



Research Article

## VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE MATATAG CURRICULUM IN COMPOSTELA WEST DISTRICT, DAVAO DE ORO

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### Abstract

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the experiences of elementary school teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in Compostela West District, Davao de Oro, Philippines. The research focused on understanding their challenges, achievements, and the impact of the curriculum on their teaching practices and student engagement. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, involving twelve teachers from three public elementary schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which involved familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, and interpretation of recurring patterns. Key findings revealed that teachers experienced inadequate training and support, limited resources, and difficulties in adapting materials to meet diverse student needs. Despite these challenges, collaboration through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and other platforms played a vital role in enabling teachers to share strategies and support each other. The study highlights the necessity of ongoing professional development, sufficient resources, and collaborative environments to effectively support teachers in implementing curriculum reforms. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences with the MATATAG Curriculum and provide valuable insights for educational authorities and school administrators in enhancing curriculum implementation and support systems.

**Keywords:** MATATAG Curriculum, elementary teachers, teaching practices, phenomenological research, thematic analysis

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## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum reform is widely used to improve student learning outcomes; however, its effectiveness often depends on how well it is implemented at the classroom level. In the Philippines, the introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum seeks to address persistent challenges in literacy, numeracy, and student engagement. Despite these goals, elementary teachers frequently encounter difficulties in adapting to new curriculum demands due to limited training, insufficient instructional resources, and increased workload. This gap between policy intentions and classroom realities presents a critical problem that may hinder the successful implementation of the reform.

More broadly, curriculum reform remains a central strategy by education systems worldwide to improve student engagement and academic performance. Educational changes aim to address learning gaps, strengthen foundational competencies, and align instruction with the demands of a rapidly changing society. However, the success of any curriculum reform depends largely on teachers, as they are the ones who translate policies into actual classroom practice. Research shows that teachers' experiences, perceptions, and the level of institutional support they receive significantly influence how effectively reforms are implemented (Janko & Pešková, 2017). Internationally, countries such as Finland demonstrate that when teachers are provided with strong professional autonomy and sustained training, curriculum reforms are more successfully implemented and result in improved educational outcomes (Chung, 2023). These global perspectives highlight the importance of examining teachers' lived experiences when introducing major educational changes.

In the Philippine context, previous curriculum transitions, particularly the K–12 reform, revealed recurring challenges such as inadequate training, lack of instructional materials, and heavy administrative demands (Trance & Trance, 2019). More recent local studies and reports on the MATATAG Curriculum and related reforms highlight similar concerns. Teachers have reported difficulties in interpreting revised learning competencies, adjusting pedagogical strategies, and managing time within streamlined content structures (Kilag et al., 2024; Department of Education reports, 2023–2024). While these studies provide valuable insights, they often focus on policy or general implementation issues, with limited attention to in-depth qualitative accounts of elementary teachers' lived experiences, particularly in diverse regions such as Mindanao.

Professional development and institutional support are critical components in ensuring successful curriculum implementation. Studies indicate that many teachers feel unprepared when training sessions are brief, generalized, and lacking sustained follow-up support (Chin et al., 2022). Effective curriculum adaptation requires not only technical knowledge but also a deep understanding of the rationale behind the reform and its pedagogical implications (Nalbantoğlu & Bümen, 2024). Without continuous and context-responsive professional development, teachers may struggle to confidently apply new strategies in their classrooms. In addition, teacher collaboration has been identified as an essential factor in sustaining reform efforts. Collaborative practices, such as shared planning, mentoring, and professional learning communities, allow educators to exchange ideas, solve problems collectively, and align instructional approaches (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). However, collaboration may be limited by structural constraints such as time, workload, and administrative demands within schools.

At the local level, particularly in Mindanao, elementary teachers face unique contextual realities, including resource limitations, large class sizes, and shifting policy expectations. Transitional challenges such as inadequate training and insufficient institutional support have been found to hinder effective curriculum adoption in similar contexts (Kilag et al., 2024). Despite the importance of the MATATAG Curriculum, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature. Existing studies largely discuss policy intentions and general implementation concerns, but limited qualitative research explores teachers' lived experiences, especially at the primary level in Mindanao. There is insufficient investigation into how teachers personally navigate the transition, how they perceive the curriculum's impact on student engagement, whether current training systems adequately support them, and how collaboration influences implementation.

To address these gaps, this study uses a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in selected schools in Mindanao. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the personal experiences of primary teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum;
2. Analyze teachers' views on the adequacy of current training and support systems related to the curriculum; and
3. Investigate how primary teachers collaborate and share best practices during its implementation.

By focusing on teachers' narratives within a specific local context, this study provides deeper insights into the realities of curriculum reform and offers practical recommendations for strengthening professional development, enhancing institutional support, and fostering collaborative practices to improve curriculum implementation in the Philippines.

## **METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore elementary school teachers' experiences of implementing the MATAG Curriculum. The phenomenological design was chosen because it focuses on understanding how individuals perceive, interpret, and make sense of their experiences (Dodgson, 2023). Since the purpose of the study was to examine teachers' personal experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in adapting to a new curriculum, phenomenology was an appropriate method, as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of their perspectives within their natural teaching context.

Through this design, the study aimed to capture rich, detailed descriptions of teachers' experiences, highlighting how they interpreted curriculum changes and how these experiences influenced their teaching practices. This approach allowed the researcher to identify common patterns and shared meanings among participants while also acknowledging the uniqueness of each teacher's experience. By focusing on the essence of these lived experiences, the study provides a deeper understanding of how teachers deal with and respond to the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

### ***Research Locale and Participants***

The study was conducted in the Compostela West District, a local government unit of Compostela, Davao de Oro. The research focused on three public elementary schools located in rural barangays within Compostela: Osmeña Elementary School, San Miguel Elementary School, and Corazon Aquino Elementary School. These schools were selected for their involvement in the pilot implementation of the 2024–2025 MATATAG Curriculum and for serving communities in rural areas with limited access to educational facilities. Moreover, the selection of these three schools was based on their representativeness of rural public schools within the district, particularly in terms of resource constraints, class size, and exposure to the initial phase of curriculum implementation. Examining these rural-based schools allowed the study to explore the realities of teaching in such contexts and the implications of implementing curriculum reforms under resource constraints.

The study specifically focused on the experiences of teachers in Grades 1 and 4, as their perspectives were important in addressing the research objectives. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. This method ensured consistency with the study objectives, which enhances the reliability and rigor of qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

The inclusion criteria for selecting participants were as follows: (1) currently teaching Grade 1 or Grade 4 under the MATATAG Curriculum; (2) have at least one year of teaching experience in the public school system; (3) are directly involved in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the 2024–2025 school year; and (4) are willing to participate in both interviews and/or focus group discussions. Participants' experiences were captured through qualitative interviews, taking into account the sensitivity of the topic, the richness of the information provided, and the number of

interview sessions conducted (Wolgemuth et al., 2015).

A total of twelve elementary school teachers were purposively selected from the three schools to represent diverse perspectives on implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. This sample size is consistent with phenomenological research principles, where focused samples provide high-quality, in-depth insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All participants had direct experience teaching under the MATATAG Curriculum, offering first-hand accounts of how the curriculum influenced teaching practices and required adaptations. The interviews captured their lived experiences, providing qualitative data that reflect curriculum navigation and implementation across different rural educational settings.

### **Research Instrument**

The study used a semi-structured interview guide as the primary instrument to collect qualitative data about elementary school teachers' experiences with the MATATAG Curriculum. This instrument was used in both in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The IDIs, conducted with six teachers from three elementary schools, focused on teachers' adaptation of teaching practices, responding to students' needs, and collaborating with peers. The semi-structured format allowed for follow-up questions to clarify and explore participants' perspectives in more depth.

The FGDs, conducted online in one session with another set of six participants, used the same semi-structured guide to encourage open dialogue and sharing of experiences related to curriculum implementation, training and support systems, and collaborative best practices.

To ensure validity and reliability, the instrument underwent formal validation while all interviews and discussions were recorded, transcribed, and supplemented with field observations and detailed note-taking to capture accurate and unbiased data. Specifically, it was validated by three (3) expert validators with backgrounds in research. The validation process utilized a rubric adapted from Marilyn K. Simon, evaluating the instrument based on clarity of instructions, alignment with research objectives, and appropriateness of language. The instrument received an overall validity rating of 3.67 out of 4.0, which corresponds to an overall interpretation of 'Very High Validity'. All qualitative comments and suggestions provided by the validators were fully addressed prior to administration. Consequently, the instrument was deemed systematic and adequate for capturing the lived experiences of the participants.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Data were collected using a phenomenological qualitative method to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The study began with approval from the Research Ethics Committee, followed by formal consent from the school administrators and principals. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, data collection methods, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). The IDIs were conducted one-on-one in a face-to-face setting, with six teachers from three different schools, allowing participants to freely share their experiences in a private and comfortable environment. The FGDs, on the other hand, were conducted virtually (online) to accommodate participants from different locations. Each FGD session included six participants and was facilitated online to encourage interaction and shared reflection.

No fixed time limit was strictly imposed for both the IDIs and FGDs. Instead, the duration of each session was flexible and depended on the participants' availability and comfort in expressing their responses. The interviews and discussions continued until the participants had fully shared their experiences and no new significant information emerged.

Both the IDIs and FGDs used the same semi-structured interview guide, with follow-up questions

used to probe deeper and clarify responses related to instructional adaptations, student needs, collaboration, training experiences, and best practices in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. All sessions were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of participants' responses. To enhance the credibility of the findings, transcriptions were returned to participants for verification, allowing them to review and confirm the accuracy of their responses prior to analysis. Written notes were also taken to supplement the recorded data.

To ensure trustworthiness and minimize researcher bias, phenomenological procedures such as bracketing (*epoché*) and reflexivity were applied. The researchers consciously set aside prior assumptions and preconceived ideas about the MATATAG Curriculum to focus on the participants' lived experiences. Reflective notes were also taken throughout the data collection process to continually reflect on the researchers' influence and ensure that interpretations remain grounded in the participants' actual responses.

### **Data Analysis**

This study used Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis to process and interpret qualitative data collected from participants. This approach involves a systematic process of introducing the data, developing initial codes, finding themes, analyzing themes, identifying and naming themes, and producing a final report. It allows researchers to identify patterns of meaning across the dataset while maintaining flexibility in interpreting participants' lived experiences (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

All interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim and carefully read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated from significant statements, which were then grouped into categories. These categories were further analyzed to identify recurring patterns and meaningful themes that reflect the essence of teachers' experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Themes were refined and reviewed to ensure that they accurately represented the participants' perspectives.

Although phenomenological studies typically employ analytical methods such as Colaizzi's method, Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis was chosen for this study because of its flexibility in capturing both the shared and unique experiences of participants without being limited to a fixed phenomenological method. This approach is appropriate for exploring complex educational experiences, as it allows for rich, detailed, and interpretative analysis while still remaining grounded in participants' actual narratives. Furthermore, it aligns well with the study's goal of understanding teachers' lived experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in diverse school contexts.

The sequential analysis process ensured that the interpretation was systematic, clear, and credible, allowing for meaningful understanding of teachers' perspectives and generating robust qualitative findings that were consistent with the study's objectives (Nowell et al., 2017).

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study followed strict ethical standards to protect the rights, privacy, and confidentiality of participants throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, participants were fully informed about the purpose, methods, and their rights in the study, including the voluntary nature of participation and the ability to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood what their participation involved and how the data would be used. Participants' identities were protected through anonymization, and all information was kept confidential, with access limited to the researchers.

To minimize potential risks, the researchers maintained ethical safeguards during interviews and focus group discussions, including careful handling of sensitive information and respectful treatment of all participants. Data were recorded, transcribed, and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access or disclosure. The study also ensures that the findings are reported accurately and objectively, without bias or manipulation, while providing potential benefits to participants and the broader education community. These steps collectively ensure that the study is conducted with integrity, transparency, and respect for all involved.

All collected data will be securely stored for a period of one (1) year after the completion of the study. During this time, digital files will be kept in password-protected devices, while printed materials will be stored in a locked and secure location accessible only to the researchers. After the retention period, all data will be permanently disposed of to ensure confidentiality. Digital files will be deleted, and hard copies will be shredded to prevent any potential identification of the participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Teachers' personal experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum*

Based on the results gathered from qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, seven emerging themes emerged from participants' shared experiences, thoughts, and reflections on the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum: (1) Uncertainty Due to Insufficient Knowledge; (2) Insufficiency of Teaching and Learning Resources; (3) Limited Instructional Time; (4) Struggles in Adapting to Technology-Integrated Teaching; (5) Positive Impact of Curriculum Decongestion; (6) Enhanced Student Engagement and Performance; and (7) Personal Growth and Professional Development.

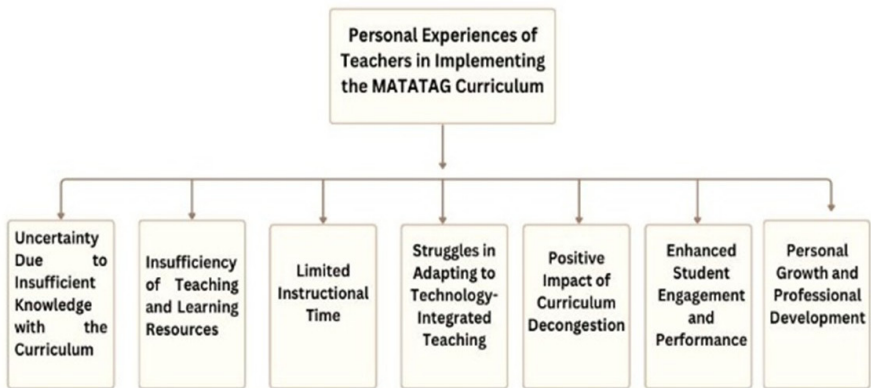


Figure 1. Teachers' personal experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

### *Uncertainty Due to Insufficient Knowledge*

Based on the responses gathered, most participants expressed that they face challenges due to uncertainty and insufficient knowledge of the MATATAG Curriculum.

*"I felt anxious about the difficulties in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in my classroom due to inadequate training and support."—IDI 1*

*"We are going to decongest the learning competencies and feel unprepared due to limited trainings, especially in new pedagogical approaches. I also feel challenged because we need to adapt new teaching strategies while managing time constraints."—IDI 2*

*"For me, it was quite difficult because the lessons were new, and I struggled to adjust since this curriculum is different from what we were used to. The sequence was also different, so I had to figure out how to properly align and follow the lessons."—FGD 1*

*"For me, I felt the difficulty in delivering some subjects under the MATATAG Curriculum, and I also saw the challenges my students experienced because not all the lessons are achievable for them, as they're a bit more advanced."—FGD 2*

This finding suggests that teachers' uncertainty is not merely a result of insufficient knowledge but reflects a deeper issue of incomplete professional readiness for reform implementation. As emphasized by Terhart (2013), teachers interpret and enact curriculum changes based on their prior experiences and the level of support they receive. When these supports are inadequate, uncertainty may translate into inconsistent instructional practices, ultimately affecting the fidelity of curriculum implementation.

### *Insufficiency of Teaching and Learning Resources*

The data revealed that the lack of teaching and learning resources was a major challenge for participants.

*"... when I had to teach a new topic without the essential resources such as teaching guides or textbooks. This lack of support made it extremely difficult to prepare and deliver the lesson effectively."*

—IDI 1

*"In my experience, I really felt the difficulty because we didn't have any books—nothing at all. We relied solely on the Lesson Exemplar, and even that was broad. We also had to reproduce the materials ourselves since only a link was provided."*—IDI 6

*"The downside for me with this curriculum is the Lesson Exemplars that aren't properly organized. Because of that, a lot of time is consumed that could have been used for preparing my lessons."*

—FGD 1

*"In my experience with this curriculum, the negative aspect is the lack of resources. Even though there are Lesson Exemplars, they're not totally enough to fully deliver the lesson. Personally, I believe that additional learning materials are really needed to provide more opportunities for students to learn."*—FGD 5

This indicates that the lack of resources does not only affect lesson delivery but also increases teachers' workload and cognitive demands, as they are forced to create or improvise materials. Consistent with Kilg et al. (2023) and Ubias (2024), inadequate resources can lead to instructional inefficiencies and reduced teaching quality, which may ultimately limit students' learning opportunities and outcomes.

### *Limited Instructional Time*

Participants also discussed the challenges they faced due to limited instructional time, which affected their ability to cover the curriculum effectively.

*"For me, one challenge in the MATATAG Curriculum is helping the students adjust to the approaches or methodologies, especially since learners have diverse needs."*—IDI 5

*"For me, the downside is that there are times when, due to the limited time to teach the lessons, some lessons don't get completed, and we have to skip to the next one."*—FGD 2

*"I find MATATAG Curriculum challenging due to the adjustments in the lesson content and time constraints. We are given 45 minutes in every learning area. For example, in English, the lessons that used to be spread over the whole school year are now crammed into just one quarter."*—FGD 4

This finding highlights a mismatch between curriculum expectations and the actual time allocated for instruction. Haque and David (2022) emphasize that excessive workload and time pressure can hinder effective teaching, while Haapaniemi et al. (2020) suggest that flexibility in implementation is crucial. Without sufficient instructional time, teachers may resort to surface-level teaching or skipping content, which can compromise the depth and quality of student learning.

### *Struggles in Adapting to Technology-Integrated Teaching*

Another emerging theme was the struggle some teachers experienced in adapting to technology-integrated teaching methods.

*“One of the most difficult situations is being someone who’s already a bit older, I find it challenging since everything is now technology-based, and I’m not very skilled, especially when it comes to using gadgets.”—IDI 3*

*“...we even had to pay online, including PowerPoint presentations, just so we would have materials to use in class.”—IDI 6*

*“Maybe I would say that my success or breakthrough with the MATATAG Curriculum is how much I’ve learned to use technology, since most of our resources are online. I’m not exactly an expert, but it has definitely helped make my teaching more effective”—FGD 6*

This suggests that teachers’ difficulties in adapting to technology are not solely due to personal limitations but also reflect gaps in targeted training and institutional support. Chin et al. (2022) highlight that effective professional development must be continuous and responsive to teachers’ needs. Without this, the integration of technology may remain superficial, limiting its potential to enhance teaching and learning processes.

### *Positive Impact of Curriculum Decongestion*

*“One positive experience I’ve observed is the decongestion of learning competencies. It helped make the lessons more focused and manageable, which allowed both teachers and students to concentrate on the most essential skills and concepts without feeling pressured.”—IDI 2*

*“What makes the MATATAG Curriculum a bit easier is that from nine (9) subjects in the previous curriculum, it has now been reduced to five (5), so it somehow lightened our workload.”—IDI 3*

*“Maybe what I can consider as a positive is the compression of the number of subjects. It’s not just for our benefit, but also the students so they won’t have too many lessons to think about.”—FGD 1*

This finding implies that reducing curriculum content can create more meaningful learning experiences by allowing teachers to focus on essential competencies. As supported by Haapaniemi et al. (2020), curriculum flexibility enables deeper engagement with content. However, the effectiveness of decongestion depends on how well teachers are supported in reorganizing and delivering the streamlined curriculum.

### *Enhanced Student Engagement and Performance*

*“At the end of the quarter, when learners achieve high grades, it serves as a meaningful reflection of our hard work and success as teachers. It shows that despite the challenges we face in delivering the lessons and adjusting to new curriculum changes, our efforts are not in vain.”—IDI 1*

*“A specific positive experience is that students became more engaged during the lessons due to the more interactive approach. This reassures me that the changes are improving learning outcomes, as students are also helping each other.”—IDI 4*

*“One of my breakthroughs with this curriculum was seeing how my students became more interested and better understood the lessons, since the curriculum is designed to be more engaging and focused on the students.”—IDI 3*

This suggests that despite the challenges faced, the MATATAG Curriculum has the potential to positively influence student outcomes if it is implemented effectively. Olipas (2024) highlights that increased engagement is a key indicator of successful curriculum reform. However, sustaining these improvements requires consistent support for teachers to ensure that engaging practices are maintained over time.

### *Personal Growth and Professional Development*

*“The most significant breakthrough I experienced is the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. It has enabled my students to learn effectively through my guidance as their teacher and allowed me to grow and learn alongside them.”—IDI 1*

*“Through teaching this curriculum, I can say that it has helped me develop new skills and adapt to other teaching methods, like differentiated instruction, to cater to my students’ needs.”—FGD 5*

This finding indicates that curriculum reform can serve as a catalyst for teachers’ professional growth by pushing them to acquire new skills and adapt innovative practices. As noted by Machost and Stains (2023), reflective practice is essential in navigating change, while Voogt et al. (2016) emphasize the role of collaboration. This suggests that challenges in implementation may also present opportunities for long-term professional development and instructional improvement.

### *Understanding the Foundation of the MATATAG Curriculum*

Five themes emerged from the data analyzed. The emerging themes are as follows: (1) Understanding the Foundation of the MATAG Curriculum; (2) Insufficient Duration of Training; (3) Lack of Practical and Contextual Learning Opportunities; (4) Lack of Ongoing Mentoring and Feedback Mechanisms; and (5) Limited Available Educational Technologies and Resources.

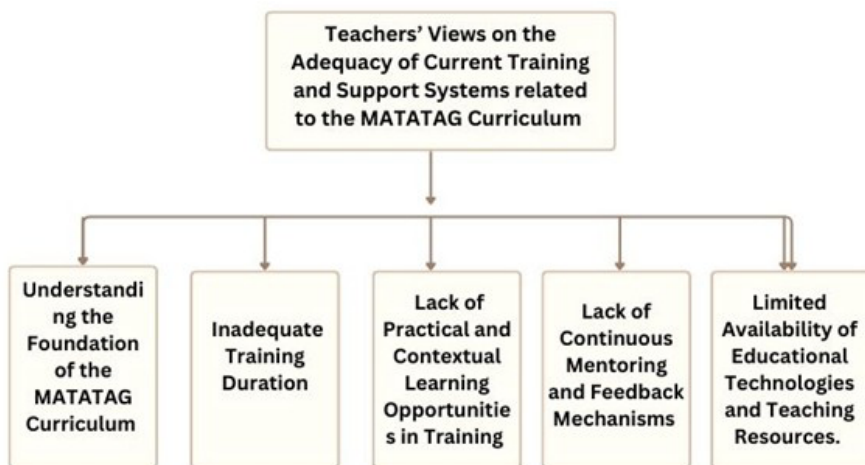


Figure 2. Teachers' Views on the Adequacy of Current Training and Support Systems related to the MATATAG Curriculum

### *Understanding the Foundation of the MATATAG Curriculum*

*“With regard to the professional development sessions, we gained a deeper understanding of the curriculum’s philosophy, goals, and implementation strategies.”—IDI 1*

*“For me, the professional development session in MATATAG Curriculum is good.”—IDI 2*

*“For me, the training was fine because it gave us some idea of the concepts behind the MATATAG Curriculum”—FGD 3*

*“For me as well, these training sessions have helped me become more knowledgeable about the MATATAG Curriculum.”—FGD 4*

This finding suggests that while teachers perceive the training as generally helpful, their understanding may still remain at a foundational or surface level rather than translating into deep pedagogical transformation. This aligns with Fullan’s (2007) view that true curriculum change requires not only awareness but also internalization and active application of new practices. Hence, understanding the curriculum is not merely cognitive but also practical, requiring continuous reinforcement through experience and reflection.

### *Inadequate Training Duration*

*“For me, the training session was really lacking. We still need more time to properly implement the MATATAG Curriculum. I felt a bit pressured because not everything was covered during the training on how to implement it, which makes it difficult for me as well.”—IDI 6*

*“The training was too short, probably just five days.”—IDI 3*

*“One of the challenges I encountered was the initial implementation of the new curriculum because the five-day seminar wasn’t enough to properly implement the MATATAG Curriculum.”—FGD 1*

*“...but it wasn’t enough since there’s still a lot I wanted to learn before its implementation.”—FGD 3*

This indicates that the limited duration of training does not allow for deep learning, practice, and reflection—key components of effective professional development. As supported by Kilag et al. (2024), short-term training often results in fragmented understanding, which can lead to inconsistent classroom implementation. Therefore, the issue is not only the length of training but also its inability to support sustained teacher development.

### *Lack of Practical and Contextual Learning Opportunities in Training*

*“For the MATATAG Curriculum, I believe there should be more training on using ICT for creating and utilizing instructional materials. This would help me integrate technology into my lessons more effectively, making it easier to engage students and enhance their learning experience.”—IDI 3*

*“For me, there have been many trainings, but they feel the same because we’re just told that we, as teachers, should manage things ourselves. It would be better if they provided more real-life examples of what actually happens in the classroom.”—FGD 1*

*“I think what really needs to be addressed is the provision of more practical examples. It would also be better if Master Teachers, instead of School Heads, conducted the training because it’s the MTs who have the knowledge and experience of what really happens inside the classroom.”—FGD 4*

This suggests a gap between theory and practice in professional development programs. Terhart (2013) emphasizes that teachers interpret reforms based on their lived experiences; thus, training that is overly theoretical may fail to influence actual teaching practices. The findings imply that experiential and context-based learning opportunities are essential to bridge this gap and ensure meaningful curriculum implementation.

### *Lack of Continuous Mentoring and Feedback Mechanisms*

*“Although the support system was readily accessible and provided, we still faced difficulties in fully adapting and executing it effectively.”—IDI 1*

*“In my opinion, the current training support system is a great help in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, especially with the environmental support that aids in adjustment. However, what’s lacking is consistent guidance and feedback for long-term implementation, which makes it challenging to sustain.”—IDI 5*

*“Just like in their responses, I can say that online resources are helpful, but one of the gaps I noticed is the lack of consistent guidance. Because of that, I’ve had difficulty implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.”—FGD 5*

This finding underscores that one-time training is insufficient for long-term curriculum success. Ubias (2024) highlights that continuous mentoring enables teachers to refine their practices and address emerging challenges. Without structured follow-up support, teachers may revert to traditional methods, limiting the effectiveness and sustainability of the MATATAG Curriculum implementation.

### *Limited Availability of Educational Technologies and Teaching Resources*

*“In my experience, accessing and utilizing the support system for the MATATAG Curriculum has been challenging. The training, materials, and updates are not always consistently provided, and I often receive limited or 67 rushed training, which makes it difficult for me to fully implement the curriculum effectively.”—IDI 2*

*“I’ve found it difficult to fully access the materials and stay updated with the MATATAG Curriculum. The materials aren’t always available when needed, and the updates come irregularly, making it hard to keep everything aligned for effective implementation.”—IDI 3*

*“I’ve found it difficult to fully access the materials and stay updated with the MATATAG Curriculum. The materials aren’t always available when needed, and the updates come irregularly, making it hard to keep everything aligned for effective implementation.”—FGD 3*

This suggests a misalignment between curriculum expectations and the actual resources available in schools. As noted by Trance and Trance (2019), the absence of adequate materials can hinder the effective implementation of innovative teaching strategies. Consequently, teachers may rely on improvisation, which can lead to inconsistencies in instruction and limit the overall impact of the curriculum reform.

### **Teachers Collaboration and Sharing of Best Practices during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum**

The analysis of data from reveals key themes. The five emergent themes were: (1) Engaging in Collaborative Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions; (2) Using Digital Platforms in Sharing Teaching Resources; (3) Developing and Exchanging of Instructional Materials; (4) Participation in DepEd’s Continuous Professional Learning Initiatives; and (5) Supplementary Training for MATATAG Curriculum Implementation.

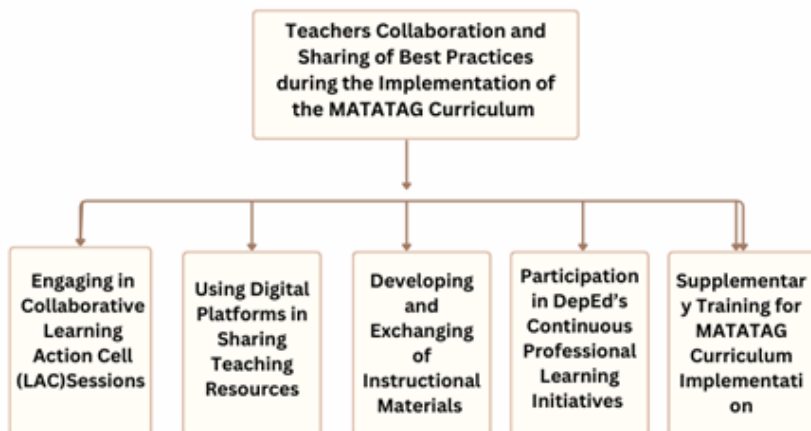


Figure 3. Teachers Collaboration and Sharing of Best Practices during the Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum

### *Engaging in Collaborative Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions*

*“We conducted learning action cells (LAC Session) and we also have time to collaborate in our class program every afternoon with the same grade level teacher.”—IDI 1*

*“I prefer LAC sessions or the learning action cells. This LAC session is DepEd mandated platforms for school based continuing professional development. In this we reflect and solve the problem and exchange insight about the curriculum implementation in this session.”—IDI 2*

*“Most of the time, we rely on our co-teachers. Through conversations with them, I also gain ideas on how to implement the curriculum, and sometimes, their strategies are even better than mine.”—FGD 2*

*“For me, I rely on our Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. That’s where we share ideas, strategies, and experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Through that, my co-teachers and I work together in discovering ways to improve our teaching practices.” — FGD 3*

This finding suggests that LAC sessions function not only as venues for sharing ideas but also as communities of practice where teachers co-construct knowledge and develop collective competence. As emphasized by Fullan, collaboration strengthens reform implementation by promoting shared ownership and continuous learning. This implies that sustained and structured collaboration is essential for translating curriculum policies into effective classroom practices.

### *Using Digital Platforms in Sharing Teaching Resources*

*“For example, sharing strategies in the new lesson or specifically during classroom observation.”—IDI 1*

*“We have a group chat with fellow teachers where I ask for updates about the MATATAG Curriculum. We also share resources by sending links and materials in the group chat.”—IDI 6*

*“We even have a group chat specifically for Grade 4 teachers. These platforms really help us share ideas, strategies, and materials. Whenever I come across a lesson or subject with a helpful link from a colleague, I immediately send it to our group chat so everyone can benefit from it.”—FGD 4*

This indicates that digital platforms serve as informal yet essential support systems that extend collaboration beyond physical school settings. As supported by Kilag et al. (2023), resource limitations can hinder implementation; thus, the use of digital tools helps bridge these gaps. However, reliance on informal platforms may also suggest the absence of a structured and centralized system for resource distribution.

### *Developing and Exchanging Instructional Materials*

*“One teacher demonstrated how she uses visual aids and hands-on activities to make lessons easier for the students to understand. We created folders for lesson plans and activities to improve coordination.”—IDI 3*

*“Whenever we face confusion, we just share with each other. For example, if a lesson is difficult, we collaborate and come up with a strategy. One teacher might suggest a technique that works for them, and then we try it out to see if it’s effective in our own classes.”*  
—FGD 2

*“We also divide tasks, especially during classroom observations. When we have materials to use, we help each other to minimize costs. Sharing strategies allow us to address daily teaching issues effectively.”*—FGD 4

This finding implies that collaborative material development not only reduces individual workload but also enhances the quality and relevance of instructional resources. As Fullan suggests, collaboration enables teachers to collectively respond to curriculum demands. This process also promotes innovation, as teachers adapt and refine materials based on shared experiences and classroom realities

### *Participation in DepEd’s Continuous Professional Learning Initiatives*

*“The Department of Education supported us MATATAG teachers, by providing training sessions and instructional materials to guide the implementation of the curriculum. These helped me better understand the changes and apply them more effectively in the classroom.”*—IDI 1

*“I’m grateful for the support provided by the Department of Education in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The five-day training helped me better understand of the changes, and the instructional materials guided me in applying them effectively in the classroom.”*—IDI 6

*“Our school head is also one of the key supporters in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum by facilitating training and workshops”*—FGD 6

This suggests that institutional support from DepEd plays a critical role in strengthening teachers’ capacity to implement reforms. However, while initial training provides foundational knowledge, Germuth (2016) emphasizes that sustained and differentiated professional development is necessary to address evolving classroom challenges. This highlights the need for continuous, rather than one-time, learning interventions.

### *Supplementary Training for MATATAG Curriculum Implementation*

*“I would suggest that continuous learning through workshop and training sessions can enhance teachers’ skills and confidence in delivering the new curriculum. Professional development helps educators to adapt to any changes in the educational system of our country”*—IDI 2

*“We really need more training because the five-day MATATAG training was not enough. We also need to explore other methods to effectively implement the curriculum.”*—IDI 3

This finding reinforces the idea that professional development should be viewed as a continuous process rather than a one-time event. Haque and David (2022) highlight that ongoing training and stakeholder support are essential in sustaining reform efforts. Without consistent upskilling

opportunities, teachers may struggle to keep pace with curriculum demands, which can affect the overall effectiveness and sustainability of implementation.

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed that elementary teachers face challenges during the implementation of MATATAG Curriculum, particularly in terms of limited knowledge, insufficient resources, time constraints, and difficulties in adapting to technology. These issues indicate gaps in teacher preparedness and institutional support, which may affect effective implementation.

Despite these challenges, teachers observed positive outcomes such as improved student engagement, benefits of curriculum decongestion, and opportunities for professional growth. Collaboration through LAC sessions and resource sharing also helped teachers address implementation difficulties.

These findings suggest that successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum requires ongoing professional development, guidance, and adequate provision of teaching resources. Strengthening structured support systems and collaborative approaches is essential to ensure consistent and effective delivery of the curriculum. Future research could examine the long-term impact of the curriculum on teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that may have influenced the conduct or interpretation of this study.

## Ethical Statement

This study followed established ethical standards and received approval from DDOSC-REC under Protocol 611-02-2025.

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