class. If we work with groups, then I can have one group only for reading. So if it is reading in a group I can have few learners or five learners for reading instead of the whole class. When other learners are busy with another task, I can proceed with reading.*

*They help me because when I come back to my class I try to implement it. For example, the timetable and teaching method I was using I changed the one I was using to the one I received from the training and it helped me to assist my learners. Even to the organisation of the classroom, I try as I can to do the better one.*

*In my class, assessment was changed, the observation, arrangement of the class, the layout of the class was also changed because I have put the reading corner and also the participation of the learners.*

#### **Support received from the school and Advisory Teachers in handling a multi-grade class**

The level and extent of support in multi-grade teaching varied from school to school. Sources of support were from the school especially the principals and fellow teachers compared to the support from the Advisory Teachers. The support was not consistent as it differed from school to school. The regional support was minimal. Advisory teachers were not much assessable. Few teachers indicated getting assistance from the Cluster facilitators. The assistance which was noted with appreciation was the teachers' workshop which was conducted by NIED officials.

*The only support I got is only at the workshop where they showed and teach and trained us to how to deal with multi-grade teaching. No support received from other teachers, principal and advisory services.*

*The advisory teacher is also providing support, if we have a problem, just get on the phone and talk to her. The principal hasn't been a multi-grade teacher, no he has been but he was not actually part of the training, is not knowledgeable about multi-grade teaching but to certain extent. Honestly speaking from my heart, I do not get any necessary assistance from the parents. Even if I give homework to learners, I cannot really say they receive assistance from their parents.*

*I didn't get any support from my advisory teachers, from the regional office. The principal has been very supportive.*

#### **4.1.2 Advantages of multi-grade teaching**

While many teachers see disadvantages of multi-grade teaching, some identified some advantages. Multi-grade teachers noted that learners from the lower grade class in the combined grades have an

advantage of learning content beyond the grade level because they listened to the teachers when presenting the lesson to the higher grade:

*May be one, especially for the lower grade. In my case, I am working with the grades 3 and 4 learners. So when I am busy with the grade 4 learners, for instance, then the grade 3s catch up what I teach the grade 4 learners. When they come in grade 4 the next year, they kind of having experience or a little bit of knowledge of grade 4's work.*

*There is an advantage, because if combine grade 2 and 3, when you learn in the class, busy doing activities, what you do with grade 3, the grade 2 can pick up. When they arrive in grade 3 the next year they already know what was done in grade 3. The grade 3 also have a benefit. Sometimes they forgot the things they do in grade 2. They must know things of grade 2 to be in grade 3. When they forgot they can get it from the grade 2 when I am busy with the grade 2s.*

Teachers noted that the once learning took place in the previous year; the teaching of learners in the following year became easy. Most of the lessons tend to become revision of what was learned previously:

*One thing that is good is that the grade 2s learns what the grade 3s are doing, implying next year things will go better for them. They will learn faster. The grade 3 is like a revision for them as I do the grade 2' work.*

Another advantage of support which came from learners was that learners in higher grade within the combined classes assisted those in lower grades during the lesson presentation and classroom activities:

*The advantage is that the learners in a higher grade support the ones in lower grades when they get any problem.*

*I teach this one, and after that I must teach the other class. I enjoy it very much. Learners help each other. When I am busy with the grade 2, the grade 1 also come and read with the grade 2. They help each other.*

The assistance among learners of different grades took place among learners in the same grade too. The slow learners in the class were assisted by the fast learning learners in working groups. Although this advantage is applicable in mono-grade classes, it was very important to the multi-grade teachers considering the 40 minutes period time they had to stick to when presenting the lessons to two or more grades:

*I think it is good for the slow learners. Sometimes we get slow learners, so the fast learners help them with the group working. They are helping each other.*

*Learners in those grades tend to learn faster because they are learning from others. Learners seem to be working faster.*

Planning plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. Planning maximizes learning. Having a combination of grades teachers were supposed to plan the lessons to cater for all the

grades they teach at the same time. Teachers indicated planning as an advantage because it includes two or more grades at the same time.

*The advantage is that you are cover two grades at the same time. When it comes to planning, you are only planning once for two grades.*

#### **4.1.3 Problems experienced by teachers in multi-grade teaching**

##### ***Challenges in teaching multi-grade classrooms***

The multi-grade teachers indicated that they experienced many challenges in teaching the combined grades. There were evident complications on the language of instruction especially in a combination of Grade 3 and 4. In practice and according to the Language Policy, Grade 3 is taught in Mother Tongue while Grade 4 a transition level to English medium of instruction is taught in English. Teachers experienced problems in switching between the two languages while instructing the two different grades:

*The challenge is grade 3 is taught in a vernacular language and grade 4 is taught in English. If you start teaching grade 3, when you come to start with grade 4, you are like somebody who is confused – which language am I going to start with. Also, the big challenge is the lesson plan – too much lesson plans, you write a lesson plan for this grade and then the next grade. The lesson plans are weekly done.*

The use of the mono grade syllabus in multi grade setting posed challenges to teachers. This difficult was intensified by the lack of training in multi-grade teaching. There should be differentiations between the mono grade and the multi grade syllabus because of the combination of grades that necessitate differentiations on the time tabling, time allocation, assessment and teaching approaches. The acquisition of these competencies could be gained through training of which most multi grade teachers lacks:

*Lack of instructional materials like computers, laptops. I want multi-grade schools must have the same syllabus, different from the mono-grade syllabus.*

The teaching resources and materials that are essential for attaining effective teaching and learning out comes in multi-grade teaching are lacking. In addition, the instructional materials and classroom space are designed for mono-grade teaching. This posed challenges to multi grade teachers. Teachers adopted the resources designed for mono grade teaching to suit the multi grade teaching. The lack of space in classrooms limited teachers' abilities to plan the classroom activities and the allocation of teaching materials to the reading corners. The effective planning in general was affected by the limited time to complete the lessons in all grades. Consultation of the two syllabuses during the lesson preparation was time consuming:

*The big one is accommodation. Here as we look in it no classroom, just a shade. But that shade is not enough for us. No spaces to move around or control my learners. Another challenge is time – to teach multi-grade, oh, you find some learners are trying to finish, even one grade. They finish earlier the activity and the other they are not finished. I extend my time and go beyond to do better.*

The combination of two or more grades did not avail time for teachers to focus on weaker and struggling learners during the teaching and learning interaction. Teachers spent more time in

classroom management than teaching or helping learners who experienced learning backlog. Learners who went through the content already can shout for the answers to the posed questions for lower grades:

*The challenges are like learners make noise when you are busy with the other class. Sometimes in these days, resources (textbooks) are not enough; you end up with learners fighting for one book. The other challenge is time – not enough to cover two grades in forty minutes. One ends up using the other period.*

*The first difficult thing is to look at the work for both grades and decide what is similar. Especially for grades 1 & 2, it is difficult to teach grade 1 because they cannot read or write like the grade 2. The teacher has to determine what sort of work to give to the grade 2 that engage them in reading and writing while s/he pays attention to grade 1 who are still to learn how to read and write.*

*As I teach the grade 2s, the grade 3 have already done the work last year, then it is like, oh we know it already, these are dull kids. The grade 3 also shouts out the answers when I am busy with the grade 2. Honestly, I don't give individual attention to all my learners. I have one learner in a class who has sight problem. She writes very slow, that is why I go so slow and this affects my time management.*

#### ***Disciplinary problem encountered***

Although discipline is common among learners in schools, controlling and thereof lack of discipline in a multi grade classroom impede the learning and teaching process in multi grade classroom. There was evident lack of discipline in multi-grade classroom posing challenges teachers. The most crucial disciplinary problems that teachers experienced during teaching and learning are: shouting, fighting, and noise making from inside and outside of the classroom, standing and walking around as well as talking during lessons. These problems were experienced when the teacher concentrated on one grade and leaving the other with work. Teachers tend to focus on or spent more time in disciplining learners than teaching:

*When you are busy with the other group and the other group is finished, they start making noise. When you are busy with grade 3 and you ask them questions, the grade 4 will shout the answer. The other one is those in upper grade will ridicule those in small grade that they don't know anything, what you are taught we know already.*

#### **4.1.4 Possible solutions to the challenges in teaching multi grade classrooms**

The participants were requested to list the possible solutions to the challenges in teaching multi-grade classroom. The solutions to challenges in teaching multi-grade were addressed specifically to teachers themselves, school managers, curriculum developers, national and regional administrators in education sector. More explicitly, there was a high demand of continuous development training in multi-grade teaching and great emphasis on the inclusion of multi-grade training during the pre-service teacher training.

*I am foreseeing a problem within a problem, and that is that once you are a kind of busy with a grade 4 class, sometimes, may be it has do with me but you forget that you have another class. So the class you start with is, is mostly the class you stay with. One must be very careful about this. Another challenge is the teachers, the young ones at the colleges,*

*must really start there if we continue with multi-grade, that system must be brought in at the colleges.*

Teachers also requested the school management and curriculum developers to revise and provide the multi grade syllabus in such a way that different grades in a phase are combined and the basic competencies in the same theme or topic are displayed on one document concurrently instead of completing the specific grade content and continue with the content of the next grade as it appears in the current syllabus content:

*May look for sponsors for multi-grade schools to get resources at their schools. For syllabus, I think we must sit together as multi-grade schools and compile a multi-grade syllabus.*

The school managers and officials at regional and national level were suggested to avoid combinations of Grades 3 and 4 due to the different language of instruction and the combination of Grade 1 and 2 to enable the Grade 1 learners to build a strong foundation:

*Language of instruction – grade 3 and 4 not to be in one class.*

*For me grades 1 & 2 are not supposed to be taught together. They don't need to be taught together because in many cases grade 1 would not get all the assistance they would need.*

Lesson planning is regarded as an essential component of teaching and learning. A set of specific activities were suggested such as: giving extra activities to faster learners; curbing noise in the classroom; planning activities for learners with different abilities; managing time effectively and making use of compensatory teaching in the afternoon for the weaker learners:

*The time management must be very good. If you cannot plan according to time, there will be a mistake in the class. You will end up very early before the time is running out or after less than 40 minutes. So proper lesson planning which indicates or include times management with enough activities for those with lower level of understanding that means slower learners. I must also prepare my activities according to the level of understanding of my learners in the class. Lesson planning must be proper done, must be done properly. If we come to activities, most of the time I use group work and if it is not for the group work, maybe I do teach, then I must also provide enough activities for all the learners. Because some will finish their work before time or on time if there are not enough activities for them, they have nothing to do in the class and that means I am wasting their time. So they must be extra activities for the fast learners. When they finish their task, there must be something else to keep them busy with, may be a puzzle or whatever. And time management, if I plan my introduction, it must be five minutes and I must not exceed that five minutes. Lesson presentation, may be twenty minutes, must be twenty minutes. There must also time to recap work afterwards, after the lesson presentation, after the learners have done written work. I must know there must also five minutes to give learners homework, so time management must be very good.*

Even if some teachers are more careful in managing their time, some concentrates more on the completion of the activity than looking at time.

*Ignore the time. So pass on with the problems or challenges I have to finish the task. I pass on with it until all the learners are done. I go beyond 40 minutes. I pass beyond the time. So I finish the task by going from one child to another by giving them full support in their work.*

Although the blocking of timetable is one of the advisable solutions to time management in multi-grade classrooms, this poses challenges to both lower and upper primary teachers. It is not known if lower primary teachers compensate for the time lost and if upper primary teachers plan together to ensure that all the subject receive equal attention.

Proper planning ensures that learners are occupied, do not make noise and disturb the teaching and learning process especially when teachers are engaged with the other class within the combined grade:

*The teacher must keep them busy with their work, give them enrichment tasks. One who is talking must pick up a stone and stand and count ten times. When it is heavier for them, I let them put it down.*

*My solution to that is teachers must always be in the class or if it so happens, children must know what to do in the absence of the teacher. There must be tasks. On stabbing, I just talk to them, give them some examples; tell them what the law in the country says about injuring others, hurting others –so to a certain extent they changed their behaviours.*

Possible action to be recognized by the higher authority was the separation of the grades and the provision of sufficient textbooks and other teaching and learning materials:

*Separate the grades. For shouting, I still try find some solutions. The other one said: Fighting for resources – just to order extra textbooks, close monitoring from the teacher side.*

In controlling discipline, the proper handling of punishments alternative to corporal punishment such as calling in parents, letting learners to replace the damaged resource(s), as well as providing additional work when the learner finish early or challenging work to keep them busy and in return, reduced noise and maintained discipline in the classroom:

*I have a leader in the class, who looks who is speaking, standing, who making anything. The punishment I give, I say they must take the chair and lift up and stand like this for 30 minutes. Those move around, I talk with them, go and sit, don't move around. If somebody moves around, they will see what will happen with him.*

*I call in the parent with the learner. I tell the parent what problem I get from the learner. We try to get the solutions. The parent also helps. Now it is a little bit coming down.*

#### **4.1.5 Organisational approaches**

##### ***The implementation of organisational approaches***

Teachers used common timetable because it was easy to teach one subject at the same time to all learners. It was evident that some teachers seems not to understand the real concept of common timetable because they taught the same content to all grade without considering the basic competencies of different grades:

*Most of time I use a common time table. Common time table means one subject at a time. So if take Khoekhoegowab, for instance, for 80 minutes, then I use just Khoekhoegowab for both grades in the same time. But when we do written work, the activities are more difficult for them, especially for grade 4.*

By analysing looking at what the teacher claimed as difficult activities for a specific grade, one could conclude that the learners in the certain grade did the content that was higher than the learners' level of understanding.

Although there were teachers who experienced difficulties in teaching multi grade classroom, some teachers were comfortable teaching combined grades:

*I use a common time tabling option. I am not separating the classes, meaning I just write on the time table, Khoekhoegowab, and that is just Khoekhoegowab. Or mathematics, but I know in my lesson preparation, I must touch both classes, reach out to both classes. I do not have a separate time table for grade 3 and a separate one for grade 4, it is combined, one time table two different classes. I am used to one class, so that is why I find it easy – I am very used to one teaching class.*

Many did not use subject staggering, subject grouping and integrated day. Common timetable was included in the list of approaches that were not used. The reasons of not using the aforementioned approaches varied in many cases. More specifically, teachers indicated that they were not comfortable or did not have sufficient knowledge on using these approaches. To others, the selection and use of these approaches depended on the different circumstances. Some teachers decided to use one approach in one year and change to the other one on the following year:

*Staggering, subject grouping and integrated day. In the coming years if multi-grade is still going on, this year I start with the common one, next year I will the staggering one, so I will pass on.*

It was therefore logic to question whether the teachers who listed all four approaches really understood them or there were other organisational approaches which were not familiar to or incorporated by the manual developers and used during training sessions.

### ***Usefulness of organisational approaches on lesson planning***

The lesson plan in multi-grade was simplified by the skills teachers' learned on the workshop. Most of the teachers identified common timetable approach as useful and simplified way of planning in multi-grade teaching. Common timetable approach, enabled teachers to identify the common topics on the syllabus and plan for the two or more grades concurrently. Planning a common timetable enabled teachers to preparing the teaching and learning materials, saved time in preparing teaching aids which were useful to all grade and prepared different learning activities for each grade:

*Let me say I to teach number concepts in mathematics for grades 3 and 4, I will just go to my syllabus, take all the basic competencies for grades 3 and 4, learning objectives for grades 3 and 4. When it comes to teaching aids, I also use the same teaching aids sometimes.*

*Lesson planning is easier for me. I just take one topic, may be animals. First of all, I do grade 2 and then grade 3, then again grade 2 and grade 3, I pass on like that. The common time table helps me a lot. In the activities that is where I make a difference. Grade 2 is a little bit ease and grade 3 is difficult.*

Although some teachers preferred one lesson preparation for the combined grades some liked to have individual lesson plans for each grade so that they can be flexible in case the lesson for a specific grade was not completed:

*We plan for the whole week, the same theme like when we get Water, we plan it for two weeks. When I am not covering today, I just switch over to the next day. I have different lesson plans for each grade, but they have the same topic. Let me say I to teach, Water, I am going to teach the grade 1 how to use Water and the grade 2s how to save Water. In that case, I use different lesson plans.*

#### **4.1.6 Teaching strategies**

The most used teaching strategies were games, group work and question, which obtained a highest rating of 5. This is followed by drama with a rating of 4; debate and storytelling received a rating of 3; field trips and pair work got a rating of 2, while individual, investigation, lecture method, models, observation, peer teaching, pictures, projects, puzzle, role play and singing were the least mentioned strategies with one rating each.

*Group work is the mostly one I use in my class to see which of the learners are slow and which ones are fast. I group the slow ones with the fast ones so that the fast ones can help the slow ones. Pair work I will also do it as a teaching methods using in my class. I use mathematics games like playing dominos. Telling stories for the children, they tell stories in groups and individually. I ask questions and they answer them. I take them out to observe plants , around our school, in the school yard, looking to the resources of water, from where we find water, even buildings when we are doing about house building – they go out and look about the different buildings around here. Which ones are made of corrugated iron and which ones are made of wood and grass?*

Many teachers did not use the project as a teaching strategy, puzzles, debate, and fieldtrips were not popular among many teachers either. The reason for not using these strategies lies on the fact that learners made too much noise during the time they were engaged in these teaching strategies.

The majority of teachers were not innovative. They did not try anything else apart from the teaching strategies listed in the teachers' and training manual. Very few teachers used songs in introducing the lessons. To some teachers, lesson and demonstration of lesson content took place during the teaching and learning process.

#### **4.1.7 The learning environment**

Teachers differed on views regarding how conducive to teaching and learning environment was. Some teachers felt that their classrooms were fine. They were equipped with various materials displayed on the walls. These teachers had enough classrooms space that enabled learners to move around during the classroom activities such as reading and using teaching and learning corners. To

some teachers, conduciveness meant cleanliness of the classrooms although the schools had insufficient number of cleaners:

*It is okay. My learners are grouped according to their grades. There are learning materials (reading and counting) displayed on the wall.*

*It is somewhat. I cannot display items as learners tear the posters. We have enough desks and chairs. Enough space for learners to move around.*

*Mostly, I have got pictures. Conducive means the classroom must be cleaned, but due to the fact that we have got only one cleaner at the school. Parents are complaining about it when we ask learners to clean the class, they are complaining that their children are not paid to clean classrooms. The classes are not always properly cleaned, but to a certain extent they look cleaned and are kept cleaned.*

There were evidences regarding the shortage of classroom space. Teacher specifically in remote areas taught under the tree shades. In many situations, teachers mobilized the parents to construct shacks and used them as classrooms. The major problem of shacks was the limited space to accommodate multi-grade classes. Learners had limited space and could hardly move around since there was no enough space to accommodate the teaching and learning process and reading corners. The shacks did not have display boards as those found in ordinary classrooms. It was thus impossible for teachers to display the teaching materials. Worse still, the passerby could easily get in the shack and destroy the displayed materials especially in communities that did not value education. In many situations learners themselves were the culprits of vandalism as a result of ill-disciplined.

The arrangement of classrooms differed in various schools. Classroom arrangement was based on the location of the chalkboard, the size of the class, ability groups, age when the younger grade sat in front and in pairs, gender, sitting. according to grade either left and right or front and back of the classroom, the availability of furniture, approach and teaching strategies to be used as well as the discipline of learners:

*The seating arrangement is not so good. The class is too small. Most of all sitting in groups to have some space in class. I make grade 2 group alone and grade 3 alone. I have a mat in the class and for common topics, all of us come and sit there, then we do it as a combined.*

The seating arrangements in multi-grade classrooms was affected by the size of the class, grade groups, number of learners in a specific grade, learners abilities, seniority and discipline. The classroom space determined the seating arrangement. Teacher who had enough classroom space could play around with it and were able to arrange how learners could sit while some teachers were quite unfortunate:

*Grade 2s is sitting at the back and are sitting in pairs and grade 1s sit in groups. When we come to for warming up or songs both grades go to the front and afterwards everyone is going back to the desk. I am trying to put the slow learners with the fast learners so that they can help each other. In the beginning of the year, the grade1 sit in pairs like the grade2s so that they can face the chalkboard because they are starting.*

*The learners are sitting in groups. I put four learners together, looking at each other. Girls now sit alone, but I don't like it. Then I shift it, I now put boys girls, boys girls. When girls are together they are talking too much and if they are sitting with boys they are learning. When we are having like a test, I sit grades 1 with grade 2. I mix the fast learners with slow learners so that they can help each other.*

*There are no problems about seating arrangement. They are sitting according to the way I let them sit. There are enough chairs, enough tables; there is no problem with furniture. When it comes to peer - teaching, I change –some of the grade 4 move to grade 3, especially those learners who are fast learners, I use them in peer teaching and I then divide them.*

#### **4.1.8 Assessment in multi-grade teaching**

The assessment in multi-grade teaching follows the specific subject syllabus stipulations. Some teachers followed the subject syllabus stipulations regarding the assessment. It was observed that teachers used the formative and summative assessment in addition to individual and group assessment:

*How I assess, assessment differs from subject to subject. When children read, reading, you ask questions and according to their response, you assess according to response, the level of understanding that is what I look at in reading especially, do they understand what they read or not, and assess accordingly. Oral and written forms of assessment are practised. I like learners coming to me individually.*

*Assess according to activities written in their syllabuses, look at the basic competencies for specific grades. When it is writing I assess according to the written activity, speaking and listening are also activities. I also do structured questions, and give them tests. I like to assess every day.*

Teachers lamented on the difficulties they encountered on contacting assessment to learners in multi-grade classrooms. Many teachers could only assess a number of learners in a day:

*When I give lessons and ask questions to my learners, I take it in my mind, I choose only three learners today. Three learners I want to observe today, when I go down and sit, I will write down which learner did I ask, didn't they answer the way I want it, did they answer correct, did they do the thing right, then I write down. I do individual assessment. I do oral, written and sometimes group work, but not always. We must not write tests, but I want to improve their work, for example, I give a picture of a dog and I say they must write, "dog" in the book or on a paper.*

#### **4.1.9 Parental involvement in multi-grade teaching**

Parental involvement could positively affect the teaching and learning in multi-grade classroom. Parents could take care of a group of learners while the teacher deals with the learners. It was noted that some teachers invited parents to school. Among the invitees, were parents who responded positively to the invitations and assisted teachers:

*I tried to do it in the beginning of the year because grades 1s are the beginners. Most of the time it is problem for me as a teacher to give more attention to grade 1s, so involved one or two them who can come and help me when I am busy with grade 1s just help with grade 2.*

*But sometimes it is not so good because they are also busy at their homes or going some way. I give them activities, explain to them like children who cannot write, just help them to write in the line, children who cannot read, first explain to them the letters, sounds and then they help. Last year we had a culture, one came in to teach the culture of the Basters as I am not a Baster. They also take part in the cultural festivals. We also involve parents when NGOs come in and visit us, for example, HIV & AIDS workshops.*

The location of school determined the parents' involvement and motivation to participate in their children education. Most of the multi-grade schools are located in remote areas where the parents had little understanding on the value of education. It was thus evident that some teachers did not involve parents in day to day progress of their children apart from inviting them to attend the parents' days. The lack of involvement among some parents in school activities was caused by the negative perception of the multi-grade teaching. These parents opted for not being involved because of the notion that children were not getting enough support and attention from the multi-grade teachers:

*We have tried but the understanding in the community is somehow. In Environmental Studies, I have tried to send learners to ask their parents on issues related to culture, but to no avail. We also use to invite them for parents' meeting to come and check books of their kids, only few do turn up.*

*What I usually use the parents for is in reading—it was a big obstacle when I entered the school. I have seen , experienced that learners, there is a big backlog as far as reading is concerned, and that is why, when I called in, especially not called in, at a meeting I talked to the parents about the reading problems of children and thereafter I tasked them to always ask learners what they did in the class, what instructions they had, any tasks, any projects and help learners at home as far as reading and projects are concerned to kind of familiarizing them with what learners are doing at school. On issues of culture, if we have a topic on culture, I just let them, before tackling the topic, tell them to go the parents to find out more about, for instance, how people lived in the past, in this case, the Nama people. Parents tell what I know and more than what I know too. In some cases I have seen there were notes written for them too.*

*Parents have a negative attitude about multi-grade teaching. They are not really involved. They don't like it... they have this thing that their children don't get enough attention.*

The essence of encouraging parent to participate on issues related to multi grade teaching arise from the fact that teachers alone in absence of the parents, cannot successfully have an impact on effectiveness of multi grade teaching in schools. Teachers need parents' involvement in order to link the school efforts to home where the learners reside:

*Oh, yes. To me education is on three pillars, parents, teachers and children. If one organ is cut out, then there is a disadvantage. By involving parents, the relationship between teachers and parents also grows.*

The advantages of involving parents in multi-grade teaching according the teachers' view point is that parents could assist in teaching or presenting specific contents of the syllabus which teachers do not have enough knowledge such as local environment and home education among many. Parents could also assisting children in homework. Children listen to the parent because they are

used to each other. The lack of education hinders educational involvement between parents, children and teachers. Parents who went through adult literacy classes were more involved in school issues and learners school progress compared to those without education. Parent who attend school activities were informed on the issues which they need to concentrate when assisting children at home. Learners also tend to seek for assistance from parents after realizing that their parents were participating in school activities and more specifically on their school performance:

*Parents can also teach things I am not aware, such as a topic on traditions... It will help the performance of learners or learning. When you give learners homework to kids, parents can help at home and in that way you are helping the learners.*

*I can say it can help learners mostly because they are coming and they hear the things how they can help the children at home. Last week we had an adult literacy classes which was more useful for the parents to help their children at home... I also see an advantage because the learner is more free with the parents than with the teachers. When we use parents the learners are performing much better in the class than they are with us.*

*They should be, most definitely. In that way they can see performances of the learners and what the learners struggle doing, and help to teach. When they come in and give, tell stories or things that happened in the past.*

Teachers alluded that community members did not comprehend the concept of multi-grade teaching. Many parents wondered about the management and teaching of combined grades. Parents did not support the practice but rather condoned the multi-grade teaching. Community members felt that children were not taught properly in these grades and they were also not getting proper attention. The parents that were taught through multi-grade system could not see the problem. Instead, they appreciated the Ministry of Education because it brought back the old system of education:

*Some of them understand and some don't. Those who don't, ask themselves questions why a learner who was in grade 1 still remains in the same class – are the children really learn anything in these classes?*

*Some were amazed, some were happy, saying that, yes, the government is moving back to old system. Some said no, me too that is how I was taught.*

There were cases whereby parents suggested school to get volunteers from the community who could assist the teachers in teaching learners. They conceived that teachers 'don't give enough attention to each and every one child'. The presence of a volunteer would have allowed separation of grades and the volunteer to teach one of the groups. Another possibility was for the volunteer to supervise one grade while the teacher was busy with the other grade.

*They said multi-grade teaching is not nice because they see that the teachers cannot teach two grades at the same time. When used to have a parents' meeting, they used to ask me to go and ask the inspector so that we can get teachers. That is why the school has two volunteers from the community to assist in that regard. Parents contribute ten dollars towards their payments.*

*Parents are wondering how I am teaching a multi-grade class. They are supportive, especially with teaching.*

*Like they say, the mostly problem is we didn't give enough attention to next grade like when we have two grades in one class, we cannot give more attention to the children. They told me that they can see their children are doing very well in the school life since I came here.*

#### **4.1.10 The use of mono-grade planned curriculum in multi-grade teaching**

Teachers used the mono-grade curriculum effectively in multi-grade classrooms. It was observed that most teachers found it relevant using the mono-grade curriculum with the common timetable and experienced no problems. While others were not happy because it was time consuming and difficult to complete the syllabus of specific grades:

*I have not found any problem in covering the syllabuses. I cover the grade 3 syllabus earlier than the grade 4.*

*Yes I do. As a principal sometimes you go to attend administrative work, you end up behind the syllabus but before the end of the year one has covered the syllabus.*

*Yes, I have done it very good. Last year it was so up and downs, but now, this year I am in better position after the multi-grade workshop.*

*No, last year I left about two, three topics, which I covered this year.*

In using the mono-grade curriculum, teachers considered the syllabus of the grades they taught and compared the basic competencies during the lesson preparations. They made use of the mono-grade syllabus that were developed with the same themes as it made it easier for them to cater for all grades at the same time since the combined grades did the same theme irrespective of the basic competencies:

*According to the grades 3&4, they are having, their themes are the same. I think it helps me to just look at themes I gave at grade 3 and activities for grade 4. I work according to their level.*

Some teachers combined the content of the combined grades the time they develop the lesson plan. While other teacher plan individual grade separately. Commonly, teachers identified similar or common topics before planning the lessons. In case of language teaching, teacher distinguished the language taught at that specific time:

*There are subjects that are also combined in my teaching and my lesson planning. Subjects like mathematics and environmental studies. I combine them and teach them in English. When it comes to languages, I teach two separate. I teach Khoekhoegowab as Khoekhoegowab and English as English.*

Teachers' responses and classroom observations revealed that they need more clarity and help on how to interpret documents used during the teaching such as curriculum documents, syllabus and the textbooks. It was further evident that completion of the theme of a grade before teaching other grade posed challenges and to a certain extent misleading:

*The format of my lesson planning, I put first grade 1, grade 1 do that, grade 2 do that, then they get evaluation of them. First complete the theme with grade 1 and then let me go back to grade 2, complete to them and go back to work.*

Inability among teachers to complete the syllabus and cover the remaining in the following year could have detrimental effect on teaching and learning. It proves in effective specifically where there was a combination of higher grades. Learners in the higher grade move the other teacher who if not informed would have no clue that the new grade did not finish the syllabus. It seemed to be a concern if the school management or the system decided to combine the grades including those that learners did not finish the syllabus and receive a new teacher. This practice would affect the allocation of time given to specific subject in a year because teacher would have additional topics added to the syllabus receive and no additional time. Although time was seemed to be important, some teachers felt that completion of the syllabus should go hand in hand with learners' ability to learn the content:

*To me, I sometimes become very disappointed when teachers talk about covering syllabus. My argument or my logic in that case is, is it better for the teacher to cover the syllabus, but for the learners they know nothing about what has been covered. What is the good about it? It is better for me to give the child knowledge, they can prosper. Because there is a continuation, even the mathematics syllabus, every year in every grade there is a continuation. So what? If can only cover up to division, and leave out geometry, and what have you, let it go as long as children understood what they have undergone. That is my principle. To me the syllabus is not important; the important thing to me is the knowledge of children. Is the child knowledgeable about what they have got already. If not, what about the syllabus, you cover it, who are you cheating? You are not cheating the ministry or the child. The child is a loser at the end of the day. The syllabus is not my problem.*

*I am not able to cover it. Mostly I take out the important things the learner must know in the next grade, the basics and then I try to teach that. I pick and choose.*

#### **4.1.11 Identified teacher training areas**

Apart from the training in multi-grade teaching that was offered by NIED officials in collaboration with the Advisory Teacher Services in most of the regions, teachers felt that they need additional training on multi-grade teaching. In responding to the question on whether they require training additional training, they responded that they needed training on the use of syllabus, organisational approaches, *staggering and subject grouping*, lesson plan, timetabling, teaching strategies and different methods of assessing learners in multi-grade classrooms. Teachers wanted to be trained at the beginning of the term or beginning of the year for them to be able to implement what they have learned during the course of the year. According to their views, they needed lesson demonstrations in a normal classroom setting where the best practice could be experienced. To them practical demonstration in a typical multi-grade environment was better than theoretical presentations:

*Yes, we need this further training mostly. We need this training at the beginning of the term not at the end like the one I attended. And also to assist or train us in assessment and lesson preparation.*

*The further training is the multi-grade teaching. I want to sit down and someone must demonstrate for me the multi-grade teaching, how can I do it – modelling. I want someone to help me with the writing of the lesson plans.*

*I wish there was a book whereby one could have all the activities combined. If there would be a book which already accommodates content for both grades that would make things easier her.*

#### **4.1.12 Teachers' concerns on multi-grade**

Although some teachers indicated that they do not have any concerns on the multi-grade teaching, many of them were not comfortable teaching multi-grade classrooms. The use of mono-grade syllabus steered the discomfort even more. Teacher proposed for specific syllabus for multi-grade teaching. They insisted for training of the school managers on multi-grade to enable them effectively manages the multi-grade school and teaching:

*There should be a syllabus for multi-grade teaching developed. The grade 3 & 4 should be separated. We need more training. The principals too need to receive training in multi-grade teaching.*

Furthermore, teachers were concerned about the lack of support or involvement of the regional officials in multi-grade schools and the challenges facing the multi-grade teachers in the classrooms. In many cases, the regions did not see the need to support multi-grade teaching schools differently from that given to the mono-grade schools. Bearing the fact that they taught two grades, double marking of exercise books, lesson preparation and assessment of learners at a time, requested for additional salary compared to the mono-grade school teachers:

*I need more support from regional office and from other schools, maybe there is someone who knows more to come and help me about multi-grade. The books, the textbooks – like the theme we are using in the syllabus, like when I am taking the Environmental Studies, I get Water – but they just show me a little bit of it. I need more details on water. Planning and preparation, must have more time to do the explanation, it so more much work for us multi-grade teachers, why can we just get us a lesson planning format for multi-grade teachers. Compensatory teaching is a problem for us multi-grade teachers. The other one is about our salaries, we are concerned about that one. We do more work than the one sitting with one grade.*

*Marking is tough. It is a pain in the neck. So many learners in the class and the work is double –crossing. The grade 2 and grade 3 combinations is good, but the time basis is not so good. The learners are writing too slowly. There are slow learners and fast learners, but most of them are slow, and in the covering of the work, when I think we must finish now and then the other one is still writing. I use the afternoons to marking the books and to do the updating of my assessment files.*

*Salary, because we give two classes, so the salary must be two, doubled. More visits by the advisory, to help us, to see where we have lack of something. I think the advisory must visit us more because we didn't receive any advisory visit for this year.*

There were strong concerns about the allocation of time to the multi-grade lessons. The curriculum allocates 40 minutes a period and each subject given specific number of periods to be taught in each grade. In multi-grade teaching 40 minutes were shared between two grades. The situation was worsened when teacher taught a combination of more than two grades. This had caused problems in completing the work for individual syllabus multi-grade teaching. In addition to that, teachers indicated the serious need for training on various issues pertaining multi-grade teaching:

*Time allocation is not enough. Grades 1 & 2 should not be combined.*

*Do away with multi-grade teaching.*

*My wish is if more training workshops are held, and not once a year, may be twice, and the period training be extended so that when you come back you are really, really equipped.*

Teachers indicated that they could assist others on multi-grade teaching, especially on the issue of lesson planning and preparation provided that they were given enough materials such as manuals and use them during training. Some teachers were not confident enough to train others teacher on multi-grade teaching:

*Yes, I can assist them because I know the advantages of multi-grade. I can assist them when they are planning lessons and how to do different activities for the different grades, and also do their resources to assist their learners and how to arrange or accommodate them in their classes.*

*If given support materials such as manuals, and be able to prepare in advance, I can accept.*

#### **4.1.13 Summary on teachers' views on multi-grade teaching**

Teachers confirmed that multi-gradeteaching existed due to staffing norms. This practice was commonly observed in Lower Primary, although few Upper Primary classes were combined. Many teachers teaching multi-gradeclasses were not professional qualification in multi-grade teaching. The multi-grade training enabled teachers to learned classroom organization, Timetabling, Organizational approaches, multi-grade lesson planning and preparation, the multi-grade lesson presentation skills, and the distribution of work among multi-grade learners. Teachers experienced difficulties to comprehend and implement organisational approaches compared to common timetable.

There were evidences of competencies among teachers on the use of the mono-grade syllabus in planning, the handling of two or more grades at the same time and the use of time scheduled. Apart from the NIED training, teachers claimed that they got enough support from colleagues at school and very little external support was given to improve teaching and solve practical problems in multi-grade teaching. The prompt support from other learners and the planning for one multi-grade lesson with different grade activities were the noticeable advantages in multi-grade teaching. However, combining the first two and the last two grades of Lower Primary Phase challenged the teachers due different work inputs for Grade 1&2 combinations and the use of different language of instruction in Grade 3&4.

Teachers experienced discipline problems especially when they concentrated on one grade the learners in the other grade tended to shout, fightinside and outside of the classroom, standing and

walking around and talking during lessons. This caused teachers to spend more time in disciplining learners than teaching.

Common timetable approach was commonly used while the subject staggering, subject grouping and integrated day were seldom used. Teachers felt that organisational approaches improved the planning of the lessons. The use of different teaching strategies such as games, group work, question-and-answer, drama, debate, storytelling, field trips, pair, individual learning, investigation, lecture method, models, observation, peer teaching, pictures, projects, puzzle, role play and singing were not applied during teaching and learning process. Teachers were not innovative and did not try other teaching techniques apart from the teaching strategies listed in the teachers' and training manual.

Teachers' perception about the conducive learning environment varied due to uneven distribution of teaching materials and dilapidated classroom infrastructures in schools. This made it difficult for some teachers to display teaching and learning materials. The arrangement of learning environment varied due to the location of the chalkboards, the size of the class, ability groups, age, gender, grade, furniture, teaching approach and strategies used and discipline of learners. The class sizes, grade groups, learners' abilities, seniority and discipline influenced the seating arrangements.

The assessment in multi-grade teaching followed the specific subject syllabus stipulations and teachers experienced problems in conducting it due to the other activities which they had to carry on daily basis. Also, parental involvement took place in some schools in a form of sharing information on local environment and assisting children with homework. However, some communities did not support multi-grade teaching and they were hesitant to take part in multi-grade related activities.

Teachers indicated the need of additional training with practical demonstration especially on the use of syllabus, organisational approaches, lesson plan, timetabling, teaching strategies and different methods of assessing learners in multi-grade classrooms. They also proposed for specific syllabus for multi-grade teaching and the training of school managers on multi-grade teaching for them to understand the reasons of manipulating the timetable.

#### **4.2 Principals' views on multi-grade teaching**

The principals' experiences in multi-grade teaching varied. There were principals who did not experience difficulties in multi-grade teaching because they had received training and had experience in teaching multi-grade classroom while others found it difficult to understand the practice and implement multi-grade teaching because they neither had training nor experience of multi-grade teaching. Although some principals had negative perception of multi-grade, it was eminent due to the falling enrolment number of learners in remote schools. To some who did not like multi-grade teaching but had no choice than to implement it appreciated the existence of such schools because they offered employment opportunities to most teachers who would have been on the streets. To them no multi-grade no employment:

*"I myself don't have good experience in multi-grade teaching but since I took up the school as a principal I started to implement and actually I teach a multi-grade class".*

*"This lack of experience in multi-grade teaching makes it difficult to understand its implementation in my school"..So, I and my staff had become part of the programme but let*

*me confess to you we find it 'not effective' when it comes to my school and teachers at this school do not find easy to teach in a combined grade classroom, specifically grade 3 and 4"*

*"I think for the teachers who are trained for it is easy for them to teach in such an environment. But for those who never went through any training it could not be easy for them to teach a multi-grade class. Multi grade teaching is something good to protect us from being unemployed"*

#### **4.2.1 Flexibility in implementing the time-table in multi-grade classes**

There were indications of flexibility among the principals in allowing multi-grade teachers to plan and teach the way it fits them, based on their multi-grade training and (the) learners' needs. Some principals wanted teachers to integrate topics for the two or more grades they taught as envisaged in their training manual. Autocratic principals were not flexible in allowing teacher to implement the time table and intervened when teachers failed to follow the time table.

*"No, the time-table cannot be tempered with, the teacher should the periods as it is indicated in the time-table."*

Principals who did not have enough knowledge of multi-grade teaching carried leisure-de- affair system whereby the teachers who were experts determined the time table implementation:

*"I arranged a meeting with this teacher and asked him/her why doing so. The teacher's confession was that he/she could not finish the work the previous day. So, I must be flexible in this respect and allow the teacher to do what is fit".*

#### **4.2.2 Teachers' perceptions and experience of teaching multi-grade classrooms**

Teachers perceived multi-grade teaching as tiresome and that learners do not benefit much from. The negative perception among teachers arose from the lack of training, teaching materials and physical facilities. It was observed that most multi-grade schools were under resourced. Teacher taught in very harsh conditions. In some cases the number of learners exceeded the required number of learners in multi-grade classroom. These factors among many, makes teachers to perceive multi-grade as denting task to carry and thus the negative perception of the practice. Should they have been given a chance to choose, they would prefer to teach in mono-grade compared to the multi-grade classrooms:

*"They don't want to teach multi-grade classes. They are always complaining. But I have to encourage them to be positive as it is part of our work"*

*"We experience difficulties in teaching multi-grade teaching because it tiresome and learners do not benefit from this practice".*

*"It is sometimes the teacher's negative attitude towards multi-grade teaching which in turn influence their perception and this sometimes is complicated by the cheer numbers of learners that they meet in a particular classroom. If they could get help in terms of facility and regular training, they could develop positive attitude towards multi-grade".*

### 4.2.3 Teachers' use of mono grade curriculum in the multi-grade classroom

Multi-grade teachers use the mono-grade curriculum. Some who had a wide experience in multi-grade teaching integrate topics across the grades they taught compared to the most popular approach in teaching multi-grade classrooms; teaching different grades separately as the curriculum prescribes. Thus the mono-grade or multi-grade teaching curriculum could not make much difference. The most important aspect is how the teachers prepare lessons in a multi-grade teaching and integrates topics of the two grades or more:

*“Sometimes the teachers integrate topics in a particular subject for the two or more grades. But in many instances teachers teach the different grades separately as their curriculum prescribes”*. This was said by one rural principal. Another went on to say: *“We try to make it easier to our multi-grade teacher. When she is teaching, say English, let it be English for the two grades at the same time”*.

### 4.2.4 Support to the multi-grade teachers

The supports principals rendered to the multi-grade teachers ranged from ordinary advises how to implement multi-grade effectively to staff development training on multi-grade at school level or at cluster centre. Most of the supports the principals offered to multi-grade teachers were based on class visits coupled with positive feedback. Principals also looked for opportunities with the Ministry of Education or other stakeholders that had interest in providing workshops to multi-grade teaching and promote the education standard in general. Principals ordered teaching-learning materials such as teaching aids or textbooks through the inspectors' offices. Furthermore, they assisted the teachers on how to help learners who experienced difficulties in learning and encouraged them to have learning support after school:

*“I organise workshops for the un-experienced teachers coming from the college who are assigned to teach a multi-grade class. This normally helps them a lot around the implementation of the policy”*, one principal confessed.

*“Really, what I do with her as a multi-grade teacher, is what I call ‘in-house in-service training’ to develop her well in multi-grade. This includes de-briefing her on issues which I pick up from my cluster training with other principals. She really appreciates whatever I share with her and it serves as motivation”*.

*“I do a lot of class visits and share solutions to their problems ...We have a regular meeting once a month to discuss our multi-grade related problems...I provide them with necessary materials which I get from other sources including from the Ministry”*

*For instance; “I emphasise to the teachers to arrange for after school support for the struggling learners. In the same light, my teachers are encouraged to give learners homework and to correct this homework as to provide practical feedback. My teachers are also encouraged to keep a healthy relationship with the parents”*, said one principal.

### 4.2.5 External support in multi-grade teaching

Majority of the principals vehemently confessed that teachers do not get external support from the Ministry of Education or any other institutions. Principals mentioned that multi-grade teachers need

support in the form of provision of teaching-learning material, furniture, workshops and visits from the advisory staff, and sometimes classroom space. Some principals recognised the effort that the Ministry of Education offered in the form of workshops that it arranged. Such trainings were seen as vital but they urged, it should have been followed by continuous monitoring and feedback:

*“Teachers struggle by themselves to implement the multi-grade policy”.*

*“A short visit at quarterly basis from a multi-grade teaching expert will go far in the life of multi-grade teachers as they will learn a lot from such an individual where they also can share their concerns.*

*“That is very important for us to be trained we learn a lot from that and we can in reverse share our frustrations”.* Another principal contends *“these visits should be just a quick pop in at the school but it must be in-depth in nature that can bear fruits to teachers”.*

#### **4.2.6 The extent to which the multi-grade teacher training impacted on teachers competencies**

Principals reckoned that teachers who went through the multi-grade training had changed a great deal and became aware to the practice of multi-grade teaching compared to those who were not trained. The trained teachers were capable of integrating lessons within the grades they taught and the competency in lesson preparation has improved tremendously. It was observed that teachers who were trained did not find multi-grade teaching as a problem. They were capable of applying Learner Centred Approach; rendering the teaching and learning effective:

*“Yes, really the training the teachers received as I observed and made class visits, there has been really a change. In most cases teachers are applying the learner-centred approach even in this case where multi-grade is perceived as problematic. They tend to integrate lesson which is a good thing and time saving mechanism for the grades taught. This is part of lesson planning that they go through in their training”.*

*”Definitely, I see her developing more and more positively in this multi-grade teaching. The Advisory Teacher also confirmed to me that she could notice positive impact of training on teachers during her visits”.*

#### **4.2.7 Problems faced teachers in the multi-grade classroom**

Multi-grade teachers faced numerous problems. Teachers faced problems in time allocation in the time-table. The 40 minutes allocated for teaching one period was not enough to teach the combined grades. It was observed and further narrated by teachers that schools did not have the sufficient teaching materials. Most of the classrooms were overcrowded. The overcrowded classroom caused indiscipline. The classroom space in specifically remote schools did not allow the use of essential, if not all approaches for teaching and learning. In some cases, there were no classrooms at all and schools used temporal shelters built by parents. These harsh conditions affected teaching and learning process. Most of the schools were not visited by advisory teachers. As such essential documents such as syllabuses and specifically the absence of the multi-grade curriculum made the teaching a bit cumbersome. Teachers faced with the problem of sheer number of learners in a given multi-grade classroom:

*“Time spent on teaching is not enough for the two grades in one period. To teach two grades in one period which is 40 minutes leaves a teacher not completing his/her lesson objectives. On the whole one cannot complete the syllabus within the year”, concludes one principal.*

*“I have come across of other principals complaining their multi-grade classrooms have 50 to 60 learners. This leads to other problems like lack of space or disciplinary problems where a teacher cannot handle such sheer number of learners. A teacher may lose focus to give attention to all learners especially the under-achievers in an over-crowded classroom”.*

#### **4.2.8 Assistance that teachers requested for, in addition to the training they had received**

Teachers mostly ask principals for workshops on multi-grade teaching or experts on multi-grade to visit them so that they can learn from. Other issues teachers asked for were provision of materials like teaching and learning aids that could assist both the teachers and learners. They also asked for assistance on how to apply group work and Learner-Centre approach in an over-crowded classroom and to assess such learners at the end of the day.

#### **4.2.9 Learners’ perceptions and experiences of being in a multi-grade classroom**

Most learners who were taught in a multi-grade set-up did not like to be taught in such a combined classroom. They thought they missed a lot as they did not receive attention in the multi-grade classroom compared to the attention they had received when they were taught in a mono-grade. Others felt, especially where the lower grades learners were taught with the upper grades, they benefited from the practice as they tended to learn things that they would learn in the next grade when they were promoted. The older grade learners, who were not as bright as the others, felt shy to be taught with the juniors in cases where they did not perform well in the class activities.

*“Some learners are happy about it, but those who are struggling in class to perform well, disdain the idea of multi-grade. Some of them are slow and can’t cope well, so then they would like to be in a combined class”.*

Disciplinary problem in a multi-grade classroom was often mentioned as a major problem and this negated learners’ and teachers’ attitude towards multi-grade practice. Principals often mentioned class over-crowdedness and lack of furniture contributed to learners’ negative perception on multi-grade teaching. Principals urged if all these were rectified both learners and teachers would have positive perception on multi-grade teaching:

*“Some teachers once they see an advertisement on teaching vacancy which involves multi-grade teaching, such teachers do not apply to such a vacancy because they do not like multi-grade teaching. Multi-grade teaching should be part of the curriculum at the colleges that would introduce teachers to this topic to build up their confidence once they joined the profession”.*

#### **4.2.10 Summary on principals’ views on multi-grade teaching**

The principals’ experiences in multi-grade teaching varied. Those who understood the practice and implement multi-grade teaching were flexible in allowing teachers to plan and teach the way it fits them. Autocratic principals were not flexible in allowing teacher to implement the timetable and intervened when teachers failed to follow the timetable. Some principals supported teachers through

motivational feedback on class visits, bargaining for material support and assistance through workshops.

Although there was evidence of understanding multi-grade teaching among teachers who attended the workshops, many problems were experienced such as time allocation in the timetable, overcrowded classrooms and discipline. The distance from regional offices as well as the condition of the roads to multi-grade schools prevented schools to get external assistance.

### **4.3 Learners' views on multi-grade teaching**

Learners in multi-grade classrooms were not happy with multi-grade teaching. Among the groups which were interviewed, 78% of the learners did not like to sit in multi-grade classrooms and only 22% of the learners liked to be taught in combined grades. Most of the learners that were happy with the multi-grade teaching were in lower primary with the combination of Grades 1 and 2. None of the Upper primary learners were happy with multi-grade teaching.

Learners who enjoyed multi-grade teaching reasoned that they learnt more things when the teacher taught another grade. This practice enabled learners in higher grade to revise their previous work. In lower grades learners had the privilege learning lessons of the upper grade in advance when the teacher taught the higher grade. However learners had various reasons of not willing to sit in multi-grade classrooms. Majority indicated that the teachers were not giving them enough attention, and the effective teaching did not take place.

*It is not good to be taught together with the grade six because sometime, they give us activities which is very difficult then the other grade is making noise we are not concentrating well that is why we don't want to be taught in one grade, is good to be separate.*

Learners also felt that the lower grades were noisy because their work was easy and they always finish earlier. These responses matched well with the teachers' responses who indicated that there was a need for them to learn how to plan assessment of learners, keep them busy all the time while teaching the other class group. The learners complained of their classes being too full; hence, they did not get enough attention from teachers.

Some learners indicated that teachers taught them very well and helped them to understand the lessons. However, there were some who felt that they did not get proper attention from teachers. The learners complained that teachers left classes with work and moved to the other grades. As a result, the teachers did not give them assistance because of attending to another grade. The situation becomes worse whenever the teacher taught two grades at the same time which were not in the same venue. In this case, learners made noise and disrupt the lessons when the teacher moved to another classroom. The learners indicated that the moving between classes and dividing attention between learners in the two classes caused teachers not to honour the timetable. Teachers did not teach the subjects as they were listed in the daily timetable:

*Sometimes if the teacher is busy with grade six then the grade seven are been given work to do on their own, they finish while the teacher is busy with the grade six, then the teacher tell them just go on your own, just take something and read or, or learn what we have done all ready, then in that way the time is with them, and also we can learn but some we are not*

*doing that and also sometimes also some subject are not taught in that day, why they don't like the way the teacher is teaching them,*

Having a situation like that, it became difficult for the learners to prepare for the next day because they would have put effort in the subject which the teacher would not teach the next day. In addition to that, the subjects that were listed at the end of the daily timetable might have not been taught if the teacher did not think of compensating the time used. In addition to that, learners indicated that some teachers gave them activities taken from the books of another grade in a combination. This could have been done during the revision exercise or when advanced learning was needed. But, it could have caused problems if the basic competencies in different grades were different:

*The teachers if she is teaching mathematics, English and the (inaccessible) whatever textbooks she takes then she go for that, if the grade seven textbooks all the learners all grades six and seven we will be taught from that textbooks and even the same activity for grade seven as taught as for grade six, that is why we don't like it.*

In many multi grade classes, learners were seated in pair of two, or in groups. Their views on the seating arrangement varied. Some would like to sit with their friends, sit in groups of four or to sit according to their grades. However, some learners indicated that if the teacher allow them to sit as they wish, they may make noise and disturb others:

*Yes we are satisfy, we are satisfy because we can work together the task the teacher gives us, we help each other, we work things well together if we sit in groups*

Teachers do not prepare for the extra activities. Instead, the learners are left on their own once they finish with their daily activities.

#### **4.3.1 Summary on learners' views on multi-grade teaching**

Both principals and learners indicated that learners did not like to sit in multi-grade classrooms because teachers did not give them enough attention, shyness to be taught with the juniors, noise from lower grades, dishonouring of timetable, the use of common exercise which was taken from one grade book and the teachers' incompetence of conducting assessment in multi-grade classes.

Learners who enjoyed multi-grade teaching reasoned that they learnt more things when the teacher taught another grade. The advance learning was noticed when learners in lower grade learned what the teacher taught the higher grade.

#### **4.4 Parents' views on multi-grade teaching**

Majority of the parents interviewed had the opinion that their children did not benefit from the multi-grade teaching. They emphatically opposed the policy of combining two or more than two grades in teaching. Parents were equally concerned about discipline:

*"We are not happy about the way our children are taught of two grades being together in one classroom. The teacher will never give enough attention to all the children. It is too much for one teacher to teach and control two grades. Discipline will be a problem to maintain".*

There was a sense of not seeing the benefit of multi grade teaching as parents perceived that children in multi grade classes could read properly. They conceived that the low reading skills among the learners were attributed to teachers not pay enough attention to each child in a class and assisting those with learning difficulties. Parents were not supportive of the multi grade teaching:

*“The system should phased out!”*

The crux of the parents’ concerns about multi grade teaching was combination of Grades 1 and 2. Learners in Grade 1 who right from home do not receive strong foundation once combined with Grade two learners. These learners are disadvantaged because they need much attention and assistance from the teacher which in return, they don’t receive:

*“Grade 1 and 2 need enough attentions(sic) when it comes to (the) writing and reading”.*

Positive opinions on multi grade were noted on the fact that parents had choice because of the lack of teachers in schools surrounding their residences. In addition the few number of learners or low enrolment justified the multi grade teaching. This group of parents understand that the number of learners determine the appointment of teachers in schools. This implies that some parents were well informed on the policies and requirements of teacher learner ratio and perhaps the staffing norms:

*“Yes, I’m happy that my child is taught in a class with two grades.I do not have any other choice because in our school we do not have enough teachers though we do have available classrooms. Now what must we do. The learners are also few. We must have a certain number of learners for them to hire more teachers”.*

Parents felt they should be involved in the education of their children. Having the detailed information on how their children were doing at school was more important than being involved in minor issues that had little to do with the children scholastic progress. The school involvement that parents felt could be effective in promoting teaching and learning was assisting learners in school work, partly assisting in teaching and conveyed frequent classroom observation to familiarise with how lessons were conducted. This involvement could help them to understand the problems teacher faced in classes and refrain from blaming them when children failed:

*“Yes, we would like to be called and observe how teaching is organized for our children. This will be good”.*

*“Yes, we are involved but only in the matter of parent meeting to come and sign for our children books. It is good that way! But what other ways are there. We would like to be involved more if there are chances given to us. That way we will come to know our children better and if they fail at the end of the year we will not accuse the teacher as we know how she/he teaches”.*

They were obvious preferences of the mono grade to the multi grade teaching among the majority of the parents. Parents strongly believed that children could benefit educationally when taught in mono grade compared to multi grade classes:

*“As we said early, teachers do not cope well in a multi-grade classroom. The best option is the mono grade where all children could receive enough attention and discipline is well maintained”.*

#### **4.4.1 Summary on parents’ interviews on multi-grade teaching**

Majority of the parents opposed the policy of combining two or more grades in teaching, failing to comprehend the benefits of multi-grade teaching as teachers did not give proper attention to learners in the two grades or more. Parents strongly believed that children could benefit educationally when taught in mono grade compared to multi-grade classes. Their concerns were on the combination of Grades 1 and 2 because the Grade 1 learners do not receive strong foundation once combined with Grade two learners.

Positive opinions on multi-grade were noted among parents who were well informed on the policies and requirements of teacher-learner ratio, the staffing norms and perhaps those who went through multi-grade teaching during their schooling time. However, many parents felt they should be involved in the education of the children. Having the detailed information on how their children were doing at school was more important than being involved in minor issues that had little to do with the children scholastic progress.

## SECTION FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS ON MULTIGRADE TEACHING

#### 5.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education needs to:

- Sensitise parents and make them understand the concept of multi-grade for them to be able to take part in assisting multi-grade teachers at schools
- Provide more classrooms to the schools which have no accommodation
- Abolish multi-grade teaching by building hostels which can accommodate all learners in multi-grade schools. Alternatively, the staffing norms need to be re-visited and relaxed in some schools to avoid over crowdedness in multi-grade classrooms

#### 5.2 Recommendations to NIED

NIED should:

- Develop curriculum and syllabuses for multi-grade teaching
- Train teachers as facilitators of multi-grade teaching. The teacher facilitators should train teacher at circuits or clusters levels
- Conduct multi-grade teaching workshops annually, to improve the multi-grade teaching competencies among teachers.

#### 5.3 Recommendations to Curriculum developers

Curriculum developers need to:

- Understand the multi-grade practice and its challenges in the subject areas
- Recognise the existence of multi-grade teaching during the workshop presentations
- Stress the essence of avoiding the combination of Grades 1 and 2 and the combination of Grade 3 and 4 in multi-grade teaching
- Develop the subject specific guidelines and or manuals to assist teachers in teaching each subject confidently. The manual should address issues like identification of common themes, topics and suggesting teaching approaches, activities and classroom arrangement (seating)
- Develop through consultation a thematic scheme of work for upper primary phase in order to reduce the work load
- Involve multi-grade teachers in curriculum development activities for them to give directions on how best multi-grade teaching can be handled

#### 5.4 Recommendations to Continuous Professional Development

- NIED needs to re-emphasise the training on multi-grade teaching specifically the teaching approaches such as subject grouping, subject staggering and integrated day which teachers did not use during classroom visits and how to assess learners in multi-grade settings
- Training model should deviate from traditional cascade training model to capacity building whereby school based practical training should be offered by a trained teacher and co-facilitated by NIED and Advisory Teachers.

- Provision of multi-grade related Continuous Professional Development is essential for improving teaching and learning in multi-grade classrooms. Consider offering on-site CPD with demonstration (model lessons) to teachers
- Workshop facilitators need to consider multi-grade teaching during subject related workshops
- The multi-grade training need to be conducted once a term than once a year

### **5.5 Recommendations to the Regional office**

- The regional office need to prioritise the facilitation of activities in multi-grade school, in terms of teaching and learning materials and the provision of infrastructure
- The multi-grade schools are located at the outskirts of many regions and meeting with other teachers in the same region become a challenge. It is therefore very essential for the regional office to give permission to teachers to meet with colleagues from neighbouring schools although from different regions to discuss and assist each other in multi-grade related activities and alternate or share the cost of these activities
- Due to the thin differences between multi-grade teaching and teaching learners with different abilities, all regions should emphasise Multi-grade teaching to be part of discussions in different platforms such as principal meetings, teachers' workshops and other regional meetings to inform other educators that multi-grade teaching exist. This will help schools with multi-grade related problems to use the same method of teaching. It is also recommended that schools make internal arrangement to cope with the situation where teachers have to stay away from school for a period due to illness
- In addition to the NIED Multi-grade Committee, there is a need to establish multi-grade committees in each region where multi-grade issues are discussed. This will give chance for regions to assist the multi-grade schools basing on the report of the multi-grade committees. Schools should be informed by sending a copy of the activities done or the regional office plans on multi-grade teaching
- Regional office need to establish the multi-grade committees in each circuit. This committee should be equipped with resources necessary to assist multi-grade teachers
- The regional office should take note that the trained multi-grade teachers should not be transferred to a school where there is no multi-grade classes
- The Inspector of Education need to assist schools in involving parents in school activities
- The regional officials that are responsible for multi-grade teaching should avail themselves to teachers who have problems with multi-grade teaching and they should arrange demonstrations of different teaching strategies in class
- The regional office need to organise awareness programmes for parents, to inform them about the importance of multi-grade teaching and their involvement in the children's education
- The regional office need to recruit more advisory teachers to cater for multi-grade teaching instead of using the existing Advisory Teachers who are already occupied and overloaded with other tasks. Also one Advisory teacher is not enough as regions are too vast. Alternatively, some region needs to be divided into two regions because of vastness
- The regional office need to appoint the temporary teachers to help schools which have overcrowded classes. This will reduce over-crowdedness in some multi-grade schools.
- The regional office need to invite all schools to attend multi-grade workshops instead of inviting few teachers from few schools

## **5.6 Recommendations to School managers**

- The provision in the National Curriculum for Basic Education that Grade 1 and 2 learners should not be grouped together, should be adhered to. The management also need to avoid the combination of lower primary classrooms as indicated in the National Curriculum for Basic Education

School managers need to:

- Be accommodative, supportive and flexible for teachers to manipulate the time-table (This need to be followed up properly to make sure that teachers compensate the time utilised from another subject.. They also need to be trained on multi-grade teaching to be at par with teachers in order for them to understand the multi-grade practices and its challenges and be able to support teachers
- Ensure that teachers have done their lesson plan and preparations
- Provide teachers' flexibility to manipulate the timetable
- School managers need to ensure that teachers that are not teaching multi-grade assist others morally, material and in prevention of noise
- The cluster centre principals need to be trained so that they can have knowledge of what is going on in multi-grade schools and assist teachers or schools in their clusters
- As a tentative measure, school managers need to convince parents to construct huts for the community hostel to avoid learners travelling for long distances to and from school on every day basis
- Reduce the work load for multi-grade teachers, especially lower primary teachers teaching upper primary classes in the afternoon

## **5.7 Recommendations to Teachers**

Teachers need to:

- Plan properly beforehand and arrange with others in case the blocking of timetable is needed
- Motivate the learners to be positive towards multi-grade teaching.
- Be given multi-grade syllabus to help them teaching
- Motivate parents and explain to them about multi-grade teaching during the parents' meeting
- Use the knowledge and materials obtained from the workshops during the teaching and learning process.
- Decide beforehand on the approach to be used to teach a specific topic considering the nature of the topic.
- Identify the learners' abilities
- Ensure that all practising teachers need to be trained on how to teach in multi-grade classes. The training should be done twice in a term
- Make sure that trained teachers share multi-grade teaching information with others at school, cluster and circuit level. Resources given during the workshops should be shared

## **5.8 Recommendations to Parents**

- Parents should increase their participation in children education and school matters
- The literate parents and retired teachers need to assist multi-grade teachers in presenting the cultural related content in forms of stories to the learners on voluntary basis or when requested

- The parents should attend parents meetings for them to be informed about multi-grade issues

### **5.9 Recommendations to Teacher education institutions**

- Teacher training institutions need to include multi-grade teaching in teacher training courses as an area of specialisation and module in a general course
- The teacher training institutions need to conduct a tracer study, visit and monitor graduates to assess the impact of multi-grade teaching.

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