
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluating The Implementation and Impact of the Matatag Curriculum in Early Childhood Education Programs

Marjorie Alburo¹, Margie Fulgencio², Dennis Plando³, Kaitlin Marie Opingo⁴

¹*Department of Education*

^{2,3,4} *Cebu Technological University*

Corresponding Author: Marjorie Alburo, **E-mail:** marjoriealburo@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study examined the implementation of the MATATAGS curriculum in basic education, focusing on its perceived benefits, impact on student learning and development, and the challenges faced by teacher-respondents. A descriptive- correlational research design was employed to gather both quantitative data and determine relationships between variables. The study involved 45 teacher- respondents selected through total population sampling. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the responses. Data were collected using a validated researcher-made survey questionnaire, which covered demographic profiles, perceptions on curriculum implementation, perceived benefits, encountered challenges, and the learning process and development of students. Findings revealed that most respondents were female, aged 30–39, with varied years of teaching experience, and the majority were pursuing graduate education. Teachers generally agreed that the curriculum is well-implemented, especially in areas like technology integration, assessment, and lesson clarity. However, challenges such as limited materials, large class sizes, and the need for additional training were identified. The curriculum was perceived to significantly contribute to students' academic and socio-emotional development. Statistical results showed a strong positive relationship between curriculum implementation and both perceived benefits and learning process and development. These findings highlight the importance of effective curriculum implementation and suggest the need for targeted improvements in teacher support, resource provision, and stakeholder involvement to enhance educational outcomes under the MATATAG curriculum.

| KEYWORDS

MATATAG Curriculum, Early Childhood Education, Curriculum Implementation, Foundational Learning

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

The MATATAG Curriculum is a critical step in improving the quality of early education in the Philippines, targeting key developmental competencies through learner-centered strategies. As noted by Villaver, Kilag, Andrin, and Abellanos (2024), MATATAG was introduced to restructure the overcrowded K to 12 curriculum, highlighting essential learning areas such as literacy, numeracy, and emotional development. Foundational learning is vital during early childhood, a phase recognized for its lasting impact on educational achievement (UNICEF, 2022). Nationally, persistent challenges in literacy and math among young learners have triggered the need for more focused, competency-based frameworks (Spink et al., 2023). The Department of Education (2023) designed MATATAG to streamline content, reinforce localized instruction via the mother tongue, and equip educators through targeted training. These initiatives follow international standards that prioritize curriculum alignment, age-appropriate content, and inclusive language policies (OECD, 2021). By integrating cognitive, emotional, and social development into its structure,

MATATAG aims to cultivate a more inclusive and robust foundation for Filipino learners, ensuring equitable access to quality early education (UNESCO, 2022; Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025).

The transition toward the MATATAG Curriculum attempts to address ongoing barriers in Philippine education such as overly extensive content, minimal emphasis on core literacy and numeracy skills, and outdated pedagogical methods. According to Dictado and Dagdag (2025), previous curriculum frameworks often favored breadth over depth, limiting students' ability to build foundational understanding. This aligns with the critique of the K to 12 curriculum, which overwhelmed educators with too many learning competencies (David et al., 2021). The MATATAG Curriculum reorients instruction to focus on developmental priorities and social-emotional growth, aligning with evidence from the OECD (2021) that advocates reducing academic overload in early education. The Department of Education (2023) emphasizes structured teacher training and simplified learning goals as a response to gaps in the prior system. However, successful adoption requires consistent implementation, monitoring, and assessment to ensure real impact on learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2022). The integration of these reforms marks a deliberate shift toward responsive, child-centered education at a foundational level (Nietschke et al., 2024).

Challenges such as curriculum overload, limited focus on core academic areas, and ineffective teaching approaches are core issues that the MATATAG Curriculum seeks to resolve. However, its success relies heavily on localized implementation, particularly within the early years of schooling. Monitoring its effectiveness in actual learning environments is key to determining its impact on student development and instructional quality. According to SEAMEO INNOTECH (2021), curriculum reforms require comprehensive support systems, particularly for teachers, to be effectively delivered. This research evaluates how MATATAG is implemented, the barriers encountered, and the resulting effects on teaching and learning within Early Childhood Education. The initiative emerged amid ongoing dissatisfaction with student outcomes in national and global assessments such as PISA, where Filipino students consistently perform below average (UNESCO, 2022). These shortcomings are often linked to excessive academic requirements and a lack of developmental relevance in instruction (Tarraya, 2023). As a result, education reformers call for a greater emphasis on essential competencies and inclusive strategies (Cabaya et al., 2025). By evaluating classroom practices and learner progress under MATATAG, this study aims to uncover how curriculum design influences real-world teaching dynamics. Ultimately, such evaluation promotes continuous improvement and responsiveness in national education efforts.

The MATATAG Curriculum, developed under the leadership of the Department of Education and supported by Vice President Sara Z. Duterte, seeks to rebuild the foundation of basic education by emphasizing core skills and developmental learning domains. The reduction in learning competencies allows teachers to focus on deepening literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning, which are key to long-term academic success (DepEd, 2023). Additionally, the use of mother tongue-based instruction in early grades improves comprehension and learner engagement, particularly in multicultural contexts (UNESCO, 2022). Yet early assessments of MATATAG's rollout show systemic challenges. Villaver et al. (2024) identified inadequate teacher preparation, material shortages, and weak monitoring structures as major obstacles to effective implementation. Similarly, Jalotjot and Dantes (2020) point out that teachers lack adequate resources and pedagogical support for multilingual education. These findings underscore the importance of institutional readiness, including structured training, supportive supervision, and provision of culturally appropriate learning materials. Kilag et al. (2024) stress that teacher development programs must be continuous and aligned with curriculum goals for implementation to be successful. International organizations like the OECD (2021) recommend integrating feedback loops from practitioners into national reform to ensure responsiveness to on-the-ground realities. Spink et al. (2023) similarly emphasize that early childhood reforms must be backed by system-level investments in teacher quality, data-driven planning, and inclusive teaching strategies. MATATAG's success depends on whether it translates well into classroom realities and meets the diverse needs of Filipino learners. Monitoring learning outcomes, teacher adaptation, and institutional support will ensure the curriculum is not just a theoretical improvement but a practical tool for educational transformation. This study was conducted in that light assessing whether MATATAG is effectively implemented in early childhood education settings and whether it supports both students' developmental needs and teachers' instructional capacities.

Evaluating how the MATATAG Curriculum is implemented is crucial for ensuring that its objectives are achieved, instructional practices are enhanced, and students benefit from more meaningful learning experiences. The Department of Education must closely assess how schools apply the new curriculum, including how teachers deliver lessons and adapt to new content structures. Research by Demate et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of feedback mechanisms in guiding education reform. In Philippine schools, persistent challenges such as limited budgets, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers remain significant obstacles (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2021). Furthermore, studies by Tarraya (2023) suggest that excessive workloads diminish teachers' capacity to adopt innovations effectively. This study seeks to explore the extent to which MATATAG is meeting its goals at the Kindergarten and Grade 1 levels, assessing both instructional outcomes and structural challenges. Villaver et al. (2024) argue that implementation studies are necessary for refining curriculum reform and enhancing system-wide quality. Ultimately, this research contributes to ongoing educational development in the Philippines, ensuring that MATATAG not only exists on paper but actively empowers early childhood educators and uplifts learning outcomes among young Filipino students (UNICEF, 2022).

Literature Review

The rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum represents a strategic overhaul in the Philippine educational landscape, particularly in Early Childhood Education (ECE), where early skill development forms the basis of future academic achievement. Designed to address inefficiencies in the K to 12 frameworks, this curriculum prioritizes essential learning domains such as literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional growth (Ariate & Arguelles, 2024). These revisions are timely, as excessive academic loads in the earlier framework often hindered skill mastery during critical developmental stages (Francisco, 2023). According to Almazan and Luga (2023), the fragmentation and misalignment of curricular content across grade levels contributed to learning gaps, especially among young learners. These concerns align with global education research advocating for competency-based, developmentally appropriate instruction that fosters inclusive learning (UNESCO, 2022). International guidelines by organizations like UNICEF (2022) and the OECD (2021) reinforce the importance of reducing content overload and enhancing pedagogical coherence to support young children's growth and equitable access to education.

While the MATATAG Curriculum presents a promising blueprint for educational reform, its implementation poses significant challenges at both institutional and classroom levels. A common concern is the insufficient preparedness of educators, particularly in using child-centered and inclusive teaching strategies (Cabaraban & Ramos, 2023). Many teachers have not received adequate training in differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and developmentally appropriate practices essential for early learners (Bernardo & Boholano, 2021). Further complicating this is the lack of localized resources needed to implement mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), despite its inclusion as a core feature of the curriculum (Francisco, 2023). Studies suggest that successful curriculum reform must be supported by investments in teacher development, educational resources, and sustained monitoring (Andaya, 2024). Without institutional support systems such as capacity building, resource provision, and evidence-driven evaluation curriculum innovations may fall short of their goals (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). Thus, ensuring the effectiveness of MATATAG requires a comprehensive and sustained approach that bridges policy intent with classroom realities.

Methodology

This research utilized a descriptive-correlational design to evaluate both the implementation and perceived effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum. The quantitative approach enabled the researcher to explore measurable outcomes while also capturing the contextual factors surrounding curriculum execution in selected public schools. The descriptive component provided a systematic way to present data on participant profiles, the extent of curriculum implementation, and the perceived advantages and difficulties encountered. The correlational aspect analyzed the relationships among key variables, including teacher experience, availability of instructional resources, and observed student developmental progress. The study was carried out in three public elementary schools located in Cebu City, specifically chosen for their active engagement in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum at the Kindergarten and Grade 1 levels. Participants included Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, who were selected for their firsthand involvement in curriculum delivery and their ability to offer meaningful feedback on its effectiveness and challenges. Data were collected through a structured survey instrument, which was subjected to content validation and reliability testing by subject matter experts. Adjustments were made following pilot testing and expert recommendations to enhance the tool's clarity, accuracy, and reliability. The collected data were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation methods to determine patterns and associations.

Results

The results on curriculum implementation reveal a generally high level of adherence to the MATATAG Curriculum among participating schools. The highest-rated item was "Student progress is regularly assessed and monitored" ($M = 4.47$), indicating strong emphasis on evaluation practices. Similarly, technology integration ($M = 4.38$) and clear learning objectives ($M = 4.22$) received strong agreement, showing that instruction is both purposeful and supported by digital tools. While most indicators were rated as "Strongly Agree," areas such as teacher training ($M = 4.02$) and availability of resources ($M = 3.93$) were slightly lower, suggesting room for improvement in professional development and instructional support.

Table 1. Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
The MATATAG curriculum is fully implemented in my institution.	4.31	0.70	SA
Teaching strategies such as play-based learning and storytelling are effectively applied.	4.27	0.62	SA
Adequate resources and materials are available to support curriculum delivery.	3.93	0.81	A
Teachers are well-trained to implement the MATATAG curriculum.	4.02	0.84	A
Clear learning objectives are set for each lesson.	4.22	0.74	SA
Activities are aligned with the developmental needs of students.	4.16	0.77	A
Parents are involved in supporting curriculum activities.	4.11	0.65	A

The school administration provides adequate guidance for curriculum implementation.	3.96	0.71	A
Teachers effectively integrate technology into the curriculum.	4.38	0.61	SA
Student progress is regularly assessed and monitored.	4.47	0.50	SA
Grand Mean	4.18	0.70	A

Table 2. Perceived Benefits

Perceived Benefits	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum improves language and literacy skills.	4.22	0.67	SA
The curriculum enhances social interaction and teamwork.	4.33	0.6	SA
Students show increased cultural awareness and identity.	4.20	0.89	A
The curriculum fosters creativity and self-expression.	4.29	0.63	SA
Students demonstrate improved emotional regulation.	4.22	0.6	SA
The curriculum promotes independence and responsibility.	4.22	0.6	SA
Students demonstrate improved problem-solving skills.	4.11	0.78	A
The curriculum encourages respect for diversity and inclusion.	4.13	0.63	A
Students demonstrate better listening and communication skills.	4.16	0.6	A
The curriculum supports healthy habits and routines.	4.16	0.6	A
Grand Mean	4.20	0.64	A

The findings on perceived benefits indicate that the MATATAG Curriculum has a generally positive impact on early learners, particularly in enhancing core developmental areas. The highest-rated benefits include improved social interaction and teamwork ($M = 4.33$), creativity and self-expression ($M = 4.29$), and strengthened emotional regulation ($M = 4.22$), all of which were rated as "Strongly Agree." These outcomes reflect the curriculum's emphasis on holistic, learner-centered development. However, certain areas such as problem-solving skills ($M = 4.11$), cultural awareness ($M = 4.20$), and communication ($M = 4.16$) were slightly lower, indicating that while benefits are evident, some competencies may require further instructional support.

The data on challenges in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum highlight several pressing issues that affect its effectiveness in early childhood education settings. The most notable challenge was the need for additional staff support ($M = 4.22$), which received a "Strongly Agree" rating, emphasizing the importance of manpower in managing new curriculum demands. Other significant concerns included large class sizes ($M = 4.20$), time constraints ($M = 4.15$), and insufficient teacher training ($M = 4.11$). While all items were rated within the "Agree" range or higher, the overall mean of 3.86 suggests that implementation hurdles remain persistent and require targeted intervention and resource allocation.

Table 3. Challenges in Implementation

Challenges in Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
There is a lack of teaching materials and resources.	3.80	0.92	A
Teachers require more training to effectively implement the curriculum.	4.11	0.78	A
Classroom space and facilities are insufficient for curriculum activities.	3.93	0.86	A
Time constraints hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum.	4.15	0.62	A
The number of students in the classroom is too high.	4.20	0.92	A
There is limited support from parents or guardians.	3.98	0.85	A
There are challenges in accessing digital resources.	4.00	0.70	A
Teachers face difficulty adapting to new curriculum methods.	3.82	0.75	A
The budget allocated for curriculum implementation is insufficient.	4.07	0.78	A
Additional staff support is required for effective implementation.	4.22	0.64	SA
Grand Mean	3.86	0.782	A

Table 4. Learning Process and Development

Learning Process and Development	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum positively influences literacy development.	4.16	0.60	A
The curriculum improves numeracy skills.	4.24	0.53	SA
The curriculum enhances social development.	4.18	0.49	A
Students demonstrate improved fine motor skills.	4.16	0.52	A
The curriculum helps improve critical thinking skills.	4.16	0.52	A

The curriculum encourages collaboration and group learning.	4.24	0.53	SA
Students show improved listening and speaking skills.	4.09	0.51	A
The curriculum helps students develop emotional intelligence.	4.02	0.62	A
The curriculum promotes curiosity and inquiry-based learning.	4.11	0.53	A
Students demonstrate improved self-confidence.	4.07	0.62	A
Grand Mean	4.143	0.547	A

The findings on the learning process and development reveal that the MATATAG Curriculum has a positive impact on early learners. Most indicators received ratings in the "Agree" range, with improvements in numeracy skills and collaboration receiving the highest means ($M = 4.24$), reflecting strong agreement that the curriculum enhances critical areas of development. Literacy development, social skills, and fine motor skills also showed favorable responses ($M = 4.16$ – 4.18), suggesting balanced growth across cognitive and social-emotional domains. With a grand mean of 4.14, the data indicate that the curriculum is effectively supporting holistic student development in early childhood education settings.

Table 5. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Curriculum Implementation and Perceived Benefits

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.7713	7.9460	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

The statistical findings in Table 5 indicate a strong positive correlation between the level of curriculum implementation and the perceived benefits of the MATATAG Curriculum in early childhood education. With an r-value of 0.7713 and a t-value of 7.9460, the results show that as the quality and extent of curriculum implementation increase, so do the perceived positive outcomes for learners. The p-value of 0.000 confirms that this relationship is highly significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that effective implementation plays a crucial role in achieving the intended developmental benefits of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 6. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Curriculum Implementation and Learning Process and Development

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.7029	6.4794	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

The results presented in Table 6 reveal a strong positive correlation between the level of curriculum implementation and the learning process and development among early learners. The r-value of 0.7029 signifies a substantial relationship, indicating that better implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is closely associated with enhanced learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional domains. The t-value of 6.4794 and a p-value of 0.000 confirm that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, reinforcing the importance of consistent and effective curriculum delivery in promoting overall child development in early education settings.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between the level of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and both perceived benefits and the learning process and development among early childhood learners. Specifically, the correlation coefficient between curriculum implementation and perceived benefits suggests a strong association, indicating that schools that implement the curriculum more thoroughly tend to observe greater developmental gains in their students. This supports the notion that when the curriculum is delivered with fidelity through the use of play-based strategies, structured objectives, and developmentally appropriate practices students are more likely to experience improvements in areas such as literacy, emotional regulation, teamwork, and problem-solving. These outcomes affirm the curriculum's alignment with holistic child development frameworks, which prioritize cognitive, emotional, and social learning domains during the formative years.

Similarly, the relationship between curriculum implementation and learning process and development indicates that the MATATAG Curriculum plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' academic and behavioral competencies. Effective implementation leads to positive gains in foundational skills like numeracy, literacy, collaboration, and critical thinking. The statistical significance of both correlations ($p < 0.05$) highlights that these effects are not due to chance but are likely a direct result of the structured and child-centered approach of the MATATAG framework. These findings suggest that investment in proper teacher training, adequate learning materials, and administrative support is critical to maximizing the curriculum's intended outcomes. Ultimately, this emphasizes the importance of policy consistency and resource allocation in scaling up successful early childhood education reforms across the country.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the curriculum is generally well-implemented, with teachers reporting strong use of teaching strategies, regular assessment of student progress, and integration of technology. While areas such as teacher training, parental involvement, and resource availability still require improvement, overall perceptions point to effective execution of the curriculum. Teachers also recognize significant benefits from the curriculum, particularly in developing students' language, creativity, social interaction, and emotional skills. However, they face challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, and time constraints, which can hinder full implementation. Despite these obstacles, the study found a strong and statistically significant relationship between curriculum implementation and both perceived benefits and student learning and development. Moreover, sustained investment in teacher support, resource provision, and training is essential to maintain and improve the quality of curriculum implementation and maximize its positive impact on learners.

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