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Research Article

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

This study utilized a scoping review to provide an overview of empirical studies on the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in the Philippines. The review covered eleven studies published in 2024 that qualified in the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The majority of the studies were qualitative in nature and were subjected to descriptive and content analyses. The results of this review revealed five themes: teachers' perspectives, school heads' perspectives, training experiences, challenges encountered and teaching and leading with resiliency. The findings express that the successful implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in the Philippines depends on teachers' and school heads' experiences, effective training programs, and ongoing professional development, emphasizing the need for policy support and adaptive strategies to enhance resilience and sustain curriculum reforms in a supportive educational environment.

Keywords: MATATAG curriculum, Implementation, Scoping review

Introduction

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 made significant reform in the educational landscape of the Philippines by changing the 10-year cycle to a 12-year system which is widely known as the K-12 curriculum. The K-12 curriculum was developed to equip students with mastery of concepts and skills, create lifelong learners and produce graduates ready for higher education, employment, and entrepreneurship (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). However, despite its efforts to achieve its goals, the K-12 curriculum has faced several challenges.

The 2022 results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) placed the country in the bottom 10 out of 81 participating countries in science, mathematics and reading comprehension. The study indicated that students in the country are five to six years behind in learning competencies (Servallos, 2023). Meanwhile, Filipino students ranked second to the last out of 64 countries in the latest PISA result when it comes to creative thinking (Ombay, 2024). According to a report by the World Bank (2022), 91% of 10-year-old Filipinos struggled with basic reading comprehension.

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In response to these alarming learning loss and statistics brought about by the pandemic, the Department of Education in collaboration with the Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC) conducted a comprehensive review of the curriculum and resolved basic education challenges through the launching of the MATATAG Agenda in 2023 that puts premium on curriculum relevance, improved facilities and services, learner well-being and support for teachers. It aims to produce competent, job-ready, active, and responsible citizens by making the curriculum relevant to learners' needs. It emphasizes accelerating the delivery of basic education facilities and services, promoting learner well-being through inclusive education and a positive learning environment, and supporting teachers to enhance their teaching effectiveness. (DepEd, 2023). Furthermore, the MATATAG Curriculum focused first on Kindergarten to Grade 10 while the Grades 11 and 12 curriculum are still in its current review.

According to the DepEd Memorandum No. 54 (2023), the MATATAG curriculum emphasizes decongestion of the curriculum by reducing the number of competencies by 70% and focus on foundational skills such as language, reading and literacy as well as Makabansa. In its general shaping paper enclosed in the said memorandum, it was further highlighted that the curriculum aims to strengthen literacy and numeracy through the National Reading and Mathematics Programs, redefine the interplay among languages in the MTB-MLE Program, clearer articulation of the 21st century skills framework and strengthen peace and values education. The revised K-10 curriculum begins its implementation starting school year 2024-2025 for kindergarten, grades 4, 6 and 7.

Initial assessments and pilot implementations have yielded promising outcomes with a notable percentage of stakeholders expressing approval and optimism about the new curriculum (Philippine Institute of Development Studies, 2024). Relevant literature concerning the MATATAG curriculum implementation is surging however there is lack of gathered evidence to guide stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating its impact and areas for improvement. Hence, the focus of this present article is to

review existing research on the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum and gain an overview of the body of empirical research literature. Examining teachers' experiences highlights that considering communication between educators and the curriculum planning system can facilitate the effective implementation of curricula (Dadmehr et al., 2023). Transformational leaders create an empowering environment for teachers to provide high-quality education by focusing on job satisfaction, the work atmosphere, and self-efficacy (Virgana & Fitriani, 2025).

It utilized a scoping review, which is suitable when the existing literature has not been thoroughly reviewed, and there is a need to explore the scope, variety, and nature of research to identify gaps in knowledge (Chang, 2018). Therefore, the present scoping review was guided by these research questions: What are the existing empirical studies on the MATATAG Curriculum implementation? What are the key themes identified in the existing studies on the MATATAG Curriculum implementation? What gaps are present in the current body of knowledge? How can these findings guide future research and policy development?

This study contributes to the broader conversation on curriculum reform by providing evidence-based insights that can aid in the refinement and effective implementation of the MATATAG curriculum.

Methodology

This paper used a scoping review method in the purpose of investigating studies on the MATATAG curriculum implementation. The goal of a scoping study is to identify relevant research studies within a chosen research area and provide a coverage of available literature (Arkskey & O'Malley, 2005). In this review, it used scoping review strategies for the search, selection and analysis of studies (Levac et al., 2010).

Search strategy

The search strategy in gathering the articles to be utilized in the review comprised of two stages - the identification of potentially relevant studies and inclusion and exclusion

criteria which are outlined in more detail below.

Phase 1 – identification of potentially relevant articles

The identification stage covered only database searches from Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar and ResearchGate. The search phase resulted in 54 hits. The researcher screened titles, abstracts and keywords to remove duplicates and exclude irrelevant articles. This

resulted in the identification of 21 potentially relevant studies.

Phase 2 – inclusion and exclusion criteria

The potentially relevant studies underwent alignment with regards to the aim and the research question as shown in the inclusion and exclusion in Table 1. Articles in which the focus on the MATATAG curriculum was ambiguous were eliminated. The iterative process led to 11 to be included for advanced analysis.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
The main focus is to investigate the empirical studies in the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum	Empirical studies not related to the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum
Studies from year 2022 to 2024 (these were the years where the MATATAG curriculum was developed and launched)	Studies before 2022
Description of methods for collecting and analyzing empirical data	Articles that present empirical examples without describing the research methods
Published studies from online databases	Book chapters and reports

Analysis of the included articles

To address the research questions and characterize the empirical research on the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum, both descriptive and content analyses were performed on the 11 selected studies, as recommended for scoping reviews (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The descriptive analysis included the participants and the methodology. The content analysis was carried out inductively to uncover the dominant perspectives reflected in the objectives of the research questions presented in the selected articles. The categorization of the articles according to its emerging theme is qualitative since the

understanding and interpretation of the content is done by the author.

Results and Discussion from the descriptive analysis

Based on Table 2, it appears that most of the participants in the studies are in the elementary (4) and secondary (4), 2 studies did not specify the particular level of the involved participants while 1 study had mixed respondents which included public school teachers, grade level coordinators, teacher education students and teachers in the conduct of the study. Qualitative studies prevailed with 10 while there is only 1 quantitative study.

Table 2. Studies included in the scoping review

Authors	Participants	Methodological approach	Assigned category in content analysis
Bantayao & Quibod (2024)	5 secondary school heads	Qualitative	Challenges encountered, Teaching and Leading with Resiliency
Batar et al. (2024)	Grade 1 teachers	Qualitative	Training experiences
Domingo & Masabpi (2024)	School heads and teachers	Qualitative	Teachers' & School Heads' Perspectives

Authors	Participants	Methodological approach	Assigned category in content analysis
Garma (2024)	11 Grade 7 teachers	Qualitative	Teaching and Leading with Resiliency
Gutierrez (2024)	Secondary teachers	Qualitative	Training experiences
Langit (2024)	Grade 4 teachers	Quantitative	Challenges encountered
Loza (2024)	5 secondary teachers	Qualitative	Teachers' Perspectives
Olipas (2024)	6 social studies teachers, 2 grade level coordinators, 6 teacher education students and 6 instructors from higher education	Qualitative	Teachers' Perspectives
Saro & Montejo (2024)	30 teachers	Qualitative	Teachers' Perspectives
Wabingga & Tumakin (2024)	Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 4 teachers	Qualitative	Challenges encountered, Teaching and Leading with Resiliency
Ubisas, (2024)	Elementary school heads and teachers	Quantitative	Challenges encountered

Results and Discussion of the content analysis

The content analysis created the following five themes: teachers' perspectives, school heads' perspectives, training experiences, challenges encountered and teaching and leading with resiliency.

Teachers' Perspectives

Teachers perceive the MATATAG Agenda as emphasizing holistic student development, focusing not only on academic achievement but also on essential life skills and values. Teachers recognize the transformative nature of the curriculum, which prioritizes the holistic development of learners. Additionally, teachers observe that the MATATAG curriculum encourages student-centered learning approaches, promoting greater student engagement and ownership of learning processes.

Teachers appreciate the curriculum's focus on active student involvement and empowerment. Furthermore, teachers value the emphasis of the MATATAG Agenda on providing diverse learning opportunities tailored to meet individual student needs and interests. They recognize the importance of fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all learners. (Domingo & Masabpi, 2024)

The study of history and geography is perceived to include heightened awareness on contemporary and critical issues, deepened understanding with expanded perspectives, varied outcomes based on implementation, early exposure to history and geography, addressing knowledge gaps and fostering patriotism, impact on discipline and awareness, intensified focus on geography and history, and the teacher's perspective and meaningful learning. (Olipas, 2024)

The new MATATAG curriculum can have a positive impact on the learning of the students because of the holistic approach to teaching and reduction of competencies which can be an opportunity for the teachers to focus more on the specific values, skills, and knowledge that the students must possess as they face the complexity of the world. However, teachers perceived that this curriculum change demanded rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes where the teachers assigned will be worried about preparing for such things needed in the curriculum implementation assessment process. They anticipate an increase in the administrative tasks related to the new curriculum's implementation. Additionally, they were burdened with the fact that they needed to prepare new instructional learning materials, study the new procedures in creating a lesson plan for

each module, and consume a lot of their time studying their lessons. In line with this, considering the challenges that they will be encountering in the implementation of the new MATATAG curriculum, they believe that the school must provide them with their needs, support them in any aspect concerning their teaching and learning process, and empower them to fully embrace the curriculum change through the constant supervision of the instructional leaders. (Loza, 2024)

The new curriculum had the potential to significantly enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which was expected to foster a more analytical and creative learning environment. The curriculum's emphasis on real-world problem-solving and interactive learning approaches was thought to increase student engagement and motivation, aligning with current educational trends that advocate for student-centered pedagogies. Furthermore, the MATATAG Curriculum could shift teaching practices towards more student-centered methods and emphasize the integration of technology and competency-based education, as these elements are recognized for improving educational outcomes. However, this positive outlook was tempered by concerns regarding the need for extensive professional development and adequate resources to support the successful implementation of these new approaches. Participants identified insufficient professional development and training as significant obstacles, noting that adapting to new curricula can be challenging without adequate support. They also anticipated resistance to change and adaptation issues, reflecting common challenges in educational reforms where established practices and skepticism about new methods can hinder progress. (Saro & Montejo, 2024)

The analysis of the MATATAG curriculum reveals a complex landscape where its potential for fostering holistic student development and improving engagement through student-centered learning is acknowledged by teachers, but its successful implementation is met with significant challenges. Teachers recognize that the curriculum's emphasis on not only academic success but also life skills, values, and critical thinking offers a promising shift

towards a more comprehensive educational approach. The curriculum's focus on interactive learning and real-world problem-solving is seen as an opportunity to cultivate deeper student involvement and creativity, aligning with contemporary pedagogical trends. However, concerns about the increased administrative burden, the time-consuming preparation of new materials, and adapting lesson plans to the new framework highlight the strain that teachers face. Teachers also note that the need for extensive professional development and resources to support the transition is critical, as the lack of adequate training and support could hinder the effectiveness of these changes. While the MATATAG curriculum offers great potential, its success hinges on the ability of schools to provide the necessary resources, training, and continuous support to teachers, ensuring they can fully embrace and effectively implement the reforms.

School Heads' Perspectives

The curriculum is aligned with industry needs to enhance skill application. School heads see the importance of updating the curriculum to ensure it meets contemporary industry demands, thus facilitating the practical application of skills acquired by learners. This can only be done when there is commitment and dedication to improving the educational system with the flexibility and adaptability needed for the evolving job market, demonstrating educational excellence and continuous improvement. School heads prioritize ensuring teachers are adequately prepared for the implementation of the MATATAG Agenda, including providing instructional materials and organizing training sessions to align with the demands of the new curriculum. (Domingo & Masabpi, 2024)

The alignment of the MATATAG curriculum with industry needs reflects a forward-thinking approach aimed at bridging the gap between education and the evolving job market. School heads recognize the critical importance of updating the curriculum to ensure that students gain skills directly applicable in the workplace, which requires a flexible and adaptable educational system capable of responding to industry demands. This alignment is not only about

providing students with relevant skills but also ensuring that the educational system remains dynamic and responsive to economic changes, thus maintaining educational excellence. School heads emphasize the need for comprehensive support structures, including well-prepared teachers, adequate instructional materials, and ongoing training sessions to ensure that educators are equipped to implement the MATATAG Agenda effectively. This commitment underscores the necessity of a collaborative effort within schools to foster an environment where both students and teachers are empowered to meet the practical demands of a rapidly changing workforce. Ultimately, the success of the MATATAG curriculum will depend on the ability of school leaders to manage this transformation, ensuring that the curriculum is not only relevant but also effectively delivered to facilitate students' future success in the workforce.

Training Experiences

There are areas of concern in the training such as the readiness of the resources, time relevance and weekend conflicts. There were no available resources given especially on the learners' materials. Some speakers during the training exceed their time resulting to extending the the making of the required outputs at home. The training was also conducted during weekends which makes it difficult. (Batar et. al, 2024). Teachers have reported that they only have the one formal training attended prior to the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. There have been no additional training sessions or follow-up workshops since then, which may impact their ongoing preparedness and ability to effectively deliver the curriculum. Although there is a relatively high level of confidence among the teachers, the variation in confidence levels highlights the need for continued support and potential areas for additional professional development to address any concerns and enhance overall effectiveness. (Gutierrez, 2024)

The concerns raised by teachers regarding the training for the MATATAG curriculum highlight critical gaps in preparation and support that could affect the successful implementation of the curriculum. Teachers noted issues such

as the unavailability of adequate resources, especially learning materials, and the time constraints imposed by speakers exceeding their allocated time, which led to additional work outside of training hours. The scheduling of training sessions during weekends further exacerbated the challenges, making it difficult for teachers to fully engage. Furthermore, the lack of follow-up training or workshops after the initial session is a significant concern, as teachers have only attended one formal training session before the curriculum's rollout (Gutierrez, 2024). While there is a sense of confidence among teachers, the variability in confidence levels underscores the need for continuous professional development to address gaps in preparedness and maintain effective curriculum delivery. The absence of ongoing training and support not only limits teachers' ability to adapt to the new curriculum but also highlights the importance of consistent professional development to ensure that teachers remain equipped to meet the demands of the MATATAG curriculum and enhance student outcomes.

Challenges in the Implementation

The transitional obstacles are the biggest issue for school heads with MATATAG curriculum implementation. Transition challenges include limited resources to facilities, classrooms and learning materials, teacher adaptation since teachers must be constantly updated and prepared and implementation phase and readiness to new content, teaching and evaluation methods where educators must adapt to these considerable changes (Bantayao & Quibod, 2024). The absence of resources and materials draws attention to a crucial weakness that may restrict the curriculum's ability to have the desired effect on students' learning. Classrooms are under-resourced without the essential teaching aids, especially for the MATATAG Curriculum's hands-on, project-based learning. There is also an increase in the curriculum demands and a need for enhanced professional development and support (Wabingga & Tomakin, 2024).

Teachers consider the coverage of the Science lessons a problem since there are "too many" in every grading problem. The activities

in the K-12 Science teaching manual were too many given the number of days to cover all those lessons. There is also a lack of support from school administrators in providing budget for school materials (Langit, 2024). Teachers highly observed gap on the curriculum required them to teach an excessive number of learning competencies--with very limited time available for instruction and still an observed gap on closely monitoring the pilot run of the MATATAG curriculum. This means that the schools highly observed gaps to implement MATATAG curriculum. (Ubias, 2024)

The challenges identified by school heads and teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum reveal significant transitional obstacles that may hinder its success. School heads emphasize the lack of resources, such as inadequate classroom facilities and teaching materials, which pose a barrier to effective curriculum delivery, particularly for hands-on and project-based learning. This resource shortage, coupled with the increased demands on teachers to continuously update and adapt to new content, teaching methods, and evaluation strategies, creates considerable pressure on educators to meet the curriculum's expectations. Teachers also report challenges in the Science curriculum, where the volume of content and activities exceeds the time available, further exacerbating the strain on instructional time and resource. The lack of administrative support, particularly in providing budgets for necessary materials, adds to the difficulties, while the excessive number of learning competencies and the limited time for instruction create a significant gap in curriculum delivery. These issues point to a broader concern that the schools may be inadequately prepared to implement the MATATAG curriculum, which requires greater attention to resource allocation, professional development, and administrative support to ensure its effectiveness. Without addressing these gaps, the curriculum's potential to improve student outcomes could be compromised.

Teaching and Leading with Resiliency

Teachers managed to withstand the challenge of having 6 hours of actual teaching per day with 45 minutes per subject. This new

schedule has shaken the time management of the teachers in handling the first section to the next. Despite the time constraints the teachers stayed committed to delivering the curriculum in the most accurate and standard manner. The teachers showed willingness and effort to fully implement the curriculum in various ways despite having not enough training, unattainable suggested activities, and lack of total understanding to the whole MATATAG agenda. The teachers managed the class despite the lack of available resources. The teachers showed the ability and creativity to cope with the arising problems from having a lack of textbooks, learning manuals, available ready-to-use power presentations, etc. Teachers adapt with the new curriculum. The teachers showed versatility in implementing the curriculum despite the determined problems. The teachers were able to adjust and modify their teaching methods and styles in order to fully implement the MATATAG curriculum (Garma, 2024).

Teachers applied coping mechanisms to conquer problems encountered such as collaborative and peer support where teachers offer each other professional and emotional support as they navigate with the various pressures. Teachers possessed positive mindset and strong self-motivation to maintain a constructive outlook and focus on incremental successes such as student progress or small wins in lesson delivery despite the stress and curriculum demands. Professional development and adaptation is also seen as one of the coping strategies where it helps teachers to skills and knowledge to the changing educational demands thus maintain their confidence and flexibility (Wabingga & Tomakin, 2024).

School leaders have also employed school management practices amidst the challenges in the implementation of the curriculum such as collaborative learning and support, enhanced communication strategies and targeted professional development. The school heads conducted peer coaching, mentoring and assessment feedback to guide colleagues through the new curriculum as well as series of information dissemination to all stakeholders through orientation, meetings, focus group discussion and social media. Moreover, school heads have provided trainings that strengthen the

understanding of teachers in unpacking of learning competencies, new methodologies and assessment strategies. (Bantayao & Quibod, 2024)

The teachers' resilience in managing the challenges posed by the MATATAG curriculum, particularly the demanding schedule and lack of resources, highlights their commitment and adaptability in the face of adversity. Despite having only six hours of teaching per day with limited time for each subject, teachers managed to deliver the curriculum effectively, showing creativity and flexibility by adapting their teaching methods and coping with resource shortages, such as the lack of textbooks and learning materials. This determination was further supported by their use of collaborative coping mechanisms, including peer support and a positive mindset, which helped maintain morale and focus on incremental successes despite the pressures of the curriculum. School leaders also played a crucial role in addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, enhanced communication strategies, and collaborative learning practices such as peer coaching and mentoring. By conducting training sessions, organizing orientations, and providing ongoing support, school heads helped teachers navigate the complexities of the new curriculum. These strategies demonstrate the importance of both teacher perseverance and strong school leadership in overcoming the hurdles of curriculum implementation, ensuring that despite the obstacles, educators can continue to foster student learning and growth effectively.

Conclusion

The scoping review concluded that there have been a few number of studies identified related to the MATATAG curriculum implementation. With this literature, five themes emerge which include: teachers' perspectives, school heads' perspectives, training experiences, challenges encountered and teaching and leading with resiliency. The first theme highlights teachers' perspectives on the MATATAG curriculum as a transformative curriculum that promotes holistic student development, encourages student-centered learning, and emphasizes essential life skills and values, but they

express concerns about the increased administrative tasks, need for professional development, and adequate resources for effective implementation. The second theme stressed on school heads' perspectives on the importance of updating the curriculum to align with industry needs, ensuring skill application, and prioritizing teacher preparation, instructional materials, and training to meet the demands of the evolving job market under the MATATAG Agenda. The third theme asserted training experiences where teachers express concerns about the lack of resources, time conflicts, and the need for additional training, as they only attended one formal session before the MATATAG Curriculum implementation, highlighting the need for continued support and professional development. The fourth theme noted on the challenges encountered by school heads and teachers especially on the transitional obstacles in implementing the MATATAG curriculum, such as limited resources, teacher adaptation, insufficient support for classroom materials, and excessive content coverage, all of which hinder the effectiveness of the curriculum and require enhanced professional development and administrative support. The fifth theme covered the resiliency of teachers and school heads despite the challenges encountered like time constraints, limited resources, and insufficient training, teachers have shown resilience and creativity in implementing the MATATAG curriculum, utilizing coping strategies such as peer support, a positive mindset, and professional development, while school leaders have facilitated collaborative learning, communication, and targeted training to support the transition.

Based on the findings from the selected literature, further research on the MATATAG curriculum implementation should address several key areas. First, conducting a comparative study across different districts or regions would provide a broader perspective on the challenges and successes faced by curriculum implementers, enhancing the generalizability of findings. Second, future studies should include students' perspectives and performance to directly assess the impact of the MATATAG curriculum on learning outcomes, offering a more comprehensive understanding of its

effectiveness. Additionally, exploring the role of parents and other key stakeholders in supporting and understanding the curriculum would highlight opportunities for greater collaboration and communication. Third, quantitative research should be conducted to evaluate the curriculum's effectiveness in improving educational outcomes, as most existing studies have been qualitative. Lastly, more research is needed on the support provided to teachers, including technical assistance, professional development, and psychological support, to assess whether educators feel adequately prepared and confident in implementing the new curriculum. These areas of study would contribute valuable insights to strengthen the overall implementation and impact of the MATATAG curriculum.

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