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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **The Impact of 'Matatag' Curriculum Implementation in the Foundation Stage of Education**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This research assessed the implementation of the “Matatag” curriculum by examining teachers’ perceptions on implementation, perceived benefits, challenges encountered and learning process development and the relationship between implementation levels and learning process and development. Data were collected from 43 teacher-respondents through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that the curriculum is generally well-implemented, with teachers strongly agreeing that core components such as assessment practices, technology integration, and age-appropriate teaching strategies are effectively applied. Perceived benefits include improvements in students’ literacy, problem-solving, social interaction, emotional regulation, and respect for diversity, highlighting the curriculum’s support for holistic development. However, several challenges hinder full implementation, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, limited digital access, insufficient training, and low parental involvement. A significant positive relationship was found between the level of curriculum implementation and both perceived student benefits and learning development outcomes. These findings suggest that better implementation leads to stronger educational outcomes. Based on the results, an Enhanced Curriculum Implementation Support Plan was proposed to address the identified gaps, focusing on teacher training, improved resources, classroom management, community involvement, and sustained funding. This study underscores the need for continued support and systemic improvements to ensure the curriculum’s long-term effectiveness and equity. The results provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to improving the quality of education through curriculum reform.

**| KEYWORDS**

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

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

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### **Introduction**

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a major initiative in Philippine education reform, focusing on addressing persistent challenges in Early Childhood Education (ECE) by reinforcing foundational learning and adopting a child-centered teaching model. As explained by Villaver et al. (2024), this curriculum was developed to ease the burden of the overcrowded K to 12 framework and to refocus learning on critical developmental skills, particularly in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional growth. These changes are crucial during early childhood, a stage recognized globally for its importance in shaping long-term learning outcomes (Solang et al., 2024; OECD, 2021). In the local context, Filipino learners have shown consistently low achievement levels, especially in reading and math, prompting a re-evaluation of curriculum priorities (Nietschke et al., 2024). MATATAG responds by promoting coherence in learning content, investing in teacher capacity-building, and emphasizing instruction in the mother tongue (DepEd, 2023; Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025). These reforms mirror international standards that advocate for inclusive, developmentally

appropriate, and language-responsive curricula (UNESCO, 2022). With its clear alignment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and quality education for all, MATATAG offers a localized yet globally relevant framework to improve learning outcomes for young Filipino children (UNICEF, 2022).

The shift to the MATATAG Curriculum aims to resolve long-standing problems in Philippine basic education, such as curriculum congestion, limited focus on core competencies, and outdated pedagogical methods. Cabaya et al. (2025) emphasized that the MATATAG framework redefines early childhood instruction by streamlining learning goals and removing excess content that hinders student mastery. Previous evaluations of the K to 12 curricula revealed that its expansive scope overwhelmed both teachers and students, contributing to gaps in foundational skills (David et al., 2021; Oracion, 2022). These findings are consistent with research by Dictado and Dagdag (2025), who observed that depth in early literacy and numeracy was often sacrificed for content breadth. The MATATAG Curriculum, led by the Department of Education and supported by key government leadership, seeks to resolve these issues by emphasizing core domains such as communication, critical thinking, and socio-emotional development (DepEd, 2023). These goals reflect global early learning standards that advocate for developmental appropriateness and reduced content overload (UNICEF, 2019; OECD, 2021). However, successful reform depends not only on policy design but also on teacher competence, instructional quality, and effective implementation monitoring, all of which influence how well these reforms translate into improved classroom practice (Villaver et al., 2024).

The MATATAG Curriculum was developed to reduce academic overload, enhance mastery of foundational competencies, and replace ineffective teaching strategies embedded in previous systems. While these reforms are well-intentioned, their true effectiveness hinges on how consistently they are applied at the classroom level (Demate et al., 2025). As Kilag et al. (2024) pointed out, curriculum improvement must be supported by a clear understanding of its impact on student learning and teaching quality. The Department of Education's initiative came in response to widespread concern about declining performance in national and global assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), where Filipino students ranked among the lowest globally (DepEd, 2023). Scholars like Tarraya (2023) have linked this decline to overloaded curricula, insufficient instructional time, and inadequate teacher support. These conditions have prompted calls for more streamlined, inclusive, and competency-based instruction (Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025). Moreover, UNICEF (2022) underscores the importance of early investment in foundational skills to address learning poverty and to lay the groundwork for lifelong learning. MATATAG aims to meet these goals by refining instructional content and ensuring that early learners acquire the necessary cognitive and non-cognitive skills to succeed in school and beyond, making its early evaluation crucial for sustainable reform.

Through a refined set of competencies and a sharpened focus on essential learning areas, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to develop children's foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, key to thriving in a fast-changing society. In particular, the inclusion of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) ensures that instruction is more accessible and culturally relevant in early grades (UNESCO, 2022). Villaver et al. (2024) highlighted the challenges encountered in the early stages of MATATAG's rollout, notably insufficient teacher preparedness, limited access to materials, and the absence of inclusive strategies. Kilag et al. (2024) reinforced these concerns, pointing to the need for continuous training and stronger institutional support structures to help educators transition effectively to the new curriculum. These findings call attention to the urgency of developing robust implementation frameworks, not just policy reforms. According to Solang et al. (2024), the success of any early childhood program depends on its responsiveness to children's developmental needs. Thus, systematic monitoring and adaptive program management are essential in ensuring that MATATAG does not merely exist as policy but actively contributes to learner outcomes across cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, especially during the early, most formative years of education.

Assessing the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is critical to ensuring that it fulfills its intended objectives, addresses learner needs effectively, and informs future policy decisions. A comprehensive evaluation must consider the quality of classroom delivery, teacher preparedness, alignment of instructional strategies with learner development, and the actual impact on student performance (Demate et al., 2025). In the Philippine context, systemic challenges such as limited school funding, high pupil-teacher ratios, and inconsistent teacher training continue to hinder curriculum reform efforts (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2021). Tarraya (2023) also noted that excessive administrative work and unrealistic teaching loads reduce teachers' capacity to implement reforms meaningfully. Recognizing these realities, this study focuses on evaluating the implementation of MATATAG in Early Childhood Education particularly at the Kindergarten and Grade 1 levels by examining its effectiveness, challenges, and influence on the teaching-learning process. According to Villaver et al. (2024), implementation research is vital in education reform because it provides evidence-based feedback that can be used to improve policy in real time. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to national efforts to improve ECE outcomes by ensuring the MATATAG Curriculum is responsive, equitable, and capable of delivering the strong educational foundation every Filipino child deserves (UNICEF, 2022).

## Literature Review

The launch of the MATATAG Curriculum signifies a transformative step in Philippine basic education, particularly within the realm of Early Childhood Education (ECE), where foundational learning is essential for long-term academic and developmental success. As discussed by Cabaya et al. (2025), the curriculum was designed to resolve the issues of curriculum congestion under K to 12 by refocusing on essential learning domains such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development. These priorities are critical in early education, a stage where cognitive and behavioral skills are most effectively developed (Solang et al., 2024). Jalotjot and Dantes (2020) argue that the lack of structured, age-appropriate content in early grades often leads to learning gaps and inequity. In line with global perspectives, Spink et al. (2023) advocate for competency-based, learner-centered instruction as a pathway toward inclusive and quality education. Additionally, UNICEF (2022) highlights that simplification of curricula and contextualization to learners' developmental stages are crucial for improving outcomes, particularly in low-resource settings. The MATATAG Curriculum's structure aligns with these international benchmarks by promoting coherence, inclusivity, and developmental appropriateness, aiming to deliver a more equitable educational experience for young Filipino learners.

Although the MATATAG Curriculum presents a promising framework for educational improvement, its classroom-level execution remains a significant concern. Research by Demate et al. (2025) found that many early-grade educators lack adequate preparation to apply child-focused pedagogical approaches, formative assessments, and differentiated strategies, which are essential for effective foundational instruction. Similarly, Kilag et al. (2024) reported that limited access to instructional resources, particularly those aligned with mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), continues to hinder meaningful curriculum integration. These implementation gaps reflect systemic challenges, including underinvestment in teacher training and the absence of robust monitoring systems. As Nietschke et al. (2024) point out, reforms must be backed by institutional capacity building and ongoing professional development to ensure they yield sustainable outcomes. Internationally, UNESCO (2022) and OECD (2021) stress that the success of early learning programs depends on responsive implementation strategies supported by data-driven decision-making. Without such mechanisms, curriculum reform efforts may fall short of their objectives. Therefore, MATATAG's effectiveness in improving early childhood education depends not only on its design but on the availability of structures that support its consistent, high-quality delivery across diverse educational contexts.

## Methodology

This research utilized a descriptive-correlational design to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The quantitative approach enabled the researcher to gather both measurable outcomes and contextual insights related to curriculum delivery across selected public schools. The descriptive aspect provided a structured overview of the respondents' profiles, the extent of curriculum implementation, and the perceived benefits and challenges encountered. Meanwhile, the correlational component explored the relationships between variables such as teaching experience, availability of resources, and observed developmental progress among learners. The study was conducted in three public elementary schools in Cebu City, chosen for their active adoption of the MATATAG Curriculum in Grade 1. The main respondents were Grade 1 teachers, as they are directly responsible for implementing the curriculum and are well-positioned to assess its impact. Data collection was carried out through a structured survey questionnaire, which underwent expert validation and reliability testing. Revisions were made based on expert suggestions and pilot testing to ensure the instrument's clarity and accuracy. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis techniques.

## Results

Table 1. Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
The MATATAG curriculum is fully implemented in my institution.	4.56	0.63	SA
Teaching strategies such as play-based learning and storytelling are effectively applied.	4.51	0.63	SA
Adequate resources and materials are available to support curriculum delivery.	4.19	0.82	A
Teachers are well-trained to implement the MATATAG curriculum.	4.35	0.72	SA
Clear learning objectives are set for each lesson.	4.40	0.66	SA
Activities are aligned with the developmental needs of students.	4.44	0.63	SA
Parents are involved in supporting curriculum activities.	4.28	0.63	SA
The school administration provides adequate guidance for curriculum implementation.	4.21	0.64	A

Teachers effectively integrate technology into the curriculum.	4.49	0.59	SA
Student progress is regularly assessed and monitored.	4.56	0.59	SA
Grand Mean	4.40	0.65	SA

Table 1 presents the level of curriculum implementation based on teacher responses. The results indicate a very satisfactory (SA) overall implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, with a grand mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.65. Items such as regular assessment of student progress (M=4.56), effective integration of technology (M=4.49), and application of play-based strategies (M=4.51) received high ratings. Although most indicators were rated "SA," the availability of teaching resources (M=4.19) and administrative guidance (M=4.21) were slightly lower, indicating areas for improvement. Overall, the findings suggest that the curriculum is well-implemented across key instructional dimensions.

Table 2. Perceived Benefits

Perceived Benefits	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum improves language and literacy skills.	4.47	0.70	SA
The curriculum enhances social interaction and teamwork.	4.44	0.63	SA
Students show increased cultural awareness and identity.	4.33	0.64	SA
The curriculum fosters creativity and self-expression.	4.42	0.59	SA
Students demonstrate improved emotional regulation.	4.33	0.75	SA
The curriculum promotes independence and responsibility.	4.47	0.74	SA
Students demonstrate improved problem-solving skills.	4.33	0.71	SA
The curriculum encourages respect for diversity and inclusion.	4.47	0.63	SA
Students demonstrate better listening and communication skills.	4.37	0.66	SA
The curriculum supports healthy habits and routines.	4.40	0.66	SA
Grand Mean	4.40	0.67	SA

Table 2 highlights the perceived benefits of the MATATAG Curriculum based on teacher responses. The results reveal a very satisfactory (SA) overall rating, with a grand mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.67. Teachers reported strong improvements in areas such as language and literacy skills (M=4.47), independence and responsibility (M=4.47), and respect for diversity and inclusion (M=4.47). Other highly rated outcomes include enhanced social interaction, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and creativity. These findings suggest that the curriculum significantly contributes to learners' holistic development, particularly in reinforcing core academic, emotional, and social skills in early childhood education.

Table 3. Challenges in Implementation

Challenges in Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
There is a lack of teaching materials and resources.	4.09	0.89	A
Teachers require more training to effectively implement the curriculum.	4.37	0.76	SA
Classroom space and facilities are insufficient for curriculum activities.	4.33	0.71	SA
Time constraints hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum.	4.42	0.63	SA
The number of students in the classroom is too high.	4.44	0.70	SA
There is limited support from parents or guardians.	4.37	0.76	SA
There are challenges in accessing digital resources.	4.44	0.59	SA
Teachers face difficulty adapting to new curriculum methods.	4.09	0.89	A
The budget allocated for curriculum implementation is insufficient.	4.26	0.79	SA
Additional staff support is required for effective implementation.	4.40	0.69	SA
Grand Mean	4.32	0.74	SA

Table 3 presents the challenges encountered in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The results show a very satisfactory (SA) overall rating, with a grand mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.74, indicating that while implementation is progressing, substantial issues persist. The highest-rated concerns include overcrowded classrooms (M=4.44), difficulty accessing digital resources (M=4.44), and time constraints (M=4.42). Teachers also cited insufficient training (M=4.37) and limited parental support (M=4.37) as major barriers. Although most indicators fall under "SA," areas like lack of materials (M=4.09) and difficulty adapting to new methods (M=4.09) suggest areas needing targeted interventions.

Table 4. Learning Process and Development

Learning Process and Development	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum positively influences literacy development.	4.53	0.59	SA
The curriculum improves numeracy skills.	4.53	0.63	SA

The curriculum enhances social development.	4.40	0.66	SA
Students demonstrate improved fine motor skills.	4.49	0.67	SA
The curriculum helps improve critical thinking skills.	4.47	0.59	SA
The curriculum encourages collaboration and group learning.	4.49	0.63	SA
Students show improved listening and speaking skills.	4.53	0.59	SA
The curriculum helps students develop emotional intelligence.	4.44	0.59	SA
The curriculum promotes curiosity and inquiry-based learning.	4.49	0.63	SA
Students demonstrate improved self-confidence.	4.49	0.63	SA
Grand Mean	4.49	0.62	SA

Table 4 illustrates the impact of the MATATAG Curriculum on the learning process and child development. The results show a very satisfactory (SA) level overall, with a grand mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.62. Highest-rated areas include literacy and numeracy development (M=4.53) and listening and speaking skills (M=4.53), indicating strong gains in foundational learning. Other highly rated aspects were critical thinking (M=4.47), emotional intelligence (M=4.44), and social development (M=4.40). These findings confirm the curriculum's effectiveness in supporting holistic child development, addressing both academic competencies and essential socio-emotional skills in early education.

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

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.262	-0.482	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 5 presents the relationship between the level of curriculum implementation and perceived benefits. The results reveal a statistically significant correlation with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 threshold. Despite the relatively low r-value of 0.262, this indicates a positive but weak relationship between how the MATATAG Curriculum is implemented and the benefits perceived by teachers. The negative t-value (-0.482) appears inconsistent with the positive r-value and may be a typographical error, but the overall interpretation holds as implementation quality improves, perceived learner benefits tend to increase, supporting the decision to reject the null hypothesis.

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

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.665	8.602	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows a statistically significant relationship between the level of curriculum implementation and learning process and development, with a p-value of 0.000, well below the 0.05 threshold. The r-value of 0.665 indicates a moderately strong positive correlation, suggesting that as the quality and consistency of MATATAG Curriculum implementation increases, so does the observed improvement in learners' development across cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains. The high t-value of 8.602 further supports the strength of this relationship. These findings validate the effectiveness of the curriculum when implemented properly and justify the rejection of the null hypothesis.

## Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate the positive impact of the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly in shaping learners' foundational skills. The consistent application of learner-centered approaches such as play-based learning, clear learning objectives, and the integration of technology has contributed to favorable outcomes in classrooms. Teachers reported significant improvements in language development, social interaction, emotional regulation, and critical thinking among their pupils. These perceived benefits align with global standards for high-quality early education, which emphasize developmental appropriateness and inclusivity. The curriculum's focus on foundational domains has also enhanced learners' self-confidence, communication skills, and curiosity key indicators of holistic growth in the early years. Despite these positive outcomes, the study also reveals critical implementation challenges. Teachers identified limitations in teaching resources, insufficient classroom space, and high student-teacher ratios as recurring issues. Additionally, a lack of parental involvement and limited digital infrastructure continue to hinder effective curriculum delivery. These obstacles, while not diminishing the program's effectiveness, suggest that systemic support is essential for sustained improvement. The findings also show that as the quality of implementation increases, so do student learning

outcomes highlight the importance of strong institutional backing, adequate training, and continuous monitoring. Therefore, while the MATATAG Curriculum is showing promising results, its long-term success will depend on addressing these structural barriers and ensuring consistent support for educators and learners alike.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study show that the "Matatag" curriculum is generally well-implemented and positively received by teachers. It effectively supports both academic and personal development of students, enhancing skills such as literacy, communication, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited materials, insufficient digital access, and lack of parental support still hinder full implementation. Importantly, the study confirms a significant positive relationship between strong curriculum implementation and improved student outcomes. This emphasizes the need for continuous teacher training, adequate resources, and institutional support to fully realize the benefits of the curriculum and ensure its long-term success in enhancing education quality.

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