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Bridging the Gap: Teacher Readiness and Challenges for the Matatag Curriculum

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Abstract **Review Article**

This study evaluated the readiness and challenges faced by elementary teachers in Maddela District II during the initial implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Using a mixed-methods approach, it combined quantitative data from a validated survey and qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The quantitative analysis showed that teachers felt highly prepared both psychologically and pedagogically, with strong motivation and professional commitment. However, the study revealed significant challenges in the external environment that hindered implementation. The qualitative analysis identified five main challenges: lack of resources and infrastructure, workload and time management, adapting pedagogy to learners, technological barriers, and instructional uncertainty. A key issue was the "abono" culture, where teachers personally fund learning materials, and administrative overload. Additionally, there was disconnect between the inquiry-based curriculum and students' literacy gaps. The study concluded that teacher resilience, rather than system support, is currently driving the implementation. The research proposes solutions, including administrative de-loading, creating an offline digital resource repository, and implementing remedial programs to improve student proficiency.

Keywords: instructional intervention, integer operations, mathematics, problem-solving, REACT strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Education today goes beyond just sharing knowledge; it is essential for promoting sustainable development, equality, and global citizenship. This aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates for inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education, along with lifelong learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). Global educational reforms aim not only to improve academic performance but also to equip students with life skills like critical thinking, adaptability, resilience, and emotional intelligence, which are crucial for success in a rapidly changing world (OECD, 2023).

In response to global educational trends, the Philippines has introduced significant reforms in its education system. The Enhanced K-10 Curriculum aims to address learning gaps, particularly in literacy

and numeracy, following the country's poor performance in international assessments like the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), where the Philippines ranked last in Mathematics, Science, and reading comprehension (World Bank, 2022; Garcia & Diaz, 2021). This curriculum focuses on essential skills such as literacy, numeracy, and life skills (Singh, 2024, as cited in Garma, 2024).

In addition to the Enhanced K-10 Curriculum, the Philippines launched the Revised K-12 Curriculum (Matatag Curriculum) in 2024, which focuses on addressing global issues like poverty, inequality, and climate change. This curriculum emphasizes resilience, foundational literacy, learner-centered teaching, and socio-emotional well-being (DepEd, 2024). However, despite these reforms, challenges persist, particularly in rural and underserved areas where access to resources and teacher preparedness remain limited (UNESCO, 2023).

The K-12 Basic Education Reform Act (Republic Act No. 10533) extended the basic education cycle from 10 to 13 years (DepEd, 2023), to improve the educational system. Despite progress, significant gaps in student competencies remain, especially in remote areas (UNESCO, 2023). The success of the Revised K-12 Curriculum, or Matatag Curriculum, depends largely on the preparedness of teachers to implement these reforms effectively (Hattie, 2023).

The Department of Education (DepEd) introduced frameworks like Self-Guided Development (SGD) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to help teachers continuously assess and improve their professional skills (DepEd Memorandum No. 123, s. 2023). However, rural teachers face additional challenges, such as isolation and limited support, which hinder their ability to access professional development opportunities and implement the new curriculum effectively (Carrington et al., 2020).

Innovations such as mobile learning platforms and localized training programs are helping to bridge the gap between rural teachers' professional development needs and the geographical and infrastructure barriers they face. Studies have shown that mobile-based training programs can be an effective way to deliver professional development to teachers in remote areas (Reyes & Santiago, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). Furthermore, incorporating culturally relevant teaching strategies, particularly for indigenous students, can help make education more inclusive and better suited to local needs (Smith & Ginsburg, 2016).

This study explores the challenges and opportunities in teacher readiness for the Matatag Curriculum among elementary teachers in Maddela District II. It aims to assess teachers' understanding of the curriculum, instructional planning, and attitudes, while identifying factors affecting their readiness. The study will also examine challenges in training, resources, workload, student-related issues, and support. Lastly, it will propose strategies to improve teacher preparedness and overcome these challenges.

METHODS

This research methodology for examining. The study follows a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, combining quantitative data from surveys to assess teacher readiness and implementation challenges, followed by qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore these results in more depth. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the challenge’s teachers face and how they impact curriculum implementation. The study was conducted in Maddela District II, Quirino, using stratified random sampling to select 102 teachers from a total population of 400. The sample represented urban, rural, public, and private schools. In the qualitative phase, 10 to 15 teachers were purposively selected for FGDs based on their experience with the MATATAG Curriculum. This approach provided diverse perspectives on the challenges faced during implementation. Data collection involved a structured survey that assessed demographic profiles, teacher readiness, and

challenges using a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability, yielding excellent results. The survey was administered in person, followed by FGDs to gather detailed insights. All data were anonymized, and ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. For data analysis, frequency counts, medians, and the Kruskal-Wallis Test were used for quantitative data. Qualitative data from FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis with NVivo software. This methodology provided a rich understanding of the challenges faced by teachers, which informed practical recommendations for improving teacher preparedness and curriculum implementation. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were observed throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Frequency and Percent Distribution of Respondents.

Profile	Specifics	Frequency	Percent
Age	30 years old & below	36	35.29
	31-45 years old	39	38.24
	46 years old & above	27	26.47
Position	Teacher I/II	27	26.47
	Teacher III	66	64.71
	Master Teacher I/II	9	8.82
Years in Service	5 years & below	36	35.29
	6-15 years	37	36.27
	16 years & above	29	28.43

n = 102

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of 102 respondents, mostly in early to mid-career and mid-level teaching positions. The largest age group is 31-45 years old (39 or 38.24%), followed by those 30 years old and below (36 or 35.29%). Only 26.47% (27 respondents) are 46 years or older. In terms of position, most hold the rank of Teacher III (66 or 64.71%), followed by Teacher I/II (27 or 26.47%), and a small percentage are Master Teachers (I/II) at 8.82% (9 respondents). For years of service, most have been teaching for 6-15 years (37 or 36.27%), with a similar number having 5 years or fewer (36 or 35.29%). The remaining 28.43% (29 respondents) have been in service for 16 years or more.

II. Teacher's Extent of Readiness for the MATATAG Curriculum

Table 2. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Understanding of Curriculum Content

Category	Median	Description
Understanding of Curriculum Content	3.00	GE
Instructional Planning and Delivery	3.00	GE
Assessment and Monitoring	3.00	GE
Attitudes and Motivation	3.00	GE

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 Not at all (NAA),
1.76 – 2.50 Slight Extent (SE),
2.51 – 3.25 Great Extent (GE),
3.26 – 4.00 Very Great Extent (VGE)

Table 3 presents the results of the MATATAG Curriculum readiness survey, showing that teachers feel highly prepared to implement the new curriculum, with a Grand Median score of 3.00 ("Great Extent"). This reflects their confidence in understanding the curriculum, supported by Fullan (2020) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of teacher readiness, confidence, and professional development for successful curriculum implementation. Teachers feel well-trained and informed about the differences between the old and new curricula, aligning with Guskey's (2021) research on the need for clear communication during transitions. Regarding instructional planning, teachers express strong readiness, with confidence in lesson alignment, access to materials, and adapting teaching styles, supported by Fullan (2020) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2021). Additionally, they are prepared to use modern pedagogical strategies, including critical thinking, technology integration, and collaborative learning, which aligns with the National Education Association (2022) and Hargreaves & Shirley (2020). In terms of assessment and monitoring, teachers are confident in evaluating student progress using diverse methods, ensuring a holistic approach to learning. The survey also reveals that teachers are motivated, with a focus on professional development, a belief in the curriculum's potential, and a strong commitment to collaboration, which resonates with Guskey's (2021) findings on the role of efficacy and collaboration in successful reform.

The strong readiness demonstrated by teachers suggests that the MATATAG Curriculum is likely to be smoothly implemented, as teachers feel adequately prepared in both content and teaching strategies. However, ongoing professional development and support are essential to maintain and enhance this preparedness, as it ensures teachers are updated on best practices and curriculum adjustments. The teachers' confidence in using modern pedagogical techniques also implies that schools may need to invest in resources and tools to support these strategies. Moreover, the positive attitude and motivation among teachers can lead to greater engagement, but continued collaboration and support will be necessary to sustain enthusiasm and address any challenges that may arise during implementation.

Table 3: Assessment of Respondents' Readiness for the MATATAG Curriculum Based on Age, Position, and Years in Service

Statements	H	p-value	Decision
1. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum, along with Understanding of Curriculum Content, When They are Grouped by Age	1.202.	0.9152.	Fail to reject Ho
2. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum, along with Understanding of Curriculum Content When They are Grouped by Position	0.6093	0.9988	Fail to reject Ho
3. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum, along with Understanding of Curriculum Content When They are Grouped by Years in Service	1.1181	0.9414	Fail to reject Ho

p-value of ≤.05 is significant

The statistical analysis in Table 4.a reveals that there are no significant differences in the respondents' readiness for the MATATAG curriculum when grouped by age, position, or years in service. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test consistently yielded p-values greater than the 0.05 significance level, indicating that demographic factors such as age, position, and tenure do not significantly affect teachers' understanding of the curriculum. This finding supports the work of Fullan (2020), who argued that teacher readiness is more influenced by professional development and curriculum engagement than by factors like age or years of service. While there was a slight dip in perceived training adequacy among the oldest age group, the statistical test showed that this difference was not significant, suggesting it was incidental rather than a systemic issue.

The results also demonstrate that regardless of whether teachers are new to the profession, in mid-career, or highly experienced, their understanding of the MATATAG curriculum is statistically comparable. This aligns with Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of high-quality training and support over demographic variables in shaping teacher readiness. The lack of significant differences across these groups reinforces the notion that teacher preparedness is largely shaped by continuous professional development and active engagement with the curriculum, rather than by accumulated tenure or position within the educational hierarchy.

Table 4. Assessment of Respondents' Readiness for the MATATAG Curriculum in Instructional Planning and Delivery across Age, Position, and Years in Service

Statements	H	p-value	Decision
1. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Instructional Planning and Delivery When They are Grouped by Age	1.5969	0.7186	Fail to reject Ho
2. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Instructional Planning and Delivery When They are Grouped by Position	3.7282	0.0022	Reject Ho
3. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Instructional Planning and Delivery When They are Grouped by Years in Service	1.289	0.8820	Fail to reject Ho

p-value of ≤.05 is significant

Table 4 reveals that the readiness of teachers for the MATATAG curriculum, particularly in terms of instructional planning and delivery, is influenced by position but not by age or years in service. When grouped by age, the Kruskal-Wallis H-test yielded a p-value of 0.7186, indicating no significant differences in readiness across age groups, which aligns with Guskey's (2021) assertion that core pedagogical competencies, such as lesson planning and delivery, remain consistent across age groups when teachers receive adequate training.

However, the analysis grouped by position showed significant differences, with a p-value of 0.0022, particularly in areas like technology integration and collaborative learning. Junior teachers (Teacher I/II) reported higher confidence in integrating technology, while Master Teachers were more confident in facilitating collaborative learning activities. These findings are consistent with Hargreaves and Shirley (2020), who noted that junior and senior teachers often excel in these areas due to their exposure to new digital tools and leadership experience, respectively.

In contrast, when grouped by years in service, the p-value of 0.8820 showed no significant differences, suggesting that professional tenure does not significantly impact instructional readiness. This is in line with Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who emphasized that teachers' readiness is not drastically influenced by years of service but rather by the quality of professional development opportunities. Despite new teachers reporting higher confidence in collaborative learning, the statistical analysis clarified that this was not statistically significant. Overall, the data support the conclusion that while position plays a role in readiness for certain competencies, age and years of service do not. These results highlight the importance of continuous and targeted professional development, particularly in technology integration and collaborative teaching methods, to ensure all teachers are adequately prepared to deliver high-quality instruction.

Table 5: Assessment of Respondents' Readiness for the MATATAG Curriculum in Assessment and Monitoring Across Age, Position, and Years in Service

Statements	H	p-value	Decision
1. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along Assessment and Monitoring When They are Grouped by Age	1.3007	0.8770	Fail to reject Ho
2. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along Assessment and Monitoring When They are Grouped by Position	2.2539	0.3104	Fail to reject Ho
3. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Assessment and Monitoring When They are Grouped by Years in Service	1.5418	0.7519	Fail to reject Ho

p-value of ≤.05 is significant

Table 5 reveals that there are no significant differences in teachers' readiness for the MATATAG curriculum's assessment and monitoring tasks based on age, position, or years in service. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test results indicate that for all ten statements across these groups, the p-values are consistently higher than the 0.05 significance threshold, leading to a decision to "Fail to reject Ho" (the null hypothesis). Specifically, when grouped by age, the p-values ranged from 0.117 to 0.999, suggesting that despite slight differences in self-reported confidence, particularly among younger and mid-career teachers, these variations are not statistically significant. The slight "gap" observed in the descriptive data, where younger and mid-career teachers reported higher readiness in certain areas like using varied assessment methods and tracking student progress, was not substantial enough to indicate any meaningful difference in readiness across age groups. This finding supports the conclusions of Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) and Fullan (2020), who assert that age does not significantly impact teacher readiness, with professional development and engagement with curriculum changes being more influential.

Similarly, the analysis grouped by years in service also showed no significant impact of professional tenure on teachers' readiness for assessment and monitoring. The p-values for all statements ranged from 0.173 to 0.870, again exceeding the 0.05 significance level. Although descriptive data indicated a "U-shaped" pattern, where both the newest and most senior teachers reported higher confidence in assessment tasks compared to their mid-career counterparts, the statistical analysis confirmed that these differences were not meaningful. Whether a teacher has been in service for less than 5 years, 6–15 years, or over 16 years, their readiness to engage in key assessment tasks, such as using rubrics, understanding formative and summative assessments, and providing feedback, remains statistically uniform. This consistency reinforces the importance of high-quality and consistent professional development, which, as noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), ensures that teachers of all experience levels are equally equipped to implement effective assessment and monitoring practices. Fullan (2020) also highlighted that professional experience, when coupled with continuous and effective training, does not significantly influence a teacher's readiness. Thus,

the results of Table 5 suggest that age, position, and years in service do not significantly impact teachers' readiness for the MATATAG curriculum's assessment and monitoring protocols. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing, high-quality professional development to ensure all teachers, regardless of their demographic or career stage, are adequately prepared to implement the curriculum's assessment practices. This confirms that teacher readiness is primarily shaped by training and curriculum engagement, rather than by demographic factors such as age or professional tenure.

Table 6: Assessment of Respondents' Readiness for the MATATAG Curriculum in Attitudes and Motivation across Age, Position, and Years in Service

Statements	H	p-value	Decision
1. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Attitudes and Motivation When They are Grouped by Age	1.2276	0.6157	Fail to reject Ho
2. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Attitudes and Motivation When They are Grouped by Position	4.47	0.0012	Reject Ho
3. Extent of Readiness of the Respondents for the MATATAG Curriculum along with Attitudes and Motivation When They are Grouped by Years in Service	0.7894	0.9925	Fail to reject Ho

p-value of ≤.05 is significant

The statistical analysis presented in Table 6 highlights that the Attitudes and Motivation of teachers for the MATATAG curriculum do not significantly differ when grouped by age. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test results show that all ten statements had p-values ranging from 0.174 to 0.995, all exceeding the 0.05 significance threshold, leading to a decision to "Fail to reject Ho" (the null hypothesis). This means that, although younger teachers reported higher enthusiasm, particularly in areas such as willingness for professional development and excitement for collaboration, these differences were not statistically significant. The data suggest that, regardless of age, teachers across all groups share similar levels of motivation and openness to curriculum changes. These findings align with Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who argued that the enthusiasm for professional development is not age-dependent but is more closely linked to the quality of support and development opportunities provided to teachers.

When grouped by position, Table 6 reveals more nuanced findings, where certain aspects of motivation show significant differences. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test indicated statistically significant disparities for three statements:

willingness to engage in professional development (p=0.049), excitement to collaborate (p=0.042), and belief in holistic development (p=0.006). These results led to a decision to "Reject Ho," confirming that Master Teachers and entry-level teachers exhibited higher enthusiasm in these areas than mid-career teachers. These findings are consistent with the research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) and Fullan (2020), who noted that teachers in leadership roles and those at the beginning of their careers often demonstrate higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm for professional growth and collaboration. The results emphasize the importance of positioning professional development opportunities in a way that addresses the specific needs and motivations of teachers at different career stages.

Lastly, the statistical analysis of Attitudes and Motivation grouped by years in service, as shown in Table 6, indicates that professional tenure does not significantly impact teachers' enthusiasm for the MATATAG curriculum. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test results, with p-values ranging from 0.305 to 0.946, all exceed the 0.05 significance level, leading to a decision to "Fail to reject Ho." Despite the descriptive data suggesting that newer teachers (with less than five years of service) reported higher enthusiasm in areas such as collaboration and confidence in student outcomes, these differences were not statistically significant. This implies that motivation and openness to new strategies are not influenced by years of service but rather by ongoing professional development and organizational support. This finding is in line with Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who emphasized that motivation to adopt new curricula is more dependent on continuous support and professional growth opportunities than on years of teaching experience. Overall, the data indicate that regardless of a teacher's tenure, there is a consistent level of motivation and commitment to professional development across the entire workforce.

IV. Challenges Encountered by the teachers in the Implementation of MATATAG Curriculum: Thematic Analysis (NVivo Coding Structure)

Parent Node (Major Theme)	Child Nodes (Sub-themes)	Source Frequency (Number of Teachers)	Frequency/ Prevalence
1. Resource & Infrastructure Scarcity	▪ Lack of aligned textbooks/materials ▪ Infrastructure Deficits ▪ Lack of funds (Out-of-pocket expenses)	9 out of 10	High (90%)
2. Workload & Time Management	▪ Administrative burden vs. Teaching ▪ Rushed lesson delivery ▪ Teacher burnout/stress	8 out of 10	High (80%)

3. Pedagogical & Learner Adaptation	▪ Student learning gaps/readiness ▪ Passive vs. Active learner transition ▪ Differentiation difficulties	6 out of 10	Medium-High (60%)
4. Technological Barriers	▪ Digital Divide (No devices/internet) ▪ Power interruptions ▪ Digital literacy gaps (Students & Teachers)	5 out of 10	Medium (50%)
5. Instructional Uncertainty	▪ Confusion on assessment methods ▪ Limited training/orientation ▪ Curriculum alignment confusion	4 out of 10	Medium (40%)

The analysis of challenges faced by Master Teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum identified five key themes: Resource & Infrastructure Scarcity, Workload & Time Management, Pedagogical & Learner Adaptation, Technological Barriers, and Instructional Uncertainty. The most common issue was the lack of aligned textbooks and learning materials, with 90% of teachers reporting this as a major challenge. Teachers also faced overcrowded classrooms and the financial burden of out-of-pocket expenses for materials. Workload and time management were also significant, as administrative tasks often consumed teaching time, leading to rushed lessons and teacher burnout. Teachers struggled with student learning gaps and adapting to the active learning approach of MATATAG, and the shift to digital integration faced obstacles like the digital divide and power interruptions. Finally, instructional uncertainty, particularly with new assessment methods and curriculum alignment, added to the strain.

V. Proposed Support Mechanisms

To address these challenges, the study proposes several support mechanisms. These include resource localization through the creation of a digital repository of learning materials, prioritizing MOOE funds to eliminate teacher expenses, and establishing offline-first technology solutions for schools in remote areas. Administrative de-loading is recommended to reduce the burden on teachers, along with protected planning time for collaborative lesson design. Targeted bridging programs and remediation periods are suggested to address student learning gaps. To resolve instructional uncertainty, the study advocates for workshop-style Learning Action Cells (LAC) that focus on practical output creation and peer mentorship through Master Teacher-led sessions. Additionally, the involvement of the community and private sector is encouraged to provide financial and infrastructural support for classroom needs and multimedia equipment.

The study concluded that while the teachers of Maddela District II possess strong psychological and pedagogical readiness for the MATATAG Curriculum, their ability to implement it is hampered by external challenges like insufficient resources and excessive administrative duties. There was no significant difference in readiness between novice

and veteran teachers, suggesting that both groups are equally committed to the curriculum's success. The teachers' high ratings in instructional planning masked the personal financial sacrifices they made to produce learning materials. Additionally, the curriculum's "learner-centered" design is hindered by students' foundational literacy and numeracy gaps, forcing teachers to resort to remedial teaching. The greatest threat to successful implementation was found to be the lack of time, with administrative tasks competing with instructional time, leading to rushed lessons.

Based on the study's conclusions, several key recommendations are made to improve the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. The Department of Education (DepEd) is advised to institutionalize a "Bridging Period" dedicated to remediation focused on foundational literacy and numeracy before fully immersing students in grade-level competencies. This approach addresses the gap in student readiness, ensuring that the curriculum's more advanced competencies can be effectively introduced. For school heads and administrators, it is recommended to create a Localized Digital Resource Hub at the school or district level, providing teachers with quality-assured Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) and lesson plans to alleviate the burden of creating materials from scratch. Additionally, Learning Action Cells (LAC) should be reoriented into workshop-style sessions where teachers collaborate to design assessment tools and rubrics, with Master Teachers mentoring their peers on integrating Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) into daily lessons.

Local Government Units (LGUs) and community partners are encouraged to launch initiatives that promote community support for learning, particularly by fostering parent-teacher partnerships focused on monitoring and supporting students' reading habits at home. This strengthens the holistic development aspect of the MATATAG curriculum. Lastly, future researchers are advised to replicate the study in 3–5 years to assess whether the teachers' readiness translates into actual improvements in student learning outcomes, such as National Achievement Test (NAT) scores. Future studies should also explore the relationship between administrative workload and teacher burnout, providing valuable data to inform policy changes aimed at improving teacher welfare.

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