

HIDDEN PEDAGOGY IN MULTIGRADE CLASSROOMS: TEACHER-CREATED INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN RURAL BALOCHISTAN

Wazir Ali^{1*}, Joko Nurkamto², Gunarhadi³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: wazirjamali504@student.uns.ac.id

Abstract. In rural, under-resourced schools, multigrade teachers develop systematic instructional strategies through experience. However, this classroom-based expertise is often overlooked by teacher education programs, curriculum guidelines, and supervision frameworks. This study defines these teacher-created practices as hidden pedagogy: explicit and deliberate classroom knowledge that remains excluded from institutional recognition. Using Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, the study conducted focus group discussions with twenty experienced teachers, structured observations in ten schools, and documentary analysis in Balochistan, Pakistan. Reflexive thematic analysis identified four key components: curriculum reconstruction across grades, rotational classroom flow with flexible grouping, peer learning that redistributes instructional roles, and learning extension through community engagement and local resources. Gender analysis showed that female teachers face distinct social constraints that influence the form and feasibility of these practices. Because the study did not measure student outcomes, it does not claim that these practices necessarily improve learning. The findings cautiously develop hidden pedagogy as an analytical lens that differs from Bernstein's invisible pedagogy: its instructional logic is explicit, while its institutional status is hidden. The study outlines implications for teacher education, curriculum policy, and gender-responsive school support, while emphasizing that recognition must accompany structural reforms in staffing, training, and materials.

Keywords: multigrade teaching; hidden pedagogy; pedagogic discourse; rural education; Balochistan.

INTRODUCTION

Multigrade teaching, in which a single teacher instructs students from two or more grade levels simultaneously, is a defining feature of schooling in rural and geographically dispersed regions worldwide (Ares-Ferreirós et al., 2025; Arif et al., 2026; Carrete-Marín et al., 2024; Rondero & Casupanan, 2024; Schlebusch & Pele, 2024; Zulu et al., 2025). In low-resource contexts, it serves as a structural necessity rather than an emergency measure. Governments often use multigrade instruction to ensure educational access where student enrolment is low, and teacher deployment faces logistical or economic challenges (Ahmed et al., 2025; Ali et al., 2024, 2025; Arif et al., 2026; Taole, 2022).

In Pakistan, multigrade teaching is particularly prevalent in rural public schools, where chronic teacher shortages, dispersed settlements, low enrolment densities, and limited infrastructure make single-grade configurations difficult to sustain (Ali et al., 2026; Qayoom et al., 2024). These structural constraints are especially acute in Balochistan, the country's largest and most sparsely populated province (Ali et al., 2026). Many government schools in the region operate with one or two teachers covering multiple grades and subjects while also managing administrative responsibilities. Despite the ubiquity of multigrade arrangements, Pakistan's teacher education

programs, curriculum documents, and supervision frameworks continue to operate under assumptions of single-grade instruction.

Existing scholarship has documented the institutional and pedagogical difficulties associated with multigrade teaching, including excessive teacher workload, inadequate teaching materials, limited training, weak instructional leadership, and insufficient systemic support (Asante, 2025; Kwenin, 2026; Raggl, 2025; Tahir et al., 2025; Taole, 2022; Urma & Callo, 2023). However, much of this literature views teachers mainly through a deficit lens, focusing on their constraints rather than their expertise. The systematic instructional knowledge that multigrade teachers develop through years of practice in complex classrooms is less examined. Although this knowledge is often sophisticated, responsive, and intentional, it is largely absent from teacher education, curriculum planning, and policy discussions.

This study examines teacher-created instructional practices in multigrade elementary schools in District Naseerabad, Balochistan, addressing a gap in current research. It defines these practices as hidden pedagogy: pedagogical knowledge that teachers consciously develop, systematically apply, and can articulate, but that institutions do not formally recognize. Drawing on Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, the study treats hidden pedagogy as a question of institutional recognition rather than instructional implicitness. Three questions guide the research: 1. What teacher-created instructional practices are used in rural multigrade classrooms? 2. How do teachers develop and organize these practices without formal multigrade preparation? 3. What does hidden pedagogy reveal about institutional recognition, teacher education, and curriculum design in low-resource rural contexts?

The study makes two interrelated contributions. First, it offers a cautious extension of Bernstein's framework by identifying an explicit but institutionally excluded form of pedagogic knowledge. Unlike invisible pedagogy, whose instructional principles are implicit, hidden pedagogy may be deliberate and observable; what is hidden is its status within curriculum, teacher education, and supervision. Second, the study introduces a gendered analysis of pedagogical practice, showing how female teachers in rural Balochistan navigate distinct social constraints that shape the enactment and visibility of their instructional work. This gendered dimension, largely absent from existing multigrade literature from Pakistan, highlights the need for institutional frameworks that are not only pedagogically inclusive but also socially responsive.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design informed by an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism treats social reality as constructed through individuals' experiences, meanings, and interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2016), and is appropriate for a study seeking to understand how teachers make sense of and articulate their instructional practices. The study was situated within a practice-based perspective on teacher knowledge, which views teachers as active creators of professional knowledge rather than passive recipients of externally generated expertise (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This orientation aligns with the study's central focus on hidden pedagogy as teacher-generated knowledge.

A qualitative design is appropriate for the institutional invisibility problem this study addresses. Institutional invisibility is revealed not by measuring outcomes or testing hypotheses, but by documenting what teachers know, articulate, and consistently practice, and by examining what formal institutional documents omit. The qualitative approach allows the study to generate exactly the kind of thick, practitioner-grounded evidence that institutional recognition of hidden pedagogy requires.

The study was conducted in District Naseerabad, Balochistan, Pakistan. Naseerabad is predominantly rural, with dispersed settlements, limited educational infrastructure, and persistent teacher shortages. Many government elementary schools in the district operate with one or two teachers responsible for teaching multiple grade levels simultaneously. Naseerabad does not appear in existing multigrade research literature, making it a site of a genuine empirical gap rather than merely another case in an established research tradition.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Patton, 2014). Selection criteria were: current employment in a government elementary school; direct involvement in multigrade teaching; a minimum of ten years of experience in multigrade elementary settings; and willingness to participate voluntarily. The sample comprised twenty teachers: thirteen male and seven female, across five focus group discussions. The gender composition reflects the demographic realities of rural school staffing in Balochistan, where male teachers substantially outnumber female teachers in government elementary schools. Female teachers were deliberately included, given their demographic minority status, and because their particular social position in rural Balochistan, navigating mobility constraints, community scrutiny, and different relationships with male community gatekeepers, was expected to shape their hidden pedagogy in distinctive ways. Gender is therefore treated as an analytical category in this study, not merely as a demographic variable.

Sample size was guided by the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2016). Given the specificity of the selection criteria, the combination of three data sources, and the theoretically focused analytical approach, 20 participants across five groups were considered sufficient to generate sufficiently rich data without compromising depth.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant code	FGD	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience
T1	FGD 1	Male	10 years
T2	FGD 1	Male	12 years
T3	FGD 1	Male	15 years
T4	FGD 1	Female	18 years
T5	FGD 2	Female	10 years
T6	FGD 2	Female	12 years
T7	FGD 2	Male	16 years
T8	FGD 2	Female	20 years
T9	FGD 3	Male	12 years
T10	FGD 3	Male	15 years
T11	FGD 3	Male	18 years
T12	FGD 3	Male	24 years
T13	FGD 4	Female	10 years
T14	FGD 4	Male	14 years
T15	FGD 4	Female	18 years
T16	FGD 4	Female	22 years
T17	FGD 5	Male	10 years
T18	FGD 5	Male	15 years
T19	FGD 5	Male	20 years
T20	FGD 5	Male	24 years

Data were generated through three qualitative sources: focus group discussions, structured classroom observations, and documentary review. Multiple sources were used to enable

methodological triangulation and to support comparison between teachers' reported practices and observed classroom routines. To strengthen transparency in the research process, participants were drawn from 20 government elementary schools in District Naseerabad, comprising 12 boys' schools and 8 girls' schools. These schools were purposively selected because multigrade teaching was a regular classroom arrangement rather than an occasional response to teacher absences. From these 20 schools, 10 schools were selected for structured classroom observations to compare teachers' reported practices with observed classroom routines. Documentary review was conducted where school-level records were accessible and included lesson plans, classroom timetables, attendance registers, grade records, and available instructional materials from the participating schools.

Data analysis was conducted collaboratively by the research team. Initial coding was undertaken through repeated reading of focus group transcripts, observation notes, and documentary summaries, after which codes were discussed, compared, and refined through analytical meetings. Coding was primarily inductive, but emerging categories were subsequently interpreted through Bernstein's concepts of classification, framing, recontextualization, and institutional recognition. Disagreements in coding and theme development were resolved through discussion and reference back to the original transcripts and observation notes rather than through statistical intercoder agreement, consistent with the reflexive thematic analysis approach. Member checking was conducted by sharing summaries of the emerging themes with selected participants and inviting them to comment on whether the interpretations reflected their classroom experiences. Their feedback was used to clarify theme descriptions and to ensure that the analysis did not overstate teacher agency or understate the structural constraints shaping multigrade practice.

Five focus group discussions were conducted between April and May 2024. Each group comprised four participants and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Mixed-gender composition was maintained where possible. The discussion guide addressed curriculum adaptation, classroom organisation, peer learning, grouping strategies, instructional materials, assessment, and community engagement. An additional probe was included specifically addressing the conditions and constraints female teachers experienced in enacting these practices, including home visiting, community engagement, and peer learning supervision.

All discussions were conducted in Urdu and Balochi to allow participants to express their experiences without linguistic constraint. With participants' informed consent, discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by bilingual research team members. Translation into English was carried out collaboratively, with iterative discussion to ensure conceptual and contextual equivalence rather than word-for-word substitution. Selected excerpts were back-translated as a verification procedure, recognising that translation in qualitative research involves interpretive as well as linguistic decisions (Temple & Young, 2004).

Focus groups have recognised limitations. Group dynamics may produce social desirability, suppress minority views, or allow dominant voices to influence the discussion. To mitigate these risks, the facilitator used probe questions to draw out divergent experiences, encouraged quieter participants explicitly, and recorded group dynamics in field memos. The analytical strategy distinguished consistently between individual teacher accounts and group-level consensus, and triangulated FGD data against independent classroom observation notes.

Classroom observations were conducted in ten participating schools, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, guided by a semi-structured protocol focusing on curriculum adaptation, classroom organisation, grouping practices, peer learning dynamics, instructional material use, teacher movement patterns, and teacher-student interaction. Field notes were recorded

contemporaneously and written up in fuller form immediately afterward. Observation data served two distinct analytical functions: direct documentation of practices that might be subject to retrospective idealisation in focus groups, and systematic comparison between teachers' accounts and directly observed classroom practice.

Documentary sources including lesson plans, classroom timetables, attendance records, and available instructional materials were reviewed where accessible across participating schools. Documents were treated as evidence of institutional arrangements, formal curriculum expectations, and the material conditions within which teachers worked, rather than as direct records of classroom practice. Analysis addressed three questions: How closely did formal lesson plans reflect the instructional approaches described in focus groups and observed in classrooms? What did official curriculum frameworks specify for multigrade contexts? And what instructional materials were formally provided versus locally improvised?

The research team's professional involvement in teacher education and rural schooling in Balochistan facilitated contextual understanding and participant trust, while also creating risks of confirmation bias toward findings that emphasise teacher agency and expertise. To manage these risks, reflexive journaling was maintained throughout data collection and analysis, with explicit attention to moments when the analysis risked overstating teacher capability or understating structural constraints. Member checking with selected participants was used to verify that analytical summaries reflected their experiences.

Data were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2023; Braun & Clarke, 2021), proceeding through six stages: familiarisation; initial coding; development of candidate themes; review and refinement; theme definition and naming; and production of the analytical narrative. The analysis combined inductive coding, anchored closely to participants' descriptions and observed practices, with theoretically informed interpretation through the framework's four lenses. A dedicated sub-analysis compared the accounts of female and male participants across all four themes, using the gender-probe data and gender-linked patterns in the full dataset.

Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of three data sources, member checking with selected participants, and sustained engagement within the research context. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a documented audit trail that included coding records, analytical memos, observation notes, and reflexive journal entries. Confirmability was established through reflexive journaling that recorded analytical decisions and their underlying rationale. Transferability was facilitated by providing a detailed description of the context, participants, data collection procedures, and classroom practices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained after participants were informed about the study's aims, their right to withdraw without consequence, confidentiality, the use of anonymized quotations, and audio recording and transcription. Participant identities were protected through alphanumeric codes (T1–T20). Data were stored securely and were accessible only to the research team.

RESULTS

The analysis identified four major themes describing how teachers created and organized instruction in rural multigrade classrooms. These themes form a coherent pedagogical system: curriculum reconstruction provides the content structure; rotational flow provides the temporal and spatial organization; peer learning extends instructional reach; and community engagement sustains the conditions under which the other three can operate. Each theme is addressed in turn,

followed by a dedicated section analyzing how the themes operate differently for female and male teachers.

Figure 1. The Structure of Hidden Pedagogy

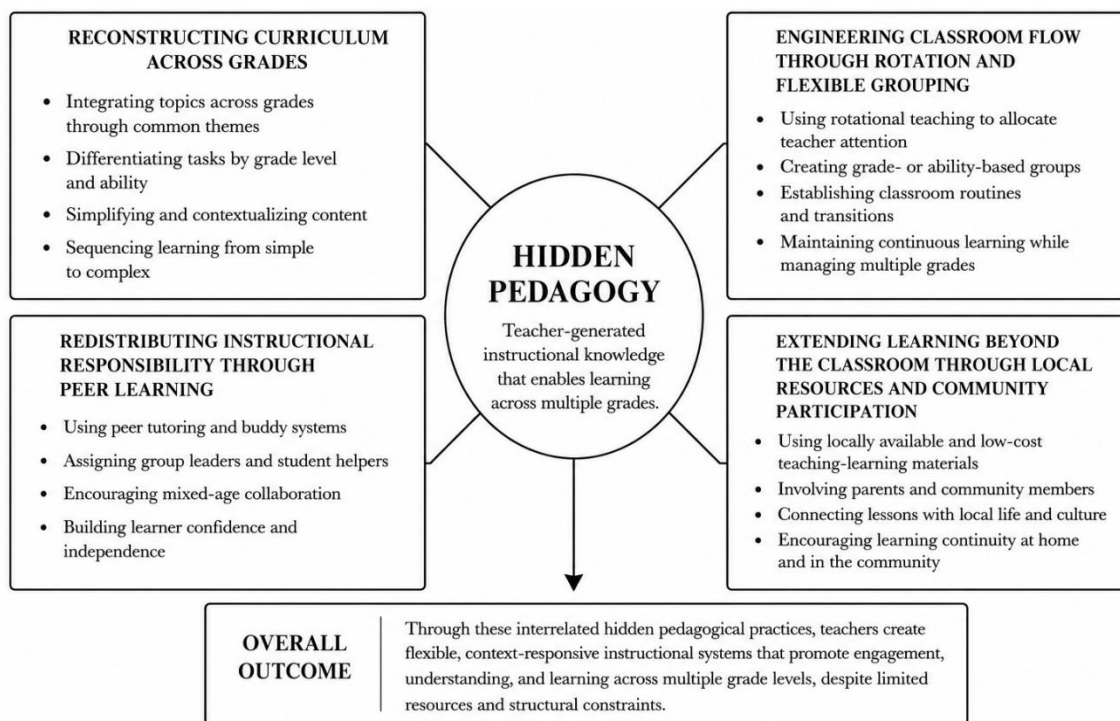


Table 1. Table of Main Categories and Subthemes

Reconstructing Curriculum Across Grades

The first theme concerns teachers' reconstruction of official curriculum content to suit the realities of multigrade classrooms. Rather than delivering separate lessons for each grade, teachers identified overlapping concepts and reorganized content into shared instructional topics, with tasks differentiated by grade and ability. Participants described this practice as emerging through years of trial, failure, and refinement rather than through pre-service preparation.

If I teach the topic of plants, I do not teach it five times separately. Grade 1 draws the plant, Grade 2 names the parts, ... and Grade 5 explains how plants grow. The topic is one, but the work is different. (T6)

This approach reflects pedagogical content knowledge: the transformation of subject matter into forms learners can understand. In the multigrade context, this transformation operates across several grade levels, requiring teachers to hold multiple representational levels of the same concept in mind. Another teacher explained the organizational logic driving the practice:

Classroom observations confirmed that curriculum reconstruction operated as an established pedagogical routine. In one observed environmental studies lesson, the teacher introduced a single topic to the whole class before distributing differentiated written tasks by grade level: younger learners drew and labeled, while older learners wrote explanatory paragraphs and discussed causal relationships. The transition between whole-class introduction and differentiated group work was smooth and required minimal instructional direction. Documentary review of available lesson plans revealed a consistent pattern: plans were formatted for single-grade delivery, specifying one

learning objective, one set of activities, and one assessment task, with no provision for grade differentiation. Timetables listed individual grade periods sequentially as though taught by separate teachers. This institutional framing confirmed that curriculum reconstruction was entirely teacher-generated.

Curriculum reconstruction is also the foundation on which the other three themes depend: only because teachers have reorganized content into a shared thematic framework can the rotational, peer, and community-based practices of the remaining themes function coherently.

Engineering Classroom Flow Through Rotation and Flexible Grouping

The second theme concerns how teachers created functional classroom flow in the absence of sufficient staff. Since one teacher could not provide simultaneous direct instruction across multiple grades, teachers developed rotational routines and flexible grouping systems through which direct instruction, independent practice, and peer-supported learning occurred concurrently. These rotational systems also show how teachers gradually built practical knowledge through repeated classroom problem-solving rather than formal preparation.

I make a small timetable inside the school timetable. First, I sit with Grade 1 for reading. At that time, Grade 3 does write and Grade 5 checks each other's work. Then I move to Grade 3.
(T3)

This “timetable within the timetable” represents the spontaneous generation of an instructional management system not provided through formal training or curriculum guidance. Observation data showed that the rotation system was internalized by students and the teacher alike, functioning as a shared classroom norm: students began their assigned activities without prompting and continued through the teacher’s rotation without significant disruption. The rotational system also creates the structural spaces in which peer learning (Theme 3) becomes necessary: precisely because the teacher is occupied with one group, older students must take on facilitative roles with others.

Flexible grouping by learning level, rather than by grade placement, constituted a second dimension of this theme. Several teachers reported that official grade designations did not reliably correspond to actual learning levels.

In Grade 4, I have children who cannot read properly. ... So I put them with a reading group first. The grade is written in the register, but the learning level is evident in the classroom. (T15)

This practice reflects the wisdom of experienced professionals. Documentary evidence made the gap concrete: attendance registers and grade lists consistently recorded students’ official grade placements, yet observations showed that every school had some students working at a different level from their registered grade. In two classrooms, literacy groups did not correspond to official grade assignments.

Redistributing Instructional Responsibility Through Peer Learning

The third theme describes teachers’ deliberate use of peer and cross-age learning to extend instructional support beyond what one teacher could provide alone. This practice too was developed through experience rather than training.

My senior students are like my helpers. When I am teaching small children to read, I ask Grade 5 students to help Grade 3 with multiplication tables. The younger students get support, and the older students become more confident. (T20)

Observation notes documented that peer learning arrangements were organised rather than incidental. Peer helpers operated within clearly understood roles: they supported, monitored, and encouraged, but did not replace teacher-directed instruction. These arrangements shared features

with structured peer tutoring, but the study did not collect student outcome data and therefore cannot determine whether they improved achievement or distributed benefits equitably.

Extending Learning Through Local Resources and Community Participation

The fourth theme describes how teachers extended their instructional work through locally available instructional resources and active community engagement. This theme functions as an enabling condition for the other three, by showing how teachers expanded their operational context when formal provision was insufficient.

We do not always have charts or models. I use seeds for counting, sticks for addition, and local examples for science. The village itself becomes our teaching material. (T11)

Classroom observations confirmed the use of improvised local materials across all schools. Documentary review found no centrally provided multigrade-specific materials in any participating school; where commercially produced materials existed, they were single-grade textbooks with no guidance on differentiation. Teacher-produced materials were observed in every classroom, but appeared in no official inventory or curriculum document.

During harvest season, many children remain absent. I go to my parents and explain that if the child misses ten days, he loses the lesson. Sometimes, elders help us convince families. (T17)

The reliance on individual teacher relationships to manage seasonal absenteeism places the burden of a systemic problem on interpersonal effort. Attendance records reviewed across schools showed seasonal gaps of up to four weeks in some classrooms, yet no formal guidance or contingency curriculum existed. Teachers' community outreach was the sole operational response.

Gender, Social Constraint, and the Conditions of Hidden Pedagogy

A dedicated sub-analysis of the seven female participants' accounts, conducted alongside comparison with the thirteen male participants, reveals that gender shapes both the content and conditions of hidden pedagogy in meaningful and previously undocumented ways.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the motivation of psychology students for entrepreneurship is the result of a combination of economic, social, personal, and creative factors. Among the nine main categories identified, economic motivation and financial security emerged as the most dominant drivers, followed by the pursuit of freedom in managing work, the desire to create employment opportunities, and the expression of creativity through the products or brands they develop. These findings indicate that students' entrepreneurial drive is not merely pragmatic but also tied to the search for meaning, emotional fulfillment, and the aspiration to contribute social value. By understanding this diversity of motivations, educational institutions can design entrepreneurship programs that are more relevant and aligned with the interests, values, and long-term goals of psychology students. For future research, it is recommended that the dynamics of motivation over time, differences across academic programs, and external factors such as family support and access to business capital be further explored.

Table 2. Gender- Differentiated Patterns Across the Four Themes of Hidden Pedagogy

Theme	Female Teachers (n=7)	Male Teachers (n=13)
Curriculum Reconstruction	Emphasized flexibility of timing; noted that harvesting schedules affected which grade topics could be addressed on given days	Emphasized the logic of topic overlap; focused more on managing noise and disruption through shared themes

Rotational Classroom Flow	Described rotation as emotionally demanding; noted fatigue from sustained vigilance across groups	Described rotation in procedural terms; focused on efficiency and minimizing group idle time
Peer Learning	More likely to describe peer relationships as relational and trust-based; expressed concern about overburdening capable students	Described peer helpers primarily in functional terms; less likely to raise equity concerns about tutors' own learning
Community Engagement	Reported greater personal risk in home visits due to social norms around female mobility; relied more heavily on female community intermediaries	Reported more direct access to male community elders; noted that their authority in community spaces was more readily assumed

The most consequential gender difference emerged regarding community engagement (Theme 4). Female teachers in rural Balochistan face social norms that restrict their independent mobility and their direct access to male community gatekeepers. Several female participants described the home-visit practices that constitute a significant dimension of Theme 4 as personally risky or socially constrained in ways that their male colleagues did not report.

I cannot always go to my father's house. It is not easy for a woman teacher here. I send a message through the mother or another woman. It takes more time, and sometimes the message is not given. (T4)

This evidence indicates that female teachers' community engagement was structurally more complex and less direct than that of their male colleagues. Female participants described relying on women community intermediaries and informal networks of trust because they could not always approach male guardians or elders directly. Their hidden pedagogy in community engagement was therefore a more socially constrained form of the same general practice.

Female teachers also described the rotational teaching dimension of Theme 2 in distinctly relational, rather than procedural, terms, emphasizing sustained awareness of how individual students were experiencing group dynamics rather than the efficiency of group movement. Several expressed concerns about peer helpers taking on too much responsibility, a theme that arose less prominently in male teachers' accounts. These differences suggest that gender shapes not only the conditions under which hidden pedagogy is enacted but also the particular emphases and concerns that characterize it.

It is important to note the limitations of this analysis. The sample size of seven female teachers is small, and the focus group format may have constrained the expression of gender-specific experiences in mixed-gender discussions. The differences identified are therefore indicative and directional rather than definitive. They nonetheless provide sufficient evidence to establish that gender is an analytically relevant variable in the study of hidden pedagogy and to argue that future research should include gender-disaggregated samples of sufficient size to develop this analysis further.

DISCUSSION

This study conceptualized four interconnected, teacher-generated practices in rural multigrade classrooms as a form of hidden pedagogy. The discussion focuses on what their systematic use

reveals about teacher knowledge, institutional recognition, the limits of Bernstein's framework, and the gendered conditions of practice.

Rather than isolated coping acts, the findings show teachers designing coordinated systems of curriculum, time, grouping, and instructional responsibility through reflection-in-action (Cattaneo & Motta, 2021; Lefebvre et al., 2023). This interpretation challenges deficit accounts while also revealing a systemic failure: the practices were developed without corresponding pre-service preparation or formal guidance.

The findings align with international work documenting teacher-developed multigrade routines in Austria, Finland, the Philippines, and South Africa. (Bongala et al., 2020; Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015; Naparan & Alinsug, 2021; Taole et al., 2024). They also extend earlier cross-national research that described multigrade teaching as institutionally overlooked and insufficiently supported (Little, 2001). Balochistan is distinctive because formal policy remains largely silent while teachers report developing practices in relative professional isolation.

Hidden pedagogy is proposed as a cautious extension, not a replacement, of Bernstein's visible-invisible distinction. Bernstein's categories describe how pedagogic communication is organized; hidden pedagogy identifies whether explicit teacher-generated knowledge is recognized within the official pedagogic field. Densgombe's (1982) use of the term concerned pragmatic occupational beliefs shaped by classroom experience, especially classroom control and privacy. Here, the term refers to observable instructional systems that are deliberately practiced but excluded from curriculum, training, and supervision. The contribution, therefore, lies in shifting attention from implicit transmission to institutional recognition.

Recognition of these practices does not establish their effectiveness. Under extreme staffing shortages, resource deprivation, and irregular attendance, adaptive routines may still fail to produce equitable learning. Because the study did not collect student outcome data, it cannot determine whether hidden pedagogy improved achievement.

Peer learning illustrates this evidentiary limit. Teachers' accounts and classroom observations indicated that peer roles were organized, but the study cannot assess their effects on tutors or tutees. Poorly structured peer arrangements may widen inequalities (Arif et al., 2026); future research should therefore examine learning outcomes and the distribution of instructional burdens. Teacher ingenuity should not be romanticized. Peer tutoring, home visits, and material improvisation are both professional adaptations and symptoms of insufficient staffing, weak attendance-support systems, and inadequate material provision. Recognition must therefore accompany structural investment, especially where adaptations create unequal burdens for female teachers.

The gender analysis shows that institutional invisibility is mediated by social access. Female teachers described restricted mobility, indirect communication with male guardians, and greater scrutiny in community engagement, while also expressing more relational and equity-oriented concerns in rotational and peer-learning practices. Given the small female subsample and the use of mixed-gender focus groups, these patterns are indicative rather than definitive.

The findings yield two core implications for teacher education. First, multigrade pedagogy should be recognized as a substantive area of expertise and integrated into pre-service training. Cross-grade planning, rotational instruction, differentiated assessment, and peer facilitation should be systematically introduced and practiced. Second, professional development should adopt a reciprocal model in which experienced multigrade teachers contribute to the design and delivery of training. Curriculum developers should also create cross-grade thematic guides, flexible activity sets, and adaptable assessment tools, while supervision and evaluation criteria should recognize the complexity of multigrade teaching.

CONCLUSION

This study examined teacher-created instructional practices in rural multigrade schools in District Naseerabad, Balochistan, conceptualizing them through Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse as hidden pedagogy: teacher-generated instructional knowledge that is systematic and explicit in classroom practice but structurally excluded from institutional recognition. Four interrelated themes were identified: curriculum reconstruction across grades; rotational classroom flow through flexible grouping; redistributed instructional responsibility through peer learning; and extended learning through local resources and community participation.

The study suggests a possible extension of Bernstein's framework by conceptualizing hidden pedagogy as explicit teacher knowledge that remains institutionally unrecognized. In Bernstein's terms, multigrade teachers perform unofficial recontextualization by reconstructing the official curriculum into contextually functional instructional forms, yet this work remains outside the official recontextualizing field. This claim concerns institutional recognition, not evidence of improved student outcomes. The gender analysis shows that female teachers face additional social constraints that compound institutional invisibility with restricted social access, requiring a gender-differentiated institutional response. Recognizing hidden pedagogy must accompany, not substitute for, institutional investment. Effective reform requires both better recognition of what teachers know and better provision of what they need.

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