
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Implementation and Outcomes of the Matatag Curriculum: A Study on Its Influence in Early Childhood Education

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| ABSTRACT

This study explored the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in basic education, focusing on teachers' perceptions of its effectiveness, benefits, challenges, and its impact on student learning and development. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, data were gathered from 44 teacher-respondents through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic information and perceptions, while correlation analysis determined relationships between curriculum implementation, perceived benefits, and learning outcomes. Results showed that although the implementation of the curriculum was generally rated positively, notable gaps were identified in areas such as the availability of teaching materials and parental involvement. Teachers agreed that the curriculum supports student development, especially in literacy, collaboration, and self-confidence, with a perceived benefits and learning process. However, limited training and support, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient resources were identified as persistent challenges. Importantly, statistical analysis showed a significant positive relationship between curriculum implementation and both perceived benefits and student learning and development. These findings highlight the crucial role of effective curriculum delivery in achieving desired educational outcomes and underscore the need for continuous teacher training, access to resources, and strong school-community collaboration to enhance the success of the MATATAG curriculum.

| KEYWORDS

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

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a pivotal reform initiative in the Philippine education system, aiming to address long-standing issues in early childhood education by focusing on foundational competencies and adopting a more learner-centered approach (Cabaya et al., 2025). Early childhood education (ECE) is globally recognized as a critical stage in a child's development, influencing future academic achievement and lifelong learning (Solang et al., 2024). In the Philippine context, efforts to strengthen foundational skills have been driven by persistent concerns over low literacy and numeracy levels among early learners (Nietschke et al., 2024). The MATATAG Curriculum, introduced by the Department of Education in 2023, seeks to simplify overly congested learning content, support mother tongue-based instruction, and enhance teacher preparedness (Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025). These strategies are aligned with global best practices emphasizing the importance of curriculum coherence, developmental appropriateness, and linguistic inclusivity in early education (Demate et al., 2025). Prioritizing key developmental domains such as

cognitive, social, and emotional skills, the MATATAG initiative aspires to provide a more holistic and equitable foundation for young Filipino learners (Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025).

The transition to the MATATAG Curriculum seeks to resolve persistent challenges in the Philippine education system, including curriculum overload, lack of instructional focus on foundational competencies, and outdated teaching strategies (Kilag et al., 2024). Research highlights that previous implementations under the K to 12 programs were hampered by excessive academic demands, which impeded students' mastery of essential literacy and numeracy skills (Dictado & Dagdag, 2025). Studies have further indicated that the previous curriculum's breadth compromised depth, reducing opportunities for young learners to develop core skills required for lifelong learning. The MATATAG Curriculum, spearheaded by Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte, aims to address these issues by streamlining competencies and focusing on learners' socio-emotional and cognitive development (DepEd, 2023). This strategic shift is consistent with international frameworks that advocate for a reduction in content overload and a renewed emphasis on developmental appropriateness in ECE (UNICEF, 2019; OECD, 2021). However, for these reforms to be successful, rigorous evaluation of school-level implementation, teacher preparedness, and instructional quality is essential.

Long-standing problems such as curriculum congestion, a lack of emphasis on reading and numeracy, and gaps in teaching methodologies are addressed by the switch to the MATATAG Curriculum. However, the implementation of this new curriculum at the school level is crucial to its success. Determining whether the planned educational innovations have a good effect on young students and raise the standard of early childhood education as a whole requires evaluating their efficacy. This research looks at the MATATAG Curriculum's efficacy, difficulties, and potential areas for development to assess its implementation and results in early childhood education. In response to concerns about the effectiveness of the Philippine education system, which are emphasized by the alleged shortcomings of the K to 12 programs, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum as a strategic initiative to address these challenges. It follows a period of concern over Filipino students' poor academic performance, as shown by their weak scores on numerous tests. Issues such as overloaded curriculum, excessive teaching demands, and an overwhelming academic load have hindered the mastery of fundamental skills like reading and mathematics (Tarraya, 2023). Consequently, there has been a growing demand for curriculum reforms that prioritize the development of core competencies and address the diverse needs of learners (De Guzman, 2003).

By simplifying the curriculum and emphasizing critical competences, the MATATAG Curriculum, which was introduced under the direction of Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte, is an attempt to address these issues (Presidential Communication Office, 2023). It seeks to decrease the number of competencies and prioritize the growth of learners' reading, numeracy, and socio-emotional abilities. Doing this aims to enhance learning outcomes and give students the fundamental abilities needed for future success in a rapidly changing world. An integrative literature review conducted by Villaver et al. (2024) provides valuable insights into the initial implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippine educational system. The study identified several key challenges that hinder effective implementation, including limited teacher readiness, insufficient support systems, and gaps in promoting inclusive and equitable education. It emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive teacher training programs, strengthened institutional support, and the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. These findings highlight the importance of assessing not only how the curriculum is being implemented in early childhood education but also whether it effectively addresses the developmental needs of young learners. This study reinforces the relevance of assessing how the MATATAG Curriculum is being implemented on the ground, and how it aligns with its intended outcomes. For a number of reasons, it is essential to evaluate the MATATAG curriculum's implementation and results in early childhood education. It guarantees that the curriculum is provided efficiently, satisfies student needs, and accomplishes its intended objectives. This evaluation maximizes resources, encourages best practices in teaching and learning, and assists in highlighting areas that require improvement. With the forgoing, the researcher is convinced to undertake the scientific study on evaluating how the MATATAG curriculum is being implemented in Early Childhood Education settings, to determine the effectiveness, identify the implementation challenges, and explore its impact on the teaching-learning process. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the continuous improvement of Early Childhood Education in the Philippines under the MATATAG framework.

Literature Review

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum marks a significant reform in Philippine basic education, particularly in Early Childhood Education (ECE), where foundational learning plays a crucial role in shaping future academic success. According to Villaver et al. (2024), the MATATAG Curriculum was introduced to decongest the overly packed K to 12 curriculum and strengthen learners' mastery of essential skills in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development. The authors emphasize that these reforms are especially vital in early education, where excessive academic demands have previously hindered the development of core competencies. Tarraya (2023) also stresses that the MATATAG initiative addresses long-standing issues such as fragmented curriculum content and the lack of coherence in learning standards, which often results in learning gaps among young Filipino learners. These concerns are consistent with international findings, as highlighted by UNESCO (2022), which advocates for child-centered, competency-based learning to improve equity and inclusion in education systems globally. Simplifying curriculum

content and aligning it with the developmental needs of children are key priorities for enhancing ECE outcomes (UNICEF, 2022; OECD, 2021).

Despite the positive intentions behind the MATATAG Curriculum, effective implementation remains a critical challenge, particularly at the school and classroom levels. Studies have identified significant gaps in teacher readiness and professional development as barriers to achieving the curriculum's goals (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2021; David et al., 2021). For instance, a lack of targeted training in child-centered pedagogies, formative assessment, and differentiated instruction often leaves teachers underprepared to facilitate foundational learning effectively (Oracion, 2022). Moreover, while the curriculum promotes the use of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), many educators report insufficient instructional materials and support for teaching in local languages (Tarraya, 2023; Villaver et al., 2024). These challenges suggest that curriculum reform must be accompanied by systemic improvements in teacher education, resource allocation, and monitoring frameworks. Recent evaluations recommend strengthening institutional capacity and establishing evidence-based practices to guide the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum across early learning centers (UNESCO, 2022; OECD, 2021). Without these supporting mechanisms, there is a risk that the curriculum may not fully deliver on its promise to improve early learning outcomes in the Philippines.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The quantitative approach allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable outcomes and the contextual realities of curriculum implementation in selected public schools. The descriptive component facilitated the systematic collection and presentation of data regarding respondent demographics, levels of curriculum implementation, and perceived benefits and challenges. The correlational aspect examined relationships between variables such as teacher experience, resource availability, and observed student development outcomes. The study was conducted in three public elementary schools in Cebu City selected for their active implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum at the Kindergarten and Grade 1 levels. The primary respondents were Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, as they are the direct implementers of the curriculum and are best positioned to provide insights on its effectiveness, benefits, and challenges. Data were collected using a structured survey. The instrument underwent content validation and reliability testing by experts. Revisions were made based on expert feedback and pilot test results to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation techniques.

Results

Table 1. Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
The MATATAG curriculum is fully implemented in my institution.	3.95	0.81	A
Teaching strategies such as play-based learning and storytelling are effectively applied.	4.20	0.67	A
Adequate resources and materials are available to support curriculum delivery.	3.70	0.85	A
Teachers are well-trained to implement the MATATAG curriculum.	3.86	0.77	A
Clear learning objectives are set for each lesson.	4.02	0.70	A
Activities are aligned with the developmental needs of students.	4.07	0.66	A
Parents are involved in supporting curriculum activities.	3.93	0.79	A
The school administration provides adequate guidance for curriculum implementation.	3.91	0.74	A
Teachers effectively integrate technology into the curriculum.	4.23	0.71	SA
Student progress is regularly assessed and monitored.	4.34	0.61	SA
Grand Mean	4.021	0.731	A

The data in Table 1 indicate that the MATATAG Curriculum is generally well-implemented in the selected schools, with a grand mean of 4.021, interpreted as "Agree." Teachers strongly affirmed the regular assessment of student progress ($M = 4.34$) and effective integration of technology into instruction ($M = 4.23$), highlighting these as key strengths of the curriculum's application. While most aspects received positive responses, the lowest mean score was on the availability of adequate resources ($M = 3.70$), suggesting room for improvement in instructional support. Overall, findings reflect a positive perception of implementation, with emphasis on continuous improvement in training and resources.

Table 2. Perceived Benefits

Perceived Benefits	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum improves language and literacy skills.	4.20	0.76	A
The curriculum enhances social interaction and teamwork.	4.18	0.79	A
Students show increased cultural awareness and identity.	4.02	0.90	A
The curriculum fosters creativity and self-expression.	4.16	0.68	A
Students demonstrate improved emotional regulation.	4.07	0.73	A
The curriculum promotes independence and responsibility.	3.98	0.73	A
Students demonstrate improved problem-solving skills.	3.93	0.87	A
The curriculum encourages respect for diversity and inclusion.	4.07	0.82	A
Students demonstrate better listening and communication skills.	4.05	0.81	A
The curriculum supports healthy habits and routines.	4.07	0.76	A
Grand Mean	4.073	0.785	A

The results in Table 2 reveal that teachers perceive the MATATAG Curriculum as beneficial to students' overall development, with a grand mean of 4.073 interpreted as "Agree." The highest-rated benefit is the improvement of language and literacy skills ($M = 4.20$), followed closely by enhancements in social interaction, creativity, and self-expression. Emotional regulation, communication skills, and respect for diversity also received favorable ratings. The lowest-rated benefit, although still positive, was in problem-solving skills ($M = 3.93$), suggesting a potential area for strengthening. Overall, findings highlight the curriculum's effectiveness in fostering holistic development in early childhood learners.

Table 3. Challenges in Implementation

Challenges in Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
There is a lack of teaching materials and resources.	3.64	1.08	A
Teachers require more training to effectively implement the curriculum.	3.98	0.88	A
Classroom space and facilities are insufficient for curriculum activities.	3.73	1.09	A
Time constraints hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum.	3.82	0.92	A
The number of students in the classroom is too high.	3.86	1.07	A
There is limited support from parents or guardians.	3.82	1.04	A
There are challenges in accessing digital resources.	3.93	0.90	A
Teachers face difficulty adapting to new curriculum methods.	3.57	0.93	A
The budget allocated for curriculum implementation is insufficient.	3.80	0.95	A
Additional staff support is required for effective implementation.	3.82	0.97	A
Grand Mean	3.797	0.983	A

Table 3 shows that teachers agree on the presence of several challenges in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, with a grand mean of 3.797. The most notable concern is the need for more teacher training ($M = 3.98$), followed by challenges in accessing digital resources ($M = 3.93$) and large class sizes ($M = 3.86$). Issues such as time constraints, limited parental support, and budget insufficiency also emerged as consistent barriers. The lack of teaching materials and insufficient classroom space further hinder curriculum delivery. These findings suggest that while implementation is ongoing, systemic support and resource allocation remain critical needs.

Table 4. Learning Process and Development

Learning Process and Development	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum positively influences literacy development.	4.16	0.64	A
The curriculum improves numeracy skills.	4.14	0.67	A
The curriculum enhances social development.	4.14	0.55	A
Students demonstrate improved fine motor skills.	4.11	0.62	A
The curriculum helps improve critical thinking skills.	4.14	0.59	A
The curriculum encourages collaboration and group learning.	4.20	0.63	A
Students show improved listening and speaking skills.	4.09	0.56	A
The curriculum helps students develop emotional intelligence.	4.05	0.61	A
The curriculum promotes curiosity and inquiry-based learning.	4.05	0.61	A
Students demonstrate improved self-confidence.	4.20	0.63	A
Grand Mean	4.128	0.611	A

Table 4 reveals that respondents agree the MATATAG Curriculum positively impacts learners' development, with a grand mean of 4.128, interpreted as "Agree." Teachers noted strong outcomes in areas such as collaboration and group learning ($M = 4.20$), self-confidence ($M = 4.20$), and literacy development ($M = 4.16$). Improvements were also observed in numeracy, social skills, fine motor development, and critical thinking, all scoring above 4.00. Slightly lower but still favorable ratings were seen in emotional intelligence and curiosity-driven learning (both $M = 4.05$). These findings highlight the curriculum's effectiveness in promoting holistic development across cognitive, social, and emotional domains.

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

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.656	5.635	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 shows a statistically significant relationship between the level of curriculum implementation and the perceived benefits of the MATATAG Curriculum, with an r-value of 0.656 indicating a strong positive correlation. The corresponding t-value of 5.635 and p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) confirm that this relationship is statistically significant. As such, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding suggests that higher levels of curriculum implementation are associated with greater perceived benefits, reinforcing the importance of consistent and effective application of the MATATAG Curriculum to achieve its intended educational outcomes for early childhood learners.

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

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.479	3.539	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 6 reveals a moderate positive correlation between the level of curriculum implementation and students' learning process and development, with an r-value of 0.479. The t-value of 3.539 and p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) indicate that the relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that as the MATATAG Curriculum is more effectively implemented, students tend to demonstrate greater improvements in areas such as literacy, numeracy, social skills, and emotional development. The findings support the conclusion that strong curriculum implementation contributes meaningfully to enhanced learning outcomes in early childhood education.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the MATATAG Curriculum is generally well-received and effectively implemented in the selected early childhood education settings. With a grand mean of 4.021 in curriculum implementation, teachers agreed that essential elements such as technology integration, assessment practices, and developmentally appropriate activities are present in their classrooms. Furthermore, the perceived benefits of the curriculum, particularly in improving language, social interaction, and creativity, were rated positively (grand mean = 4.073), reinforcing the value of the curriculum in enhancing student learning experiences. The learning process and development domain also received strong support (grand mean = 4.128), suggesting that the curriculum fosters holistic development, including literacy, numeracy, emotional intelligence, and self-confidence.

Despite these promising outcomes, the study also uncovered notable implementation challenges, particularly in the areas of resource availability, teacher training, and classroom conditions. Teachers expressed the need for more support in accessing digital tools, managing large class sizes, and adapting to new instructional methods. These barriers may hinder the full realization of the curriculum's goals if left unaddressed. Importantly, the statistical analysis revealed significant positive relationships between the level of curriculum implementation and both the perceived benefits ($r = 0.656$) and learning development outcomes ($r = 0.479$), underscoring the importance of strong implementation fidelity. These findings suggest that when the MATATAG Curriculum is fully and effectively applied, it results in more meaningful learning experiences and better developmental outcomes for early learners. Strengthening teacher capacity and providing adequate resources remain critical to sustaining these benefits.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the MATATAG Curriculum is generally implemented well by teachers, leading to meaningful improvements in students' learning outcomes. Teachers show strong dedication to applying the principles of the curriculum, particularly in using assessment and technology to support learning. However, major challenges such as insufficient teaching materials, limited training opportunities, and large class sizes continue to affect its consistency and depth of implementation. The findings strongly indicate that when teachers receive adequate support and resources, the curriculum produces more engaged, motivated, and well-rounded learners. Hence, continuous professional development, improved resource allocation, and better

classroom conditions are essential to fully realize the MATATAG Curriculum's goals of providing quality and inclusive education for all learners.

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