

## Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum: Stakeholder's Perspectives and Insights from Sulangan Central Elementary School

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined how the MATATAG Curriculum is being practiced at Sulangan Central Elementary School. The findings revealed that most of the people in the community is not aware about the curriculum, especially the private sectors such as the Church Leaders and Business Owners do not really understand the aim of the curriculum. Despite the dedication of the teachers to support the effective implementation of the curriculum, they still encounter challenges. Students confirmed that they are more interested and active in their lessons, however, there are topic that seems hard for them to understand. Also, strengthening the partnership between the school and the community to help the lack of resources and make the implementation inclusive.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education plays a vital role in societal and national development (Zhao et al., 2024). In a rapidly changing technological world, schools must equip learners with critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity skills to prepare them for future challenges (Eslit, 2023). Failure to update educational curricula may hinder learners' development and educational outcomes (Saro et al., 2024).

Across Asia, countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, and Malaysia have strengthened their education systems through skill-based curricula and continuous teacher professional development (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). However, many Southeast Asian countries continue to face challenges, including unequal access to quality education, digital disparities, and inconsistent performance in international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS (UNESCO, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

In the Philippines, education is essential for reducing poverty, promoting economic growth, and addressing social inequalities (UNICEF, 2015). Despite recent reforms, the education system still struggles with limited funding, curriculum issues, teacher shortages, and the digital divide (Trinity University of Asia, 2024). In response to low international assessment results, the Department of Education introduced the MATATAG Curriculum (Singh, 2025).

The MATATAG Curriculum aims to strengthen foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development while promoting critical thinking, inclusivity, and learner-centered education (Presidential Communications Office, 2023; Uy et al., 2024). Nevertheless, its implementation faces challenges such as insufficient teacher preparation, limited resources, inadequate facilities, and concerns regarding inclusive education (Javier, 2023; Macasero, 2023). Previous studies emphasize that teacher preparedness, professional development, and institutional support are crucial for successful curriculum implementation (Padillo et al., 2021; Kilag et al., 2024).

Elementary teachers play a key role in supporting learners' cognitive and socio-emotional growth. However, the MATATAG Curriculum requires them to adopt more integrated and flexible teaching approaches, creating additional pedagogical and classroom management demands (Osias et al., 2024; Uy et al., 2024).

This study examines the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum at Sulangan Central Elementary School from the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, barangay officials, and private sector representatives. By exploring stakeholder experiences, the study aims to identify gaps between policy intentions and actual practice, provide recommendations for improving implementation, and contribute to creating a more effective and supportive learning environment.

The study is particularly relevant to Bachelor of Elementary Education students, as it provides insights into curriculum implementation, educational policy, and stakeholder involvement. Understanding these factors can help future educators become more effective, responsive, and responsible professionals.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The MATATAG Curriculum is a major educational reform in the Philippines designed to improve literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and learner development. It seeks to address long-standing concerns regarding the K-12 curriculum, including content overload and low student performance. However, its successful implementation depends on the active participation and support of various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and the private sector.

Studies indicate that the curriculum faces several challenges, such as inadequate teacher training, limited instructional resources, insufficient school facilities, time constraints, and varying levels of student readiness. Teachers, as the primary implementers, often experience increased workload, stress, and difficulties adapting to new teaching approaches. Parents and community organizations also encounter challenges related to funding, participation, and resource mobilization.

Despite these obstacles, the MATATAG Curriculum offers significant opportunities for educational improvement. When properly supported, it promotes critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills among learners. Research also highlights the importance of strong school leadership, stakeholder engagement, and continuous professional development in ensuring successful implementation.

Overall, curriculum reform is a complex process that requires clear policies, adequate resources, trained educators, and community support. The effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum ultimately depends on how well it is adapted to local contexts and supported by all stakeholders involved.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of stakeholders regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum at Sulangan Central Elementary School in Guiuan, Eastern Samar. The participants included teachers, students, parents, barangay officials, and private sector representatives who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in curriculum implementation. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences, challenges, opportunities, and support needs related to the curriculum. Ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and member checking were observed throughout the study. The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis, which involved familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. This approach enabled the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of stakeholders' perspectives and identify key factors influencing the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Theme 1: Limited Awareness of the MATATAG Curriculum*

The findings of this study revealed a significant lack of awareness about the MATATAG Curriculum among many community stakeholders in Sulangan. Awareness is a key foundation for effective curriculum implementation because it influences how willing and able stakeholders are to contribute support, whether through resources, moral guidance, or active participation. Several church leaders and business owners openly stated that they had not heard of the MATATAG Curriculum, which limited their understanding of its objectives and their ability to participate in school-related initiatives.

This finding is consistent with the broader literature on curriculum reform, which emphasizes that successful implementation depends heavily on stakeholder awareness and engagement. According to Fullan, M. – *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (2007), educational change is a social process that requires shared understanding among all stakeholders; without this, reforms often fail to take root beyond the school level. Similarly, Spillane, J. P. – *Standards Deviation: How Schools Misunderstand Education Policy* (2004) explains that policy implementation is shaped by how individuals interpret and understand reforms, meaning that lack of awareness leads to weak or inconsistent implementation.

The Department of Education (DepEd, 2023) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum to strengthen foundational learning and simplify the curriculum structure. However, the present findings suggest that dissemination of information has not fully reached all community stakeholders, particularly those outside the education sector. This reflects challenges commonly found in education reform efforts in developing contexts, where communication gaps limit stakeholder participation.

One participant shared that they are not familiar with the curriculum, saying:

*"Like what I said I'm not familiar with the MATATAG so I don't know how will improve but as a spiritual leader in the community, how I wish some good elements to be included in the program which I think it would help the students morally as will academically prepared, but as the curriculum I would not know how to say." (Key Informant No. 3)*

*"Not yet. I haven't watched or heard anything about MATATAG." (Key Informant No. 4)*

These responses indicate a clear communication breakdown between schools and the broader community. This aligns with the findings of UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: *Inclusion and Education*, which stresses that education reforms often fail when stakeholders outside the school system are not properly informed or engaged in implementation processes.

When stakeholders lack awareness of curriculum reforms, their ability to support learners outside the classroom is significantly reduced. This weakens the broader ecosystem of learning support, which is essential in community-based education systems.

### **Sub-theme: Stakeholder Unfamiliarity**

Stakeholder unfamiliarity emerged as a sub-theme reinforcing the importance of communication in curriculum implementation. For a curriculum to succeed, all stakeholders must understand its goals and purpose, not only teachers and school administrators. However, findings show that some stakeholders, particularly business owners and church leaders, were not familiar with the MATATAG Curriculum.

Furthermore, an information from a participant revealed saying:  
*"I am not familiar with the MATATAG Curriculum" (Key Informant No. 5)*

*"No, I am not familiar with that curriculum. Please explain or summarize what MATATAG Curriculum is" (Key Informant No. 7)*

The repeated statements of unfamiliarity suggest that the MATATAG Curriculum has not yet been fully disseminated in the community. This reinforces the importance of strengthening school-community partnerships, consistent communication strategies, and localized information drives to ensure that reforms reach all stakeholders.

### ***Theme 2: Insufficient Learning Resources and Materials***

The findings of this study revealed that insufficient learning resources and instructional materials are a major challenge in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in Sulangan. Instructional materials such as textbooks, teaching aids, and learning tools are essential for effective teaching and learning. When these resources are lacking, teachers struggle to implement learner-centered approaches, and students may find it difficult to understand lessons and actively participate in learning activities.

This finding is supported by the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in education, which emphasizes that equitable access to learning materials is a key factor in successful curriculum implementation. The report highlights that even well-designed curricula fail to achieve intended outcomes when instructional resources are insufficient.

In the same way, Lobitana et al. (2024) said that having few classroom resources still affects how well students learn. This shows that it is very important to provide enough materials so that both teachers and students can better reach the goals of the curriculum.

As participant claimed saying;

*"Lack of instructional materials. The shortage of quality and updated teaching materials is also a major challenge for the school." (Key Informant No. 6)*

#### **Sub-theme**

#### **Lack of Instructional Materials**

One of the main problems in carrying out the MATATAG Curriculum, as shared by stakeholders, is the lack of enough teaching materials and learning resources. The curriculum supports learner-centered approach that helps students improve their thinking skills, solve problems, work well with others and these resources makes it harder for teachers to deliver lessons effectively and

limits student's chances to fully engage in learning activities connected to the curriculum.

*"In my view, the challenges in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum may come from the lack of materials and resources." (Key Informant No. 5)*

*"The shortage of quality and updated teaching materials is also a major challenge for the school." (Key Informant No. 6)*

This presents that when there are not enough materials, it affects not only how teachers teach but also limits students' chances to learn through activities and real-life experience. To address this problem, the school, local government and community should work together to provide more learning materials, tools, and financial support. When teachers and students have enough help and resources, teaching becomes easier and students can join activities more, understand lessons better, and remember what they learn.

### ***Theme 3: Teacher Preparedness and Capacity***

Teachers have a very important role in making any curriculum successful. Their knowledge, skills, and ability to adjust lessons to different learners are very important in the success of MATATAG Curriculum. The study showed that even if teachers are dedicated to their work, they still face difficulties in being fully prepared, improving their skills and developing better teaching strategies. Teacher readiness is very important for the MATATAG Curriculum because it focuses on active learning, critical thinking, and overall student development. This idea is supported by the study of Richard et al. (2018) and Wabinnga & Tomakin (2024) which found that when training and professional development are not well planned, teachers may feel stressed and it can also affect how they teach in the classroom.

#### **Sub-theme: Teacher Readiness**

Teachers are the ones who directly bring the curriculum into the classroom, so they are the most visible part of its implementation. In using the MATATAG Curriculum, they often need to adjust and change their teaching methods in their daily work. Since the curriculum focuses on basic skills, learner-centered teaching and different ways of learning teachers must always adapt their lessons to fit the different needs, abilities, and backgrounds of their students.

Furthermore, a participant claimed;

*"Teacher readiness. It is important that teachers are prepared and capable of effectively teaching this new curriculum. their knowledge and skills play a big role in its successful implementation." (Key Informant No. 5)*

Teacher readiness plays an important role in how well students learn under the MATATAG Curriculum. The responses show the need to improve professional development programs, especially in areas like differentiated instruction, learner engagement strategies, and a better understanding of the curriculum. When teachers are given the right skills and confidence, they will become more effective in delivering lessons, responding to the different needs of learners and improving student's overall learning outcomes.

#### ***Theme 4: Student Engagement and Learning Experience***

Students are the main beneficiaries of any curriculum reform, so their perspectives are important in understanding how will it is implemented. Based on Constructivist Learning Theory by Jean Piaget (1972) and Lev Vygotsky (1987), learners build their knowledge through interaction, experience and social engagement. Student engagement is also a key way to determine how effective a curriculum is.

Participants shared that the MATATAG Curriculum has made lessons more engaging, interactive and enjoyable, which helps increase student's motivation participate in class activities. It also shows how the curriculum meets the different ways students learn, like working in groups, doing activities and learning on their own. In all, it shows that MATATAG helps create a more positive and supportive place for students to learn.

#### **Sub-theme: Interactive and Collaborative Learning**

The MATATAG Curriculum encourages students to work together and solve problems as a group. It also helps them use what they learn in real-life situation. So the student gains the important skills of thinking, being creative, and working well with others. They also learn better social skills and behavior, learn to respect other people's ideas and work with differences in a calm and kind way. Through group work and activities, the MATATAG Curriculum not only helps them learn what they are learning at school but helps them because a better person in their feeling, values, and relationship

An information from participants saying;

*"Yes, the lessons became more interesting and fun to learn". (Key Informant No. 1)*

#### ***Theme 5: Difficulty with Complex Lessons***

Many students like the MATATAG Curriculum but some lessons are still hard for them. This is because some ideas are too difficult or advanced for them. As Javier (2019) noted, students also struggle with the new curriculum, especially if they are not prepared and it can not be executed well. this idea teaches us that everyone should have the chance to learn, even those who need more help understanding difficult lessons.

#### **Sub-theme**

#### **Comprehension Challenges**

Some of the students feel that some lessons are too hard or too advanced for them and don't want to participate in class activities. This shows that it's important to consider what the studnets are ready to learn when designing the lesson. The students are ready to learn when designing the lesson. The students also struggle with too fast or not explained lesson, or when there are not enough learning materials. This thing can affect their confidence and interest, especially for students who are already having a hard time keeping up.

*"Sometimes the lessons are advance something that is being taught to higher grades" (Key Informant No. 2)*

This shows that teachers need to use different ways of teaching, give step-by-step help and offer extra support so all students can join and learn well. When teachers

help students in these ways, students feel more confident and slowly improve their skills. This also makes sure that harder lessons will not discourage students who are finding the lesson difficult.

### ***Theme 6: Holistic Development and Life Skills***

The MATATAG Curriculum does not only focus on academic learning but also on helping students develop important life skills and positive moral values. Participants shared that it helps learners improve their critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and character formation. These skills and values are essential in preparing students to deal with real-life situations and to become responsible and well-rounded members of society.

#### **Sub-theme**

#### **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving**

MATATAG Curriculum strongly focuses on helping students develop higher-order thinking skills. It encourages them to carefully analyze information, consider different choices and apply what they learn to real-life situations. The finding shows that students value opportunities where they can think independently and creatively. These experiences help them become better prepared to face real-world challenges, make wise decisions and contribute positively to society. Overall, critical thinking and problem solving also support lifelong learning, which is important goal of 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

An information from the participants saying;

*"Yes, I think my learning has improved since MATATAG was introduced because the curriculum focuses on practical application and real-world scenarios" (Key Informant No. 1)*

These findings shows that the MATATAG Curriculum helps develop both student's thinking skills and their emotional and social growth. In doing so, it nurtures well-rounded learners who are better prepared to handle future challenges in their studies, personal lives and in society.

### ***Theme 7: Community Support and Participation Opportunities***

The Community plays important role in ensuring the success of educational programs such as the MATATAG Curriculum. While some community members, such as church leaders and business owners, are still unfamiliar with the curriculum, many are willing to help the school in various ways, such as helping with the logistics, volunteering, mentoring and providing guidance. The MATATAG Curriculum emphasizes development of the whole person, collaboration and the practical application of learning. Community members will help create a better environment for learning, improve school programs, and teach important values and life skills to students.

Involvement from stakeholders creates a supportive environment for the efforts of the teachers, offers additional support and encouragement in the student's success.

#### **Sub-theme**

#### **Financial and Logistical Support**

Community members can also help fund and provide needed resources for MATATAG Curriculum. Barangay officials said that they are willing to

provide money, supplies, or even their time and effort in order to help support school programs and activities. His kind of support will help students with a lack of learning materials, classroom materials, and other school activities.

An information from the participants saying;

*"The Brgy. Official can provide Financial, logistical, and manpower support." (Key Informant No. 5)*

The Barangay Officials' willingness to fund-raise, transport, and provide manpower support shows that the community is supportive of the MATATAG Curriculum and its beneficial effects on children. Through their donations, students are able to purchase learning materials, classroom furniture, and school materials, so they can have better access to quality education. With help in coordinating activities, transportation, or other setting preparations, the school can have more convenient and effective programs. Manpower support also shows the partnership between the school and the community in facilitating meaningful learning experiences. This is not only helps students do well in school but it also promotes positive life skills and values. It creates a sense of responsibility for everyone helping to guide the students to become a capable, responsible and well-rounded person.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of this study shows that the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum at Sulangan Central Elementary School influenced by the many connected stakeholders. However, having lack of knowledge of different community members such as Church Leaders, Barangay Officials, and Business Owners hinder their willingness to give support. It shows that the school need to take partnership with the community for the curriculum successful implementation. Lack of resources is a challenge that serve a barrier to effective lesson delivery. Regardless of these challenges, the curriculum has an ability to promote student engagement, well-rounded development, foster practical skills. Thankfully, most of the stakeholders confirm that they are willing to extend help through money, logistical, and man power, which shows that there is a strong chance for cooperation between school and community. Thus, the MATATAG Curriculum is beneficial in improving the learning of the students, it's success truly depends on solving the lack of resources, providing support for the teachers, helping students, and encouraging the involvement of the stakeholders.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in different schools and educational settings with a larger number of participants to gain a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

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