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Challenges and Adaptive Strategies in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum Perspectives of School Heads and Teachers

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges encountered and adaptive strategies employed by school heads and teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in public secondary schools in Palanas District, Masbate, Philippines. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed involving 18 respondents, comprising six school heads and 12 teachers selected through random sampling. Data were collected using a structured, expert-validated questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking. Findings revealed that respondents generally acknowledged implementation challenges, with an overall composite mean of 3.80. The lack of curriculum-aligned instructional materials was the foremost concern among school heads (M = 4.33), while teachers identified inadequate facilities, limited parental involvement, and low learner readiness as major challenges (M = 4.00 each). Despite these difficulties, respondents positively assessed adaptive strategies (M = 4.15), particularly Learning Action Cell sessions, collaborative curriculum planning, stakeholder partnerships, and values integration. The study concluded that effective curriculum implementation requires coordinated institutional support, adequate instructional resources, and sustained professional collaboration. It recommends strengthening teacher professional development, improving resource allocation, promoting collaborative instructional planning, and enhancing school-community partnerships. The findings are limited by the small, localized sample and reliance on self-reported perceptions, restricting their generalizability. This study contributes context-specific evidence for strengthening curriculum implementation and educational leadership in resource-constrained schools. Its findings support Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly the promotion of equitable learning opportunities and sustained teacher professional development.

Keywords: Adaptive Strategies; Curriculum Implementation; Educational Leadership; Instructional Challenges; MATATAG Curriculum; School Heads; Teacher Collaboration

1. Introduction

Curriculum reform is an essential component of educational development, enabling education systems to respond to changing societal demands, improve instructional quality, and strengthen learners' competencies. Successful curriculum implementation requires alignment among educational policies, instructional resources, teacher preparedness, and school leadership. However, educational reforms frequently encounter challenges involving inadequate professional development, limited resources, increased workloads, and differences in institutional capacity (Fullan, 1993; UNESCO, 2021). These challenges are particularly evident in resource-constrained educational settings, where school administrators and teachers must reconcile national curriculum requirements with local instructional realities. Recent studies have likewise identified teacher preparedness, institutional support, and resource availability as important factors influencing curriculum implementation (Khosa & Makuvire, 2021; Nawastheen, 2021; Cabaya et al., 2025).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum in August 2023 to address persistent learning gaps, curriculum congestion, and weaknesses in foundational literacy and numeracy. The reform aims to streamline learning competencies, strengthen values education, and promote relevant, learner-centered instruction (Department of Education, 2023a). Its phased implementation began in School Year 2024–2025 for Kindergarten and Grades 1, 4, and 7, with subsequent implementation scheduled through School Year 2027–2028 (Department of Education, 2024a). Although the curriculum seeks to strengthen basic education, its successful implementation depends on the preparedness, adaptability, and sustained collaboration of school heads and teachers. The broader MATATAG agenda further emphasizes improving educational delivery and strengthening institutional support to address learning challenges (Department of Education, 2023b).

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum has introduced instructional, administrative, and logistical challenges, including insufficient curriculum-aligned instructional materials, inadequate teacher orientation, limited preparation time, and difficulties adjusting teaching strategies to revised learning competencies. These concerns are particularly relevant in rural and resource-constrained schools, where access to educational facilities, professional development, and instructional resources may be limited. Elardo (2025) identified gaps in teacher preparedness and instructional resources, while Angeles and Rabago (2025) reported challenges involving inadequate training, limited learning materials, and difficulties aligning classroom instruction with curriculum expectations. Similarly, Torrefiel et al. (2025) emphasized the effects of unclear implementation guidelines and resource limitations on teachers' instructional adaptation. Other Philippine studies have documented comparable implementation difficulties and adaptive mechanisms among teachers transitioning to the MATATAG Curriculum (Bensurto & Bernardino, 2025; Cachero, 2025; Herrera, 2025).

Despite these challenges, school heads and teachers employ adaptive strategies to support curriculum implementation. These include collaborative lesson planning, contextualized instructional materials, peer mentoring, formative assessment, technology integration, and school-based professional development. Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions provide opportunities for teachers to clarify curriculum competencies, share instructional resources, and collectively address classroom difficulties. School heads contribute by coordinating resources, providing instructional supervision, encouraging professional collaboration, and strengthening stakeholder partnerships. Yulianti (2023) emphasized the importance of collaborative professional learning in curriculum implementation, while Jassim (2024) highlighted the role of educational leadership in fostering innovation and supportive learning environments. Likewise, Bazar (2025) and Wabingga and Tomakin (2025) identified peer collaboration, resource sharing, and professional support as important coping mechanisms during MATATAG Curriculum implementation. These practices demonstrate how school-level adaptation can complement national educational reforms.

The study is informed by Fullan's Theory of Educational Change (1993), Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2003), and Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). Fullan's framework emphasizes the importance of leadership, institutional support, and professional collaboration in educational reform, while Rogers' theory explains how innovations are adopted within organizations and professional communities. Constructivist perspectives emphasize active learning, contextualized instruction, and learner-centered educational practices. Collectively, these frameworks provide a foundation for understanding curriculum implementation challenges and the adaptive responses of school heads and teachers.

Although existing studies have examined teacher preparedness, implementation challenges, and coping mechanisms associated with the MATATAG Curriculum, the perspectives of school heads and teachers within the same rural educational context remain important to investigate. Previous research has frequently emphasized teachers' experiences or specific instructional concerns, providing opportunities for further examination of how administrative leadership and classroom-level practices jointly influence curriculum implementation. In Palanas District, Masbate, understanding these perspectives may provide context-specific evidence regarding instructional resource limitations, learner readiness, professional collaboration, and institutional support. Examining these factors may help identify practical strategies appropriate for public secondary schools operating under resource constraints.

Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the challenges encountered and adaptive strategies employed by school heads and teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in public secondary schools in Palanas District, Masbate, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to identify instructional, administrative, and resource-related challenges and determine the adaptive strategies and best practices employed to address implementation difficulties. The findings are intended to inform educational planning, instructional resource allocation, teacher professional development, school leadership practices, and stakeholder engagement. By providing localized evidence on curriculum implementation, the study may contribute to improving institutional responsiveness and supporting effective educational reform.

Furthermore, the study supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which promotes inclusive, equitable, and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Its focus on curriculum implementation challenges and adaptive strategies aligns with SDG Target 4.1, which emphasizes effective learning outcomes, and Target 4.c, which promotes the availability and professional development of qualified teachers. By identifying barriers related to instructional resources, teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and institutional support, the study provides evidence that may guide improvements in educational delivery. Strengthening collaborative leadership, professional learning, and stakeholder participation may contribute to more equitable and sustainable implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly in rural educational settings.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the challenges encountered and adaptive strategies employed by school heads and teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The descriptive approach facilitated the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data reflecting respondents' perceptions of instructional, administrative, and resource-related challenges, as well as their adaptive practices. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to describe existing implementation conditions, identify prevailing challenges, and assess adaptive strategies without manipulating variables or establishing causal relationships.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Palanas District, Municipality of Palanas, Schools Division of Masbate, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025. The research setting comprised six public secondary schools: Rondina-Atendido National High School, San Carlos High School, Salvacion National High School, Miabas National High School, Maravilla National High School, and Palanas National Agriculture High School. These schools provided the educational context for examining the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly the instructional challenges, administrative responsibilities, and adaptive practices experienced by school heads and teachers.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 18 educational personnel, comprising six school heads and 12 teachers directly involved in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. School heads provided perspectives on administrative leadership, resource management, instructional supervision, and institutional support, while teachers contributed information regarding classroom implementation, learner readiness, instructional resources, and teaching adaptations. Including both respondent groups enabled the study to examine curriculum implementation challenges and adaptive strategies from administrative and instructional perspectives.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized random sampling to select respondents involved in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. A total of 18 participants, consisting of six school heads and 12 teachers, were included in the final sample. The sampling approach was intended to reduce selection bias and provide eligible participants with an opportunity for inclusion. Respondents were selected based on their involvement in curriculum implementation and their capacity to provide relevant information concerning implementation challenges and adaptive practices. The study did not report a statistical sample-size calculation or the total eligible population.

2.5 Research Instrument

A structured, researcher-developed questionnaire served as the primary data-gathering instrument. It consisted of items assessing challenges encountered during curriculum implementation and adaptive strategies employed by school heads and teachers. The challenge indicators covered instructional materials, teacher preparedness, preparation time, institutional support, instructional adjustment, facilities, class size, parental involvement, learner readiness, and policy changes. The adaptive strategy indicators examined localized instructional materials, formative assessment, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, collaborative planning, stakeholder partnerships, technology integration, and values education. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing, with reliability assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher secured the necessary authorization from the Schools Division Superintendent and coordinated with the participating school heads. Selected respondents were informed about the objectives and procedures of the investigation, and their consent was obtained before questionnaire administration. The validated questionnaires were distributed through printed or electronic formats, depending on accessibility and respondent convenience. Completed questionnaires were retrieved and examined for

completeness. The collected responses were subsequently organized, encoded, and prepared for statistical analysis according to the research objectives.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and ranking. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize respondent characteristics, while weighted means determined the extent of agreement regarding implementation challenges and adaptive strategies. Responses were interpreted using a five-point Likert scale, with mean intervals of 4.21–5.00 indicating Strongly Agree, 3.41–4.20 indicating Agree, and 2.61–3.40 indicating Neutral. Composite means summarized the assessments of school heads and teachers, while ranking identified the most prominent challenges and commonly endorsed adaptive practices. The analysis was limited to descriptive interpretation and did not involve inferential statistical testing.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Institutional permission was secured before data collection, and respondents were informed about the purpose and procedures of the investigation. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before questionnaire administration. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect respondents' identities and encourage independent responses. Information gathered was used exclusively for academic research purposes, and findings were reported objectively and in aggregate form to preserve research integrity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Challenges Encountered by School Heads in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

The findings revealed that school heads experienced various instructional, administrative, and logistical challenges in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, obtaining an overall composite mean of 3.85, interpreted as "Agree." The lack of curriculum-aligned instructional materials emerged as the most prominent challenge (M = 4.33), followed by insufficient training and orientation (M = 4.17), limited lesson preparation and assessment time (M = 4.00), and learners' low readiness (M = 4.00). Difficulty adjusting teaching strategies, inadequate facilities and resources, and frequent policy changes each obtained a weighted mean of 3.83. Meanwhile, inadequate institutional support (M = 3.67), limited parental and community involvement (M = 3.50), and large class sizes (M = 3.33) received comparatively lower ratings. These findings indicate that school heads perceived instructional resources, teacher preparedness, and learner readiness as major concerns affecting curriculum implementation. The results support Elardo (2025) and Angeles and Rabago (2025), who identified inadequate instructional materials, insufficient professional development, and institutional support limitations as challenges in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Consistent with Fullan's Theory of Educational Change (1993), the findings emphasize the importance of adequate resources, instructional leadership, and sustained professional support in facilitating educational reform.

3.2 Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Teachers similarly reported implementation challenges, with an overall composite mean of 3.78, interpreted as "Agree." Insufficient facilities and resources, limited parental and community involvement, and learners' low readiness obtained the highest weighted means of 4.00 each. Frequent policy changes followed (M = 3.92), while inadequate curriculum-aligned instructional materials received 3.83. Large class sizes (M = 3.75), limited preparation time (M = 3.67), and inadequate institutional support (M = 3.58) were also identified as concerns. Insufficient training and difficulty adjusting teaching strategies received the lowest weighted means of 3.50 each. These results suggest that teachers encountered difficulties associated with instructional resources, learner preparedness, and stakeholder participation. The findings correspond with Bazar (2025) and Wabingga and Tomakin (2025), who emphasized professional collaboration, resource sharing, and instructional adaptation as important mechanisms for addressing curriculum transition challenges. The results highlight the need to strengthen instructional facilities, parental involvement, learner support programs, and continuous professional development to improve classroom implementation.

3.3 Overall Challenges in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

The combined assessment of school heads and teachers yielded an overall composite mean of 3.80, interpreted as "Agree," indicating that both groups recognized substantial curriculum implementation challenges. The lack of curriculum-aligned instructional materials and learners' low readiness received the highest weighted means of 4.00 each, followed by insufficient facilities and resources (M = 3.94), frequent policy changes (M = 3.89), and limited parental and community support (M = 3.82). Other concerns included insufficient training and orientation (M = 3.72), large class sizes (M = 3.71), limited preparation time (M = 3.64), and inadequate institutional support (M = 3.61). These findings demonstrate that curriculum implementation difficulties involve interconnected instructional, institutional, and contextual factors. Consistent with Fullan (1993), successful educational reform requires coordinated leadership, adequate instructional resources, and sustained professional collaboration.

Addressing these challenges through improved resource allocation, learner readiness interventions, and institutional support may strengthen curriculum implementation, particularly in rural educational settings.

3.4 Adaptive Strategies and Best Practices Employed by School Heads

School heads positively assessed the adaptive strategies employed in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, obtaining an overall composite mean of 4.35, interpreted as "Strongly Agree." Regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, teacher collaboration in curriculum planning, strengthening partnerships with parents and community stakeholders, and integrating values education across subjects received the highest weighted means of 4.50 each. Project-based or activity-based learning strategies followed (M = 4.33), while developing localized instructional materials, utilizing formative assessment, employing digital learning platforms, and integrating educational technology each obtained 4.17. These findings indicate that school heads emphasized collaborative leadership, professional learning, and stakeholder engagement as important adaptive mechanisms. The results align with Jassim (2024), Yulianti (2023), and Bazar (2025), who highlighted educational leadership, professional collaboration, and institutional support in facilitating curriculum reforms. Strengthening school-based professional development, collaborative instructional planning, and stakeholder partnerships may further support effective implementation.

3.5 Adaptive Strategies and Best Practices Employed by Teachers

Teachers generally expressed positive assessments of adaptive strategies, as reflected in the overall composite mean of 4.05, interpreted as "Agree." Regular LAC sessions obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.25, followed by developing localized instructional materials, utilizing formative assessment, strengthening stakeholder partnerships, and integrating values education, each receiving 4.17. Teacher collaboration in curriculum planning obtained 4.08, while digital learning platforms and technology integration received 4.00 and 3.92, respectively. Project-based or activity-based learning strategies obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.75. These findings suggest that teachers particularly valued professional collaboration, contextualized instruction, and formative assessment in responding to curriculum requirements. The comparatively lower rating for project-based learning may reflect challenges involving instructional preparation, resource availability, and classroom implementation. The results are consistent with UNESCO (2021), Yulianti (2023), and Wabingga and Tomakin (2025), who emphasized sustained professional development and collaborative instructional adaptation during educational reform. Strengthening LAC sessions, peer mentoring, and practical training in learner-centered instructional approaches may improve teachers' capacity to implement the curriculum effectively.

3.6 Overall Assessment of Adaptive Strategies in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

The combined assessment of school heads and teachers produced an overall composite mean of 4.15, interpreted as "Agree," reflecting positive perceptions of adaptive strategies employed during curriculum implementation. Strengthening partnerships with parents and community stakeholders and integrating values education across subjects obtained the highest combined weighted means of 4.28 each. Developing localized instructional materials and utilizing formative assessment both received 4.17, while digital learning platforms and technology integration obtained 4.06 and 4.00, respectively. LAC sessions were positively assessed by school heads (M = 4.50) and teachers (M = 4.25), while teacher collaboration received weighted means of 4.50 and 4.08, respectively. These findings demonstrate the importance of collaborative leadership, professional learning, stakeholder engagement, and instructional adaptation in supporting curriculum implementation. The results reflect Fullan's Theory of Educational Change (1993) and Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2003), which emphasize institutional support, professional collaboration, and innovation adoption during educational transitions. Although respondents acknowledged substantial implementation challenges, their positive assessments of adaptive strategies suggest that collaborative and context-responsive practices can support curriculum delivery. Sustaining these practices while addressing resource limitations and learner readiness may contribute to more effective and sustainable implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that school heads and teachers encountered considerable challenges in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, with an overall composite mean of 3.80, interpreted as "Agree." The primary concerns included insufficient curriculum-aligned instructional materials, low learner readiness, inadequate facilities and resources, and frequent policy changes. Despite these difficulties, respondents positively assessed the adaptive strategies employed (M = 4.15), particularly Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, collaborative curriculum planning, stakeholder partnerships, contextualized instructional materials, formative assessment, and values integration. These findings indicate that effective curriculum implementation requires adequate institutional support, professional collaboration, and instructional adaptability to address existing challenges and strengthen educational delivery.

Based on the findings, the Department of Education and school administrators should prioritize the provision of curriculum-aligned instructional materials, adequate facilities, and essential learning resources. Continuous

professional development should be strengthened to enhance teachers' competencies in curriculum interpretation, contextualized instruction, formative assessment, project-based learning, and educational technology integration. School heads should institutionalize regular LAC sessions, collaborative lesson planning, peer mentoring, and instructional supervision. Furthermore, stronger partnerships with parents, local government units, and community stakeholders should be established to improve learner readiness and promote shared responsibility for educational improvement. These initiatives may contribute to more effective, inclusive, and sustainable curriculum implementation, supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).

The study was limited to 18 respondents, comprising six school heads and 12 teachers from public secondary schools in Palanas District, Masbate, restricting the generalizability of its findings. Its quantitative descriptive design relied on self-reported perceptions, which may have been influenced by respondents' individual experiences and subjective assessments. Additionally, the investigation focused on the initial implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum during School Year 2024–2025 and did not directly examine learners' academic performance or long-term educational outcomes. Future studies should consider larger and more geographically diverse samples, incorporate qualitative or mixed-methods approaches, and investigate longitudinal implementation outcomes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum reform effectiveness.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The author affirms that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study. The research involved 18 respondents, comprising six school heads and 12 teachers from six public secondary schools in Palanas District, Masbate, Philippines, with the necessary permission obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and participating school authorities. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and data were collected through a structured, expert-validated questionnaire, with confidentiality and anonymity maintained throughout the research process. The author acknowledges the participating school heads, teachers, and school administrators for their cooperation and support throughout the study.

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