



TEACHING FILIPINO THEN AND NOW: A COMPARISON OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES BETWEEN THE K TO 12 AND MATATAG CURRICULA AS BASIS FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study explored teachers' experiences under the K to 12 Curriculum. Findings revealed key experiences such as curriculum congestion and content overload, emphasis on performance-based learning, development of higher-order thinking skills, increase on teacher workload, opportunities for creative and interactive teaching, and the integration of culture and literature. The study also identified challenges faced by teachers, including insufficient training and orientation, difficulty aligning lessons with new competencies, lack of instructional materials, adjustment to new teaching approaches, increase on preparation demands, and student learning adjustments. In the transition from K to 12 to the MATATAG Curriculum, similar challenges persisted. To manage these challenges, teachers employed collaborative planning and peer support, engaged in professional learning and continuous development, adapted teaching approaches, developed instructional materials, and maintained flexibility and a positive attitude toward change. Based on the results, the study recommends in-service program that centers on competency alignment, foundational literacy instruction, and collaborative preparation of instructional materials to ensure effective delivery of essential learning competencies.

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Keywords: *Filipino Teachers' Experiences, K to 12 Curriculum, MATATAG Curriculum, In-Service Training Program*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine educational landscape has experienced ongoing evolution as part of a strategic effort to elevate learning quality and meet international benchmarks. A landmark development in this trajectory was the enactment of Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which institutionalized the K to 12 Curriculum. By expanding the basic education cycle from ten to twelve years, this reform shifted the focus toward competency mastery, localized instruction, and the cultivation of essential 21st-century skills (Department of Education [DepEd], 2013).

Within these educational reforms, the subject of Filipino plays a central role in promoting national identity, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation among learners. Filipino 8, which focuses on language proficiency and appreciation of Philippine literature, serves as a vital platform for students to understand their linguistic and cultural heritage. The adoption of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum is recognized as a landmark reform within the Philippine educational system (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019).

The introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum marks another significant phase in Philippine education. This curriculum was designed to “make the curriculum relevant, responsive, and inclusive” by reducing learning competencies and prioritizing foundational and socio-emotional skills (DepEd, 2024). In Filipino 8, the MATATAG curriculum introduces

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simplified learning competencies, deeper integration of Filipino culture and identity, and a stronger emphasis on performance-based assessment. However, the shift also requires teachers to adapt to new content, assessment tools, and pedagogical approaches while navigating the transition from K to 12 to MATATAG.

Early feedback from educators reveals both opportunities and challenges—some appreciate the decongested curriculum and its cultural focus, while others express concern about the lack of sufficient training and updated learning materials (Del Rosario & Santos, 2024). The transition between curricula presents a unique context for examining the experiences of teachers who serve as frontliners of educational implementation. Teachers’ experiences reflect not only the effectiveness of curriculum design but also the readiness of schools and educators to respond to reforms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of the study, detailing the research design, participant selection, sampling techniques, and data collection protocols. It also describes the research instrument and the specific analytical methods employed to interpret the gathered data. The primary objective of this research is to investigate and contrast the personal teaching experiences of Grade 8 Filipino educators navigating the K to 12 and MATATAG Curricula within the Schools District of Oton during the 2025–2026 academic year.

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Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing in-depth interviews as the primary means of data collection.

The descriptive research framework is designed to systematically characterize a phenomenon within its natural context without the manipulation of variables. As noted by Elliott (2025), this method seeks to provide a precise depiction of existing conditions, institutional practices, or interpersonal dynamics within academic environments. By doing so, researchers can identify emerging trends and patterns that inform professional practice. This methodology is especially effective for documenting and analyzing authentic events, behaviors, and perceptions in a way that preserves the integrity of the original setting (Elliott, 2025).

During the data collection process, the researcher and the participant engaged in a structured yet comfortable dialogue, allowing for thoughtful reflection on a series of targeted inquiries. This conversational arrangement was intended to elicit the core perspectives and essential insights of the participants regarding specific social and educational issues. By prioritizing the participants' own narratives, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of their views within their unique social contexts.

Research Design

This study adopted a phenomenological research design, which serves as a philosophical framework for conducting qualitative inquiry. The primary objective of

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phenomenology is to explore how individuals perceive their world, highlighting how their personal, subjective interpretations may differ from mainstream perspectives. By conducting interviews to capture the lived impressions of participants, this design is widely utilized in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Phenomenology emphasizes the investigation of the structures of human consciousness from a first-person point of view. According to Biemel and Spiegelberg (2024), the fundamental goal is to examine and describe phenomena exactly as they are consciously experienced. This process requires the researcher to set aside unexamined preconceptions and theoretical causal explanations, focusing instead on the authentic essence of the participants' experiences.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were five (5) junior high school teachers handling Filipino 8 who had experienced teaching under both the K to 12 Basic Education Program and MATATAG Curriculum. They had been teaching Filipino for more than five years. The participants were selected because their firsthand experiences and reflections provided the most relevant insights into the similarities and differences between the two curriculum frameworks.

Sampling Design

The study employed a purposive sampling design to select its participants. As defined by Nikolopoulou (2023), this approach encompasses various non-probability sampling

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methods where specific units are chosen based on particular characteristics essential to the research. Essentially, the selection process is intentional, ensuring that the sample aligns strictly with the study's requirements.

Often referred to as judgmental sampling, this technique depends on the researcher's professional discernment to identify and recruit individuals, cases, or specific events. The goal is to select participants who are best positioned to provide high-quality, relevant information that fulfills the research objectives.

While this sampling method is a staple in qualitative and mixed-methods research—particularly for identifying information-rich cases or maximizing limited resources—it does carry inherent risks. Researchers must be mindful of potential biases, such as observer bias, which can influence the selection and subsequent findings.

Research Instrument

In the context of research methodology, an interview schedule serves as a structured guide consisting of pre-determined questions—whether structured, semi-structured, or open-ended—to ensure consistency during data collection. According to Socio.health (2024), it acts as a standardized instrument that guarantees the same themes and inquiries are addressed with every participant, thereby facilitating a systematic comparison and analysis of the data. Whether conducted in person, over the phone, or via digital platforms, the researcher follows this schedule to prompt participants and document their responses accurately.

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The specific interview schedule for this study consists of five primary questions designed to explore the professional journeys of Grade 8 Filipino teachers. These inquiries focus on their experiences under both the K to 12 and MATATAG curricula, the hurdles they faced during the transition between these frameworks, the strategies they employed to navigate these changes, and their recommendations for an In-Service Training Program aimed at enhancing Filipino instruction for Grade 8 students.

To ensure accurate data acquisition and thorough documentation, both audio and video recording devices were utilized. The use of these tools was strictly contingent upon the explicit consent and permission of the participating educators.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Before the researcher's interview schedule was finalized for use, it underwent a rigorous validation process. This involved a detailed review and modification phase by the research adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School, followed by an evaluation from a panel of jurors. These jurors were specifically selected for their professional expertise in the fields of research methodology, testing and assessment, and English language proficiency, ensuring each question was structurally sound and contextually appropriate. The researcher used the following criteria in validating the interview guide: clarity, relevance, adequacy, consistency, language appropriateness, organization, and objectivity. These criteria will be evaluated by experts using a content validation rating sheet to ensure that the instrument is appropriate

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for gathering data related to the experiences of Grade 8 Filipino teachers under the K to 12 Basic Education Program and MATATAG Curriculum.

In research, validity pertains to how appropriate, meaningful, accurate, and practical a researcher’s inferences are. When establishing content-related validity, it is vital that both the substance and the structure of the research tool align precisely with the operational definitions of the variables and the specific characteristics of the target population. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022), this alignment is indispensable for verifying that each item in a questionnaire or interview guide correctly measures the specific theoretical constructs it is intended to evaluate.

The refinement of the interview schedule will incorporate the specific critiques, modifications, and recommendations provided by the validation panel. These expert inputs will be systematically addressed and integrated using the standardized evaluation criteria of Good and Scates.

Data-Gathering Procedures

To ensure a smooth data collection process, the researcher first drafted formal request letters addressed to the principals of the participating schools to obtain official authorization. Once this approval was secured, the researcher engaged with the participants to obtain their informed consent, requiring them to sign a waiver or permission form prior to their involvement. Throughout this phase, the researcher maintained close coordination with both

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school administrators and the participants to foster a cooperative environment, thereby ensuring the efficient administration and retrieval of research materials.

The primary data collection involved in-depth interviews, during which audio and video recording equipment was employed to ensure an exhaustive and accurate transcript of the participants' responses. Following the completion of these interview sessions, the researcher systematically organized and consolidated all gathered information for further analysis.

Data Analyses

Data collected through the interview schedules was processed using thematic analysis, a qualitative methodology focused on identifying, interpreting, and documenting recurring patterns within narrative information. This approach allows the researcher to extract significant insights regarding the specific AI applications students utilize, their methods of implementation, and the perceived benefits or drawbacks of using artificial intelligence in language acquisition.

As noted by Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis offers a versatile yet academically rigorous framework for uncovering both explicit and implicit meanings within participant narratives, making it ideal for exploring the complex social and organizational dynamics inherent in educational research. Furthermore, Nowell et al. (2021) highlight that this method bolsters the transparency and credibility of qualitative studies through the application of a highly systematic coding and interpretation process.

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Following the transcription of the interview recordings, the data will undergo the standard six-phase thematic analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2023).

The initial stage involves familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts in both the local language and their English translations. This is followed by the generation of initial codes, where concise labels—such as "shared phone" or "fear of judgment"—are assigned to meaningful segments of the text. In the third phase, these codes are organized into potential overarching themes and sub-themes that represent broader patterns of the participants' experiences. The fourth stage focuses on reviewing and refining these themes against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately represent the intended meanings and the study's core objectives.

In the final stages of the analysis, the researcher will move toward defining and naming the themes, crafting clear and academically sound titles for the emergent concepts which was detailed in the study's fourth chapter. The process concludes with the production of the final report, where the themes are woven into a cohesive narrative structure. This interpretation will be supported by direct participant quotes and explicitly linked back to the study's theoretical framework to provide a comprehensive analysis of the findings.

The Thematic Analysis Process of the study entitled "Teaching Filipino Then and Now: A Comparison of Teachers' Experiences Between the K to 12 and MATATAG Curricula as Basis for In-Service Training Program," has data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step procedure developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria

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Clarke (2006). This method was used to identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning from the responses of Grade 8 Filipino teachers regarding their experiences, challenges, and management strategies in implementing both curricula.

The steps include Familiarization with the Data where the researcher transcribed all interview responses from the participants verbatim. After transcription, the responses were read several times to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences under the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the MATATAG Curriculum. Important statements, repeated ideas, and significant experiences were noted during this stage.

The second step was Generating Initial Codes where the researcher identified meaningful statements from the transcripts and assigned initial codes to key ideas expressed by the participants. For example, statements such as *"Preparing instructional materials required considerable additional effort"* were coded as increased preparation, while responses such as *"We discussed lesson plans and shared teaching strategies"* were coded as teacher collaboration.

Other step was Searching for Themes. Codes with similar meanings were grouped together to form broader categories or themes. For instance, codes such as extra lesson preparation, assessment revision, and resource creation were grouped under the theme Increased Preparation and Workload. Similarly, codes such as peer consultation, sharing strategies, and LAC participation formed the theme Collaborative Planning and Peer Support.

Fourth Step was Reviewing Themes. The researcher reviewed the emerging themes by comparing them with the original interview responses to ensure that each theme accurately

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reflected the participants' experiences. Themes were revised when necessary to avoid overlap and to maintain clarity in answering each Statement of the Problem. Another step was Defining and Naming Themes where after validation, each theme was clearly defined according to its meaning and relevance to the study. Themes under each Statement of the Problem were finalized, such as Curriculum Congestion and Content Overload, Streamlined and Focused Learning Competencies, Insufficient Training and Orientation, and Continuous Professional Development.

The Last sixth Step was Writing the Analysis and Interpretation. The final themes were presented in narrative form in Chapter 4. Selected participant responses were quoted and interpreted, then supported with related studies and literature to explain how teachers experienced the implementation of both curricula and how these findings may serve as basis for proposed in-service training.

This thematic analysis enabled the researcher to systematically interpret the common and differing experiences of Filipino teachers, identify major implementation challenges, and develop relevant recommendations for professional development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study determined the teaching experiences of five Grade 8 Filipino teachers of Oton National High School in implementing the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the MATATAG Curriculum, with the aim of identifying their classroom experiences, perceived

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differences, encountered challenges, and coping strategies as basis for proposed in-service training.

To facilitate accurate data collection and archival, the researcher utilized a voice recorder and handwritten notes, along with photographic documentation, all of which were subject to the explicit consent of the participants.

The study employed a qualitative methodology, specifically utilizing in-depth interviews as the primary tool for data gathering. The investigation adopted a narrative research design, with the resulting data processed through thematic analysis to identify core patterns and stories.

The participant pool consisted of five (5) Filipino Grade 8 educators currently teaching at Oton National High School.

Data collection was guided by a researcher-developed questionnaire that underwent a rigorous validation process by subject matter experts. Interviews were conducted during the teachers' designated break periods to avoid instructional disruption. Furthermore, formal request letters were drafted, approved, and signed by the participants, the research adviser, and the school principal prior to the commencement of the study.

Based on the analysis, the study yielded the following findings:

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Based on the in-depth interviews conducted with the participants, the experiences of Grade 8 teachers teaching Filipino under the K to 12 Basic Education Program were characterized by curriculum congestion and content overload, strong emphasis on performance-based learning, development of higher-order thinking skills, increase on teacher workload, opportunities for creative and interactive teaching, and integration of culture and literature in classroom instruction.

The findings also revealed that the experiences of Grade 8 teachers teaching Filipino under the MATATAG Curriculum involved streamlined and focused learning competencies, greater emphasis on foundational literacy skills, adjustment and adaptation to the new curriculum, need for instructional materials and resources, opportunities for deeper learning and mastery, and increase on collaboration among teachers.

Furthermore, the transition from K to 12 to MATATAG in teaching Filipino 8 presented several challenges for Grade 8 teachers, including insufficient training and orientation, difficulty in aligning lessons with new competencies, lack of instructional materials and resources, adjustment to revised teaching approaches, increased preparation demands and workload, and learners' difficulty in adapting to new learning expectations.

To address these challenges, participants reported using various management strategies such as collaborative planning and peer support, professional learning, adjustment to new teaching approaches, development of instructional materials, continuous professional development, flexibility, and maintaining a positive attitude toward change.

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Teaching Filipino under the K to 12 Basic Education Program required teachers to manage broad lesson coverage while maintaining meaningful learner participation in the classroom. This indicated that effective instruction relied on systematic lesson planning and the application of varied teaching strategies that encouraged critical thinking, creativity, and cultural appreciation despite the demands of a content-heavy curriculum.

The MATATAG Curriculum offered teachers a clearer instructional direction by focusing on essential competencies and foundational literacy skills. This suggested that a streamlined curriculum could enhance opportunities for deeper learning; however, successful implementation still depended on teachers' ability to adjust instructional approaches and work collaboratively in developing suitable learning resources.

The transition from K to 12 to MATATAG further revealed that curriculum reform may create adjustment challenges when teachers encounter limited training, unfamiliar competencies, and insufficient instructional resources. This emphasized the need for institutional support, timely orientation, and practical guidance during the initial stages of implementation.

Moreover, teachers' coping practices demonstrated that collaboration, continuous professional learning, and flexibility were vital in responding to curriculum change. These findings showed that teachers became more effective when they engaged in shared learning, exchanged professional experiences, and adapted instruction according to classroom realities.

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CONCLUSION

Based on the insights of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Schools are encouraged to enhance instructional support for Filipino teachers through regular capacity-building activities focused on lesson organization, time management, and the use of varied teaching strategies that enable teachers to address broad curriculum content while sustaining meaningful learner engagement. Greater attention should also be given to instructional approaches that strengthen critical thinking, creativity, and appreciation of culture and literature.

School administrators and curriculum leaders are likewise encouraged to sustain support for teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum by conducting workshops centered on competency alignment, foundational literacy instruction, and collaborative preparation of instructional materials to ensure effective delivery of essential learning competencies.

Educational institutions should also ensure the provision of timely orientation, adequate instructional resources, and practical technical assistance during periods of curriculum transition so that teachers can more effectively respond to new competencies, revised teaching approaches, and changing learner expectations.

Teachers should be encouraged to actively engage in professional learning opportunities such as Learning Action Cell sessions, peer mentoring, and collaborative lesson

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planning, since continuous professional learning, collegial dialogue, and instructional flexibility contribute significantly to successful curriculum adaptation.

Furthermore, in-service training programs should be strengthened to focus on curriculum alignment, mastery-based lesson planning, development of instructional materials, and effective teaching strategies responsive to both the K to 12 Basic Education Program and MATATAG Curriculum.

Future researchers are encouraged to undertake similar investigations involving a larger number of participants, different grade levels, or other learning areas to further examine teachers' experiences in curriculum implementation. Comparative studies across schools or divisions may also be conducted to identify additional challenges, strategies, and best practices that may contribute to the improvement of teacher support programs and curriculum delivery.

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