

Transitioning K to 12 Modifications to Matatag Curriculum: Perceptions of Basic Education Teachers in Focus

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Abstract: This study explored the lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms and insights of public elementary school teachers on transitioning to MATATAG curriculum in schools. The participants were coming from Paquibato District, Division of Davao City, DepEd Region XI. There were ten (10) elementary school teachers who participated in the study. This study made use of a phenomenological approach to extract the ideas from the participants. The participants were purposely selected as representatives from the group of elementary school teachers. The face to face in-depth interview was employed to gather significant information with regard to their respective lived experiences. Using the thematic analysis, the following themes emerged pertaining to their lived experiences: shift toward learner centered instruction, emotional investment in teaching, and rediscovery of purpose. Further, there were three sub-themes that emerged from the challenges by the participants. These are technological and resource limitations, curriculum overload and time, parental and community disconnect and hurdling transition challenges. The three coping mechanisms of teachers as participants in the challenges they experienced were collaboration and support systems, mindset shifts, and self-initiated professional learning. The three educational management insights drawn from the participants were emphasis on curriculum mastery, the significance of values integration and collaboration and support as success enablers. Thus, it is crucial for DepEd administrators to cultivate a culture of collaboration, innovation, and emotional support by organizing regular LAC sessions, supplying teaching resources, and enhancing teacher well-being.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, MATATAG curriculum, Elementary Schools, Public Teachers

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I. INTRODUCTION

The curriculum consists of carefully designed courses, activities, and experiences that shape how students learn. It includes planned content, instruction, and students' actual experiences, reflecting underlying values and beliefs about education. The curriculum influences learning outcomes and is connected to power dynamics, either standardizing or diversifying education. It is a central focus for all involved in education and often attracts public attention and scrutiny.

The curriculum's importance lay in its ability to adapt to society's evolving needs, preparing students for future challenges and ensuring education remained relevant. Failure to update curricula risked harming public education and societal progress. Globally, curriculum reform was vital to maintain effective and equitable education systems. In the Philippines, the MATATAG curriculum, set for full implementation by 2026-2027, aimed to reduce curriculum overload, enhance values education, and emphasize social

studies to strengthen national identity while meeting international standards. Already introduced in some grades in Paquibato District, Davao City, the study sought to gather perspectives on the MATATAG curriculum's impact on teaching, learning, and educational outcomes to guide future improvements.

This study aimed to explore the experiences of elementary teachers handling MATATAG classes during its transition period. It focused on identifying the challenges they faced and the strategies they used to adapt. The findings sought to support the improvement of MATATAG curriculum implementation and enhance the teaching and learning experience for both teachers and students.

In summary of the literature cited, the MATATAG Curriculum offers clear benefits, but its implementation is complex and affected by factors like teacher readiness, support systems, monitoring, evaluation, and methodology, with additional factors still needing exploration.

The study anchored on Sociocultural theory, based on Lev Vygotsky's research, which highlights the role of historical context, cultural tools, and social interaction in cognitive development. Learning is viewed as a social process facilitated through language and collaboration. This theory informed the MATATAG Curriculum, which emphasizes contextualized learning, cultural relevance, and cooperative teaching methods to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a major effort to improve Philippine education by aligning it with global standards while respecting local culture. Rooted in sociocultural principles, it promotes inclusive, culturally responsive teaching, authentic learning tasks, and collaborative environments. world.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore teachers' lived experiences in implementing the latest DepEd MATATAG curriculum. Phenomenology focuses on understanding participants' perceptions and meanings within their context, allowing for an in-depth interpretation of educators' realities. This approach helps provide valuable insights, especially for education in indigenous and remote communities.

This study is guided by four key philosophical pillars: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Ontology adopts a constructivist view, seeing reality as socially constructed and subjective, which helps capture the varied experiences of teachers implementing the MATATAG curriculum. Epistemology aligns with this, emphasizing knowledge as co-created through social interactions within participants' contexts, reflected in the use of qualitative methods like interviews. Axiology highlights the importance of acknowledging researcher values and ethical respect for cultural norms, ensuring transparency and integrity. Lastly, the qualitative methodology supports an in-depth exploration of complex social and cultural dynamics involved in the curriculum's implementation.

This study was based on the assumption that reality was socially constructed and subjective, shaped by individuals' experiences and social contexts, aligning with the constructivist paradigm. This perspective was essential for understanding the varied experiences of teachers implementing the MATATAG curriculum within diverse cultural, economic, and geographic settings. The research design captured these realities by exploring teachers' interpretations in depth, respecting their subjective experiences while recognizing the broader social and cultural influences that shaped them.

This qualitative study focused on the experiences of ten elementary school teachers in Paquibato District, Davao City, teaching Kinder, Grades 1, and 4 during the MATATAG curriculum implementation. Using purposive sampling, the study selected participants with rich, relevant experiences in curriculum transition. Inclusion criteria required teachers to

be currently teaching MATATAG subjects in the specified grades, have at least two years of teaching experience to ensure familiarity with the curriculum, and be willing to participate and share their insights.

The study collected data through in-depth interviews (IDIs) using a carefully developed interview guide with open-ended questions based on the research objectives. These one-on-one interviews aimed to explore teachers' experiences and challenges with implementing the MATATAG curriculum. Conducted in private settings, each interview lasted 20-60 minutes, with participants' consent obtained for recording. The recordings were transcribed and anonymized to ensure accuracy and confidentiality, allowing for detailed analysis of participants' perspectives.

The researcher will analyze the interview data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method. This involves transcribing interviews accurately, thoroughly reading transcripts to become familiar with the data, and generating initial codes by breaking down the text into meaningful segments. Next, the researcher will identify and refine themes by grouping related codes and reviewing them to ensure coherence. Finally, themes will be clearly defined and named, interpreting their significance in relation to the research questions and existing literature to produce a rich and insightful analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study identified four major themes from interviews with public elementary school teachers about challenges in implementing the new MATATAG curriculum: Shift Toward Learner-Centered Instruction, Emotional Investment in Teaching, and Rediscovery of Purpose. Teachers shared demanding but valuable experiences, viewing these challenges as learning opportunities that helped them manage teaching effectively. They understood that the MATATAG Curriculum aims to improve education by focusing on foundational skills, values, and relevant learning to develop globally literate, responsible, and future-ready citizens.

The second research objective examined how public elementary school teachers coped with challenges in transitioning to the MATATAG Curriculum. Their coping strategies, summarized in Figure 4, fall into three main themes: Collaboration and Support Systems, Mindset Shifts, and Self-initiated Professional Learning. These themes highlight how teachers managed difficulties during the curriculum transition.

The final research objective explored the insights and lessons learned by public elementary school teachers during the MATATAG Curriculum transition. Figure 5 summarizes these insights into three main themes: Emphasis on Curriculum Mastery, The Significance of Values Integration, and Collaboration and Support as Success Enablers. Despite challenges faced, the teachers' reflections highlighted valuable lessons that enhanced their competence and preparedness as educators.

The thematic analysis of public secondary school teachers' experiences with the MATATAG Curriculum revealed four main themes, which are - Shift Toward Learner-Centered Instruction, Emotional Investment in Teaching, Rediscovery of Purpose, and Hurdling Transition Challenges. The challenges included Technological and Resource Limitations, Curriculum Overload and Time, and Parental and Community Disconnect. Teachers coped through Collaboration and Support Systems, Mindset Shifts, and Self-initiated Professional Learning. Key educational management insights focused on Curriculum Mastery, Values Integration, and the importance of Collaboration and Support.

The analysis revealed that basic education teachers transitioning to the MATATAG curriculum experienced a deeply human journey marked by adaptation, reflection, and resilience. They shifted from traditional content-focused teaching to a learner-centered, values-integrated approach, prompting a reevaluation of their professional roles and teaching philosophies. Despite significant challenges like curriculum overload, emotional strain, and limited resources, these obstacles became opportunities for personal and professional growth. Teachers developed coping strategies centered on well-being, self-improvement, and collegial support, finding renewed purpose in nurturing both students' intellect and character.

The study recommended that key stakeholders take specific actions to support the effective implementation of the MATATAG curriculum. DepEd was advised to ensure equal access to training, resources, and infrastructure, especially in remote areas. School leaders were encouraged to foster collaboration, innovation, and teacher well-being through regular meetings and resource provision. Teachers were urged to continue reflective practices, use contextualized teaching, and participate in peer learning. Students were to be engaged through learner-centered activities and real-life connections. Parents and community partners were expected to support learning via orientations and communication. Future research was suggested to explore the long-term impacts of MATATAG across diverse contexts and consider other participants or locations, emphasizing a multi-stakeholder, empathetic approach for curriculum success.

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