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**EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
MATATAG CURRICULUM: BASIS FOR IN-SERVICE  
TRAINING PROGRAM**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was conducted to determine the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of newly hired teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum, serving as the basis for an in-service training program during the School Year 2025–2026. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological design, ten (10) purposively selected teachers were interviewed through semi-structured, face-to-face discussions. Thematic analysis revealed that teachers' experiences included developing confidence, enhancing self-motivation, and spending more time in the process of adapting to the curriculum. However, they also encountered challenges such as additional workload, lack of training, and limited learning resources. To address these, teachers sought guidance from colleagues, adopted new teaching strategies, and attended seminars and training. The findings underscore the importance of structured in-service training programs to provide sustained support and ensure effective curriculum delivery.

**Keywords:** *Teachers' Experiences, Implementation, MATATAG Curriculum, In-Service Training Program*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Basic Education System is undergoing a significant transformation with the implementation of the Department of Education’s (DepEd) MATATAG K-10 Curriculum. The reform is a direct response to persistent, structural challenges in past K-12 programs.

The poor performance on international assessments like PISA, and a mismatch between current learning outcomes and future workforce needs (Diquito, 2025). The name MATATAG itself encapsulates the curriculum’s ambitious four-pillar strategy. Make the curriculum relevant, take steps to accelerate delivery, take good care of learners, and give support for teachers (Villaver et al., 2024).

The successful integration of these new competencies, however, depends entirely on the preparedness and systemic support provided to the educators implementing them at the grassroots level. Research on the previous K-12 curriculum implementation has consistently highlighted challenges for teachers, including confusion over inconsistent policy delivery, a pervasive lack of materials resources, and sense of marginalization in the policy-making process (Bongco & David, 2020).

The MATATAG Curriculum is a Philippine basic education reform by the Department of Education (DepEd) launched to improve education quality and relevance. It features a decongested, competency-based curriculum focusing on foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, while integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as critical thinking, and digital literacy (Abrangan et al., 2022).

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The Enhanced Basic Education curriculum was introduced through Republic Act number 10533, which aims to strengthen the curriculum by increasing the number of basic education programs by adding Kindergarten and two years of senior high school, which provides technical-vocational courses (Barrot, 2021).

Recently, the Department of Education launched the "MATATAG" Curriculum, which emphasizes providing students with essential 21st-century skills while decongesting the learning competencies by focusing on fundamental skills like numeracy and literacy (DepEd Order no. 10, s. 2024).

Gouédard et al. (2020) stated that many countries are constantly reviewing their curriculum to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies required to meet global trends. However, these changes in the curriculum can bring many challenges for teachers.

Teachers, as front-line implementers of educational policies, play an important role in the success of any curriculum reform (Irembere, 2020). However, Magallanes et al., (2022) suggest that understanding how teachers perceive these changes is also important because their attitudes and insights directly influence how curriculum reforms translate into classroom practices and student outcomes.

Gaps in MATATAG curriculum often involve an overloaded, fragmented curriculum with insufficient time for deep learning, leading to a lack of mastery, especially in the Philippines where issues include teachers' shortages for specialized subjects and stakeholders support.

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Thus, this study was conducted to find out the experiences of newly hired teachers in the implementation of MATATAG Curriculum in the Schools District of Tigbauan during the School Year 2025-2026.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research design, study participants, data collection procedures, research instruments, and data analysis employed in the study.

The study aimed to explore the experiences of newly hired teachers in implementing the MATATAG curriculum, serving as a basis for In-Service Training during the 2025–2026 school year.

### Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using in-depth interviews. The descriptive method, as defined by Fraenkel and Wallen and cited by Betito (2024), was applied to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the situation under study.

The qualitative approach was suitable for gathering specific information about participants' values, opinions, behaviors, experiences, and social contexts. In-depth interviews, conducted individually, were used to collect detailed insights that go beyond surface-level responses. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews to capture participants' perspectives and experiences through their detailed and vivid responses.

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## Research Design

The design used in this study was qualitative approach under qualitative method. Mohajan (2020) explained that qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that emphasizes how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand their social reality. This approach utilizes methods such as interviews, diaries, journals, classroom observations and immersions, and open-ended questionnaires, as well as content analysis of visual and textual materials and oral histories, to collect, analyze, and interpret data. Qualitative research is exploratory in nature, aiming to explain *how* and *why* a particular social phenomenon or program functions within a specific context. It helps us gain a deeper understanding of the social world and the reasons behind its structures and behaviors (Polkinghorne, 2025).

Furthermore, according to Creswell as cited by Navarro (2023) phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants.

## Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were ten (10) selected newly hired teachers who participated in the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in the Schools District of Tigbauan during the 2025–2026 school year.

Participants must provide informed consent and are protected from harm throughout the research process.

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Considering such inclusion criteria among participants made them good subjects for this specific study. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the participants of the study (Akman, 2023).

## Sampling Design

This study employed a purposive sampling design. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics needed for the study. In other words, the units are chosen intentionally to meet the objectives of the research.

Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative and mixed-methods research. It is especially valuable for identifying information-rich cases or maximizing limited resources, although it carries a higher risk of biases, such as observer bias.

## Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in this study was a researcher-made interview guide, which was validated by a panel of experts. The researcher carefully considered all comments and suggestions provided during the validation process.

Zoom, Messenger, and other forms of accessible platforms, if face-to-face is not available, were used to conduct in-depth interviews. Voice and video recorders were used to capture all the proceedings during the in-depth interviews. Recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed.

In the analysis of the data, key terms or sentences related to the phenomenon were identified and clustered into related themes.

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## Validity of the Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made interview guide validated by the experts jurors using the Eight-Point Scale Criteria for content validation by Good and Scates (as cited by Navarro, 2023).

Content validity refers to the degree to which a measure accurately represents all aspects of a particular construct. To ensure the validity of the instrument, which was developed by the researcher, jury validation was employed.

## Data Gathering Procedures

After identifying the study participants, the researcher obtained their permission to participate voluntarily by having them sign a consent form. Once the participants' written consent was secured, the researcher conducted interviews with each participant.

The interview was done at a convenient time for each participant through face-to-face. A semi-structured interview was utilized. According to George (2023), a semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that uses a mix of predefined questions and the flexibility to explore new ideas during the interview. It involves an interview guide with open-ended questions focused on specific topics, but the interviewer can ask follow-up questions that was based on the interviewee's answers. This approach helps maintain consistency while allowing for in-depth insights.

## Data Analyses

The data collected in this study were analyzed using a thematic approach.

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This qualitative analysis method was employed to identify the themes related to teachers' experiences and their support needs in implementing the MATATAG curriculum, serving as a basis for the In-Service Training program in the Schools District of Tigbauan during the 2025–2026 school year.

According to Caufield (2023), the purpose of thematic analysis is to identify key themes or patterns within the data that are significant or interesting and to use these themes to address the research questions or provide insights about the topic. It involves summarizing, analyzing, interpreting, and making sense of the gathered data.

Braun and Clarke (2023) outlined six phases of thematic analysis: (1) Familiarization with the data, (2) Generating initial codes, (3) Searching for themes, (4) Reviewing themes, (5) Defining and naming themes, and (6) Writing the report.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study aimed to explore the experiences of newly hired teachers in implementing the MATATAG curriculum, serving as a basis for an in-service training program during the School Year 2025–2026.

The participants were ten (10) selected newly hired teachers involved with the MATATAG curriculum in the Schools District of Tigbauan. The study employed a descriptive research method using in-depth interviews. The interviewer maintained an appropriate distance and asked a series of questions on specific issues to capture the participants'

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perspectives within a social context. The goal was to obtain the participants' key views and insights on the topic.

The study followed a phenomenological approach under qualitative research. The research instrument was a researcher-made interview schedule designed to align with the objectives of the study. With participants' consent, voice and video recorders were used to document and gather data, supplemented by field notes taken during the interviews.

To ensure validity, the interview schedule was reviewed and refined by the adviser and a panel of jurors. Necessary permissions were secured from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, school heads, and the participants themselves to conduct the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at locations convenient for the participants.

After completing the interviews, the researcher consolidated all collected data and analyzed the information using a thematic approach.

Based on the results of the study, the experiences newly hired teachers in the implementation of MATATAG Curriculum were developing confidence, enhancing self-motivation, and spending more time in the process. The challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum were additional workload, lack of training, and limited learning resources. Their coping strategies in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum included seeking guidance from others, adopting new teaching strategies, and attending seminars and training.

The output of the study was in-service training program based on the results of the study.

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## CONCLUSION

The experiences of newly hired teachers with the MATATAG curriculum show that they grow in confidence, learn to motivate themselves, and realize that adapting takes time. These experiences highlight both the challenges and the personal growth that come with handling a new curriculum.

Newly hired teachers face challenges with the MATATAG curriculum because they carry extra tasks, do not receive enough training, and lack proper materials. These problems affect their confidence and effectiveness, showing the need for stronger support and resources from the school and the education system.

Teachers cope with the MATATAG curriculum by working together, being open to change, and continuing to learn. These actions show that they are not resisting the new curriculum but are instead finding ways to grow and improve with it.

As the primary implementers of the MATATAG curriculum, teachers must be included in the decision-making process related to curriculum design. A curriculum cannot function effectively without their involvement. Teachers form a critical foundation for a meaningful curriculum when they contribute as experts and actively participate in planning, implementing, evaluating, and revising it.

Despite this, teachers are often seen primarily as implementers rather than designers. Those who directly teach students play a particularly essential role in the successful development and improvement of the curriculum.

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