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TEACHERS' READINESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MATATAG CURRICULUM AND ITS CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This was conducted in 2026 and examined the readiness of Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, along with the support systems available to them, their instructional practices, and the challenges they encountered. Using a descriptive quantitative research design, the study involved 105 teacher-respondents from public schools in District 10, Division of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. A validated researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data, which were analyzed through mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a high level of readiness, particularly in pedagogical knowledge and professional development. They also displayed a very positive attitude toward curriculum change, indicating openness to new approaches and willingness to modify traditional teaching practices. However, moderate ratings were noted in areas such as follow-up training and mother tongue-based instruction. Teachers reported generally positive perceptions of support systems. Institutional support was rated high due to adequate classroom facilities, though library and financial resources were less sufficient. Administrative support received very high ratings, reflecting strong leadership in monitoring, guidance, and collaboration. Resource availability was also rated high, largely because of community involvement and external partnerships, despite persistent gaps in funding and instructional materials. Instructional practices showed very high implementation across methodologies, assessment, and classroom management, indicating strong alignment with MATATAG principles. However, teachers still faced notable challenges rated as "Challenging" including a lack of teaching materials, diverse learner needs, limited time to cover extensive curriculum content, and insufficient hands-on resources. These concerns highlight systemic barriers that may hinder the full and effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Based on the findings, the study concludes that while teachers are generally prepared and motivated to implement the MATATAG Curriculum, sustained professional development, improved resource allocation, and stronger institutional support are essential. The study recommends enhancing assessment training, strengthening mentoring systems, ensuring equitable distribution of instructional materials, increasing financial support, and fostering active community partnerships.

KEYWORDS: MATATAG Curriculum, teachers' readiness, support systems, instructional practices, curriculum implementation challenges, basic education.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education introduced the MATATAG Curriculum to strengthen the quality of basic education in the Philippines. Grounded in the MATATAG Agenda, the reform aims to make the curriculum relevant to produce competent, job-ready, active, and responsible citizens; Take steps to accelerate the delivery of basic education facilities and services; Take good care of learners by promoting well-being, inclusiveness, and a positive learning environment; and give support to teachers to teach better.

The process of curriculum reform is a crucial turning point in the country's efforts toward academic excellence and educational transformation. The launch of the MATATAG Curriculum represents a key development for education in the Philippines, one that is meant to help resolve long-standing issues in basic education and improve students' learning across the country. Bridging Program The K to 12 program, a top-down comprehensive curriculum reform by the Department of Education (DepEd), offers the rationale to improve the fundamentals of learning as it promotes a more holistic and culturally responsive understanding of education (Demate et al., 2025).

The MATATAG Curriculum is a far cry from the traditional way of teaching towards a more innovative, learner-centered, critical thinking and creativity-focused, and kelanganong-elf, or being able to apply, learnings, and understandings. This educational reform package includes several subjects such as mathematics, science, language arts, and values lessons (Freklese, 2025). Educators are implementing the curriculum across different ages of students, however, with a particular emphasis on grades K-4, as foundational learning makes all the difference for students' opportunity to succeed academically.

The literature tells us that implementing a curriculum successfully is highly dependent on teacher readiness, institutional support structures, and effective instructional practices

(Espina, 2025). Teachers are the key actors of all educational change, so any kind of perspective for schools encounters teachers' views, experiences, and difficulties as being of prime relevance for the success or the non-success of new curricula. Teachers of the MATATAG Curriculum must draw on their existing pedagogical practice, adopt new approaches to teaching, and be responsive to challenges to deliver quality education to the schools.

Recent studies have emphasized the challenging nature of curriculum implementation processes, especially in developing countries that commonly experience problems of resource scarcity, lack of professional development opportunities, and system difficulties that routinely obstruct successful educational reforms (Malinao and Miano, 2025). Challenges in the Philippine educational system environment. Students in the Philippines come from different linguistic, socio-economic, and infrastructure environments in different regions. These issues do have strong effects on how teachers perceive and execute new curriculum prescriptions, and their perspectives are invaluable for understanding the actualities of implementation.

The importance of studying teachers' perceptions during implementation of the curriculum should not be underemphasized since such information is valuable input to policymakers, educational managers, and curriculum developers. Knowing the teachers' readiness, the available support systems, and examining the teaching practices provides evidence-based data for enhancing the implementation strategies and addressing the barriers to the implementation of programs (Dr. Rechie C. Bejasa, 2025). In addition, teachers' views reflect the reality of curriculum changes at the classroom level and offer views on both successes and challenges which may be overlooked in policy statements.

However, despite the vast literature on curriculum implementation at the global level, there is very little research about teachers' actual experiences and perspectives on the MATATAG Curriculum implementation in the Philippines. Although there are already other studies conducted, such as work on educational reform, only a few of these studies have been conducted globally that have comprehensively examined the readiness of the teachers, the support system, and instructional practices which are related to the MATATAG Curriculum implementation in the basic education (Po, 2025). This deficiency is particularly notable in research on early elementary teachers (kindergarten through grade 4) who are the first in line to carry out fundamental curriculum reforms.

This study adds to the literature on teacher perceptions of MATATAG Curriculum implementation by offering empirical evidence of readiness factors, the efficacy of the support system, and instructional practice adaptations. Inspired by teachers' messages that

revealed these essential dimensions, this research provides important messages for education stakeholders, policy-makers, and future curriculum implementation activities. They can also be used as a basis to develop more focused professional development, better support structures, and improved implementation strategies to successfully support education reform (Garcia, 2025)

Theoretical Framework

Three key theories will be used as the theoretical framework for the study into the implementation of the curriculum and teachers' perspectives.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory by Everett Rogers (1962) outlines the penetration and dissemination of new ideas, practices, or innovations within social systems. In the light of the application of MATATAG Curriculum, this theory explains alter in the actions of a teacher by how they perceive a new curriculum as being beneficial because it will be compatible with the practices they already perform, it is easy to implement, they have had a chance to test it in their classrooms, and they have seen positive results from other teachers who have tried it. The theory highlights adopter categories (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards), which might account for differences in teachers' readiness and implementation behaviors. This theoretical framework is especially important in the context of teachers' attitudes to curriculum change and the factors that influence their adoption of new pedagogic practices (Soriano, 2025).

The theory priority in self-efficacy has its significance in explaining the teachers' confidence in using the MATATAG Curriculum in the way they perceived about what they could achieve, and how their perceived capabilities affect their practices in the classroom and the student learning (Tabamo & Labitad, 2025).

Curriculum as practice, however, is way more complex than just a product and consists of different elements, such as teachers, students, environment, resources- these elements are interconnected in the same manner that a systems thinking approach provides a perspective of interconnectedness. This theory points out that what affects one part of the educational system (ES) affects the other components; thus, the totality of the system needs to be taken into account when reforming the curricula. The program theory explains how factors such as teachers' readiness, support, and instructional practices work together as interdependent components that shape the extent of implementation success (Motel, 2025).

The conceptual framework illustrates the multidimensional factors influencing the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and their collective impact on determining the

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to investigate teachers' readiness, perceptions, and challenges regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in basic education. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, Grade 7, and Grade 8 teachers' readiness in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in terms of professional development, pedagogical knowledge, and attitude toward change?
2. What is the teacher's perceived level of effectiveness in the existing support systems in facilitating the MATATAG Curriculum implementation, as to institutional support, administrative backing, and resource availability?
3. What is the level of the practices employed by the teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum as to teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and classroom management?
4. What is the level of the challenges encountered by the teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum?

Significance of the Study

This research study would be beneficial to the following individuals, groups, or organizations, whether in the public or private sectors:

To the teachers, the study gives voice to their experiences and helps surface practical concerns that may otherwise go unnoticed in the policymaking process.

To the school leaders and education officials, the findings can serve as a basis for crafting more responsive implementation strategies. To gain insights into what their teachers require, allocate resources more efficiently, and support the development of an environment conducive to the successful implementation of the curriculum (Quebec et al., 2024). Ultimately, this study supports the goal of improving teaching and learning quality under the MATATAG Curriculum for the benefit of Filipino learners.

To the Philippine Educational Sector, the findings of this research are also important, especially in the implementation of curriculum and policies. The evidence will certainly be useful to inform programs and policy to support teachers in their experiences and challenges and perspectives as they implement the MATATAG Curriculum, which is distributed through the teacher education system in the country in general and in curriculum reform issues of developing countries in general. This study contributes to educational research and the scholarship base of knowledge by filling a gap in the literature since no known literature

solely addresses teachers' perceptions on the MATATAG Curriculum implementation in the basic education settings.

For educational policy makers and curriculum developers, the results of this study provide evidence-based information for curriculum implementation strategies and policy decisions in the future. The study's results related to teacher readiness levels, the effectiveness of the support system, and the challenges of instructional practice offer practical perspectives for the targeted intervention for the improvement of PD and support. The practical implications for teacher education institutions and professional development providers are that they have a research basis for modifying pre- and in-service training. To be able to empower future and current educators more effectively, these institutions can first assess the challenges and support needs that teachers identify while implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Finally, the study informs ways of improving the quality of basic education in the Philippines by providing key pertinences for more effective curriculum implementation and improved student learning outcomes (Rivera et al., 2025).

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The research under consideration is a special investigation of the teachers' perception of the implementation and the difficulty of the MATATAG Curriculum in basic education, specifically focused on the readiness factors, the support system, and the pedagogical strategies. The current research involves teachers in kindergarten level, Grade 1 level, Grade 2 level, Grade 3 level, Grade 4 level, Grade 5 level, Grade 7 level and Grade 8 level of the Department of Education Region X under the Division of Malaybalay City, 2 years after the implementation of MATATAG Curriculum based on the descriptive research design and statistical approach of survey-questionnaire description to identify the extent of perception and experience of teacher-respondents on the validated areas covered in the basic education level over the past 2 years especially on areas where MATATAG Curriculum were applied.

Some limitations also should be taken into consideration: 1) the study is geographically restricted to one district in Bukidnon, and the results may not be extrapolated to other areas with other socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, or experience in the history of implementation. The research limits itself to the perception of the teachers, thereby removing the respective perceptions of the students, parents, or school heads, which could also add interesting results to the effectiveness of the curriculum implementation. Moreover, the self-report data collection technique of survey questionnaires used to conduct the study might be affected by social desirability bias or response bias. The 2-year period, however, is likely not

to reflect long-term effects of implementation, and might fail to reflect long-term effects of a fully developed curriculum carried out over the following years.

Review of the Literature

Teachers' Readiness in Curriculum Implementation

The idea of teacher preparedness in the use of curriculum has also surfaced as an important variable in assessing the success or failure of educational innovations. Motel on (2025) carried out a thorough narrative study with regard to teachers' competence and MATATAG content delivery, wherein they established that teacher readiness is multifaceted and emanates from pedagogical knowledge, technical skill, psychological preparedness, and professional confidence. The research underscored that teachers who felt comparatively prepared were more successful in both executing curricular change and in altering their instructional strategies to address new educational demands. This result is consistent with the more general belief that whether curriculum implementation is successful is strongly a function of the extent to which teachers can change and the extent to which they have confidence in their ability to implement the new forms of teaching.

Espina (2025) offered a divergent view by examining the adaptive preparedness of public-school teachers who were carrying out the MATATAG Curriculum in inclusive education. In contrast to Motel's (2000) broad readiness study, Espina's (2001) study specifically addressed the additional issues with the implementation of curriculum reforms in diverse classrooms, including students with special needs. The research found that the preparation of teachers for inclusive classroom settings should be supported by such aspects as special training and development of pedagogical flexibility, as well as the understanding of differentiated teaching methodologies. This study shows that teachers' readiness is not universal across educational contexts and should be viewed in the cultural context of each implementation site.

The time dimension of teacher preparedness was extensively investigated by Quebec et al. (2024), who explored first-grade teachers' perceptions and feelings about the school-based training on the MATATAG Curriculum. Their investigation found that teacher preparedness was not a fixed state but, rather, a developmental process that transpires through participation in training programs, discussions with colleagues, and through 'on the ground' experience. The findings revealed that teachers' initial fears and ambivalence regarding curricular reform became, over time, confidence and proficiency through organized professional development

programs. This result contrasts with research that conceptualizes readiness as a pre-existing state and relocates it as the end product of ongoing learning and adaptation.

Freklese (2025) added a linguistic feature to the notion of teacher readiness, and one concept of preparedness investigated mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) and instructional competence in Grade 1 and 2 teachers. This research found that in multilingualism, teacher preparedness must entail more competencies than merely a pedagogical skill set, but also cultural awareness, language proficiency (s), and awareness of local community dynamics. The study showed that the use of MTB-MLE elements of the MATATAG Curriculum in MTB-MLE classes had special considerations for language transitioning, attaining cultural relevance, and humanizing learning through community involvement. Compared to other readiness studies, Freklese's research indicates that elements of a curriculum itself may call for targeted teacher preparation outside of or in addition to the most common forms of professional development.

Support Systems and Administrative Backing

In the literature, a great deal of attention has been paid to the role of the institutional support structure in realizing curriculum reform, and multiple studies have provided us with convergent as well as divergent insights into what is meant by effective support. Demate et al. (2025) analyzed teachers' perspectives about the MATATAG Curriculum implementation to look for the cooperative solutions and support systems that the grassroots teachers were able to create. They found that effective forms of support tend to evolve organically, such as through teacher collaboration, peer coaching, and team-based problem solving, rather than top-down directions from administrators. The research reminded us how much teachers prize lateral support networks with peers as they do, if not more so, in comparison with vertical relationships with the administrative chain of command.

Instructional Practices and Teaching Methodologies

One of the most visible and difficult things teachers do in the school classroom is "teaching differently" or changing instructional practice, since this means that teachers have to change "how they do teach now," and when they maintain the change attempt, teachers have to adopt a different set of "hows." Soriano (2025) researched heavily on teachers' views on the actual implementation of instruction in the MATATAG Curriculum, which disclosed a marked change in classroom teaching and instruction from traditional lecture instruction to student-centered learning. The research recorded how teachers changed their teaching to implement

collaborative learning, project-based activities, and technology as the new curriculum dictated. Soriano's research identified opportunities and challenges for the teaching and learning efforts, as teachers understood the benefits of new approaches but experienced obstacles to putting the methodology into place due to implementation logistics and resource availability.

Challenges and Implementation Barriers

The identification and analysis of obstacles to implementation has become an important research focus, as relationships between systemic, institutional, and individual barriers impacting successful curriculum implementation remain complicated. Another qualitative study on the challenges, strategies, and support needs of teachers during MATATAG Curriculum implementation, conducted by Malinao and Miano (2025), indicated that difficulty always revolved around lack of resources, inadequacy of training, and lack of time. Their study showed how teachers informally adapt when adjusting to implementation barriers, through informal networks of collaboration, resource improvising, and altered implementation schedules. The research underscored that those obstacles are not barriers, but are opportunities to inspire creative problem solving and growth of professionals educating youth.

Professional Development and Training Needs

The importance of professional development for the successful implementation of curriculum has been well documented (Abd El Khalick et al., 2018), including studies of best practices and barriers in current training (Cohen, 2018a). Rivera et al. (2025) provided a thorough review of the Philippine education system from the perspective of providing access and participation in in-service training (INSET) and teacher professional development (TPD) and found that far-reaching structural problems were preventing adequate INSET and TPD for curriculum implementation. They showed that professional development needed to be enacted as ongoing job-embedded learning, rather than one-shot training. This study has revealed obvious differences in PD access between urban and rural schools, and has therefore established unequal implementation conditions in different regional environments.

The Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design to determine the teachers' perceptions of the implementation and challenges of the MATATAG Curriculum in basic education. The

descriptive cross-sectional research design was chosen as it allows data on characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions of a given population to be collected, organized, and summarized statistically without manipulating variables at the time of restriction of causal relationships. This design is particularly appropriate to determine the present conditions of readiness and the perceived support system level of the teachers with reference to the real instruction practices employed in the course of implementing a curriculum, as it provides a general overview of what is occurring in the learning institutions. The descriptive approach aligns with the objectives of the research to identify, analyze, and identify various facets of MATATAG Curriculum implementation as portrayed by the teachers.

The descriptive method is consistent with the research's goals of determining, evaluating, and recognizing different dimensions of MATATAG Curriculum implementation as perceived by the teachers. As shown by Yunting et al. (2025), descriptive quantitative analysis is an effective method for aggregating and analyzing the perceptions of teachers and experiences with curriculum implementation, and in providing baseline data for a better understanding of the normal implementation context. This design allows both standardized survey questionnaire data to be collected and for comparisons to be made across grades, as well as for thematic analysis of obstacles and successes in implementation in this particular research context.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the public schools of District 10 under the Division of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, which forms part of Region X of the Department of Education (DepEd). The district is a unique mix of rural and semi-urban school culture, and thus represents a perfect location to study the large-scale application of the MATATAG Curriculum in basic education. And the schools in this district represent a wide range of learners, including those who live in remote upland learning environments, to others who live in more accessible and economically active barangays, so that they give a more realistic view of the diverse learning situations common within Philippine public schools. These are publicly run schools, which are governed and run according to the usual structure, policies, and guidelines of DepEd, so that systems, practices, and constraints in such schools are realistically representative of the situation in the rest of the nation. Similar to most publicly funded schools in the Philippines, schools in District 10 have to juggle issues connected to resource distribution, sufficiency of educational materials, educator load, classroom facilities, and access to ongoing professional growth. Common issues that are involved in

administrative operations include staffing limits, conflicting mandates, and balancing between instructional supervision and school management responsibilities.

FINDINGS

The results indicated that teachers were highly prepared in the area of professional development, as initial training and grade-based preparation were rated highly, but follow-up training and instruction in the mother tongue were rated moderately. The level of pedagogical knowledge was also rated high, which shows good knowledge of the competencies, strategies, and underlying learning skills. Attitude towards change among teachers was highly favorable, which means that they are highly enthusiastic and eager to implement the innovations of MATATAG alignment.

Regarding support systems, institutional support was high, particularly in classroom facilities, though library resources were less adequate. Administrative backing was very strong, with school leaders providing guidance, monitoring, and prompt responses to implementation concerns. Resource availability was also rated high, supported by parent involvement and partnerships, though financial assistance remained limited.

Teachers' implementation practices were very strong, with very high ratings in teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and classroom management, reflecting active and learner-centered instructional approaches.

Lastly, educators experienced significant issues, the most critical of which were the lack of teaching resources, the variety of abilities among learners, insufficient time preparation, the need to cover the content, and unstable resource access.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the study concludes that teachers are generally well-prepared and positively motivated to implement the MATATAG Curriculum. Their strong pedagogical knowledge and willingness to embrace change indicate readiness for curriculum reforms. However, their overall preparedness is hindered by gaps in sustained professional development, particularly in follow-up training and mother tongue-based instruction.

School support systems have mainly been effective, particularly in administrative leadership, but there is still a need to improve on material provision and financial aid.

The high level of practice of the teachers shows that they are highly determined to practice the MATATAG principles, but the implementation process is influenced by the issue of material shortage, classroom diversity, time limitation, and inconsistency of resources. Such

concerns are of great importance because it is essential to make the implementation of the curriculum smoother. The level of alignment between the teaching activities of the teachers and the MATATAG principles is very high. They constantly use the learner-centered approach, differentiated instructions, situating lessons in real life, practical learning, natural evaluation, and adjusting classroom management techniques. These results prove that teachers are not simply prepared, but are already putting to practical use the philosophy of MATATAG in class. However, there are certain aspects, including the behavior management in interactive lessons and the improvement of a feedback system, which denote the possibilities of further improvement of classroom practice.

The study concludes that teachers face significant challenges that hinder full and smooth implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. The most pressing issues include shortages of teaching materials, diverse learner needs, limited instructional time, and inconsistent availability of resources for hands-on activities. Although teachers show strong agency and adaptability, these systemic constraints pose barriers to maintaining instructional quality and curriculum fidelity. Addressing these challenges through improved resource allocation, ongoing professional development, and strengthened support systems is essential for sustaining effective MATATAG implementation.

The Department of Education and school divisions can enhance and maintain ongoing professional development in areas where teacher preparedness was least strong, especially follow-up training, instruction in MTB MLE, and assessment literacy. Since the results revealed that the initial training of teachers was good and that there was poor continuing training, professional development needs to change to regular, school-based, needs-responsive, and job-embedded activities, such as Learning Action Cells (LACs), coaching, and mentoring cycles. This is so as to ensure that the good attitude to change and high pedagogical competence level of teachers are complemented by constant capability building that meets the requirements of long-term implementation of MATATAG.

The schools and the local education heads can enhance institutional and administrative support mechanisms, particularly where deficiencies were found, e.g., supply of instructional supplies, library development, and finances. School administrators are expected to remain highly leadership-oriented, yet also to become more grade-level-specific decision-makers, meaning that implementation requirements vary at the K-8 levels. Enhancing communication channels, support systems, and feedback mechanisms between teachers and administrators will also contribute to equalizing resource gaps and to making sure that teachers' needs are met at all grade levels.

Educators can still enhance and advance their MATATAG-aligned instructional practice, especially in areas where they experience difficulties, such as behavior management when engaging in collaborative activities, providing timely feedback, and encouraging self-assessment. It is advisable that teachers develop contextualized learning materials, combine hands-on and real-life learning activities, and cooperate with their colleagues to standardize excellent teaching techniques throughout the district. Enhancement of peer-driven supports (e.g., sharing of lessons by LAC, peer observations, lesson demonstrations) will foster consistency in the quality of instruction and will further help in improving the confidence and effectiveness of teachers.

Finally, the Department of Education, school administration, and community stakeholders can collaborate to address the identified key challenges, which include: shortage of teaching materials, needs of learners, time management, and uneven distribution of resources to support hands-on learning. Enhancing relationships with parents, barangays, NGOs, and local organizations could offer more materials, enrichment activities, and learning spaces. Other measures that schools can adopt in order to enable teachers to balance the workload and curriculum pacing include flexible school schedules, joint lesson planning, and resource-sharing programs. The systemic barriers can be addressed to facilitate easier implementation and facilitate the MATATAG Curriculum to realize its goals in foundational learning.

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