



**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS ON
MATATAG CURRICULUM ROLL-OUT: BASES FOR
ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the experiences of Kindergarten teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Schools District of Calinog II, Division of Iloilo, during the school year 2025–2026. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used, and thematic analysis was applied in the analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews of ten (10) teachers who participated in the study and who were selected purposively.

The results of the study revealed dual phenomena of the curriculum implementation. Positive experiences from the implementation of the curriculum included the assessment practices, which were more student-centered, and the strong support from the school leaders, which increased the teaching effectiveness and learner engagement. The implementation of the curriculum also included negative phenomena such as resistance to change, limited instructional materials that were limited, and the workload that was high. The teachers used many coping strategies like attending trainings and seminars, updating instructional materials, personal research, and collaboration with other teachers and other stakeholders.

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Based on the findings, an enhancement program was developed to strengthen the capacity of teachers through professional practices, resources, collaboration, and sustained supportive monitoring, as well as the psychosocial support to the teachers. The MATATAG Curriculum may be a means of improving the practice of teaching in early childhood education, but the lack of support may hinder its effectiveness with the help of the teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers on the ground were happy that there is a MATATAG curriculum that could help them reduce their teaching loads and focus more on the literacy and numeracy improvement of the learners.

The MATATAG Curriculum was designed to decongest the existing K to 12 curriculum by about 70 percent, emphasizing the development of foundational competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills while streamlining learning competencies to focus on essential learning for Kindergarten to Grade 10. It further highlights the integration of values formation, peace competencies (including conflict resolution and character development), and inclusive approaches to support diverse learners and promote learner well-being. The reform aligns with DepEd’s agenda to produce competent, job-ready, active, responsible citizens with skills relevant for the 21st century (Department of Education, 2025).

The MATATAG Curriculum, which covers Kindergarten to Grade 10, was officially introduced on August 10, 2023, to tackle the problems posed by the existing K to 12 Curriculum, including the congested content, uneven cognitive demands, etc. The new

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curriculum was implemented by the start of the 2024-2025 academic year. The framework aimed to lessen the overpopulation within the curriculum, strengthen the foundational skills, and improve the socio-emotional competencies of the learners, improving the learning outcomes of the Filipino learners and preparing them for future challenges (Philippine Information Agency, 2023).

The phases planned for the MATATAG Curriculum and the curriculum changes included the Kindergarten, Grades 1, 4, and 7, and the other grade clusters beyond SY 2027-2028, by which time Grade 10 will be offered, to include them. The Department of Education stated that in preparation for the MATATAG Curriculum, 267,900 teachers and personnel had been trained at various levels to support this large curriculum shift as of May 24, 2024 (Philippine News Agency, 2025).

The challenges regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum include insufficient training, vague instructional guidelines, and limited instructional resources. The school-level issues regarding preparation and support have been the major factors that have impacted the effective delivery of the curriculum (Atienza et al., 2025).

Pilot testing MATATAG brought about difficulties for teachers, specifically regarding understanding new competencies, and apprehensions around learning materials. These were issues reported directly by DepEd during the testing phase (Hernando-Malipot, 2023).

From the education stakeholders, especially the teachers' unions and lawmakers, critical feedback pointed out both a lack of depth in the curriculum and an inordinate amount of prep work and consultation. Reckless implementation placed a larger burden on teachers

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who were dealing with learning gaps due to the pandemic and a lack of resources (Barro, 2024).

For some teachers, the MATATAG curriculum is perfectly done, but the problem might be with the rollout. The rollout was implemented by Region, Division, and District, in which different venues with different trainers were involved. The rollout was done by involving different grade levels, including kindergarten. The needs of each grade level teacher are different from the needs of other teachers. But due to the large number of participants during the rollout, generic provision of materials, supplies, and even strategies was made, including the kindergarten teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter details the methodology, research design, study participants, data collection method, research instrument, and data analysis techniques. The study investigates the experiences of kindergarten teachers concerning the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum to inform the development of an enhancement program for the Calinog II Schools District for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Research Method

The research method used for this study was qualitative research involving in-depth interviews and descriptive research methods.

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Descriptive research in its purest form consists of simply documenting a phenomenon in its raw state and its natural surroundings without the influence of any external variables. According to Elliott (2025), it aims to provide an accurate portrayal of current conditions, practices, or relationships within educational settings, enabling researchers to understand trends, patterns, and implications for practice. This approach is particularly useful in educational studies that seek to document and analyze real-world events, behaviors, or perceptions without altering the environment in which they occur (Elliott, 2025).

Research Design

The study used a phenomenological design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach grounded in philosophy. In phenomenology, the primary concern is understanding how a person constructs meaning from a situation, focusing on their particular interpretation, which may differ from the socially accepted explanations. In phenomenological studies, researchers conduct interviews to capture the perceptions of the study participants. Phenomenology is commonly used in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Phenomenology focuses on the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person perspective. The central aim of phenomenology is to investigate and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced, without resorting to theories about their causal explanations or being influenced by unexamined preconceptions (Biemel and Spiegelberg, 2024).

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Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 10 purposely selected Kindergarten teachers of the District of Calinog II, Division of Iloilo.

These participants were regular permanent kindergarten teachers with at least one (1) year of teaching experience in a kindergarten program. These kindergarten teachers must have attended the rollout of the MATATAG curriculum for kindergarten. They must be willing to participate in an interview and share their experiences.

Sampling Design

A purposive sampling design was used in the study. Purposive sampling, according to Nikolopoulou (2023), refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. In purposive sampling, units are chosen "on purpose." This technique is also known as judgmental sampling. Under this sampling technique, the researcher's discretion is utilized in discerning and choosing the persons, instances, or events that can provide the optimal data to meet the aims of the research.

Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule.

An interview schedule in research methodology was a written list of pre-planned questions (either structured, semi-structured, or open-ended) prepared to guide an interviewer in collecting information consistently from participants. The interviews provided

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guided and standardized data collection to aid systematic comparison and analysis by confirming that all interviews addressed the same issues and questions. The interviewer followed the schedule during face-to-face, telephone, or electronic interviews, asking each participant the predetermined items and recording their responses (Socio.health, 2024).

The interview schedule had only one (1) major question focusing on the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers on the rollout of the MATATAG curriculum. Probing and follow-up questions were done depending on the responses of the participants to the major question.

A voice and video recorder was used for data gathering and documentation with the permission of the participants.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Before the assessment of the interview schedule's validity conducted by the researcher, the researcher's advisor, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the panelists who were invited based on their specialization in the domain of research, evaluation, and testing, and English, were asked to assess the validity of the interview questions and suggest modifications.

Validity entails the extent to which the findings, interpretations, and conclusions of a study are accurate, meaningful, and appropriate in addressing and accurately portraying the phenomenon under study. It ensures that the research instrument reliably measures the variable as intended and that the results reflect the reality that exists. As for content validity, when determining the validity of an instrument, it is important that the questions and the organization of the instrument are aligned with the variable and the objectives of the study.

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This frequently entails the review of a panel of experts to ascertain that the items are relevant and clear, and that they illustrate the concepts that are intended to be measured.

By ensuring that the content and structure of the instrument are consistent with the study's framework, researchers enhance the accuracy and usefulness of the data collected in relation to the research objective (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Comments, corrections, and suggestions of the panel of validators regarding the interview schedule were considered using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (1972) as cited by Soqueña (2021).

Data Gathering Procedures

Permits from the adviser, Dean of the Graduate School, Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, Office of the District Supervisors, School Heads, and individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher personally went to the schools/community/place convenient for the participants to conduct the interview.

The researcher encouraged the participants to sign a waiver or permission relative to the conduct of the study.

Using an in-depth interview, a voice and video recorder was provided to completely capture the interviewee's words. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after a series of interviews.

Data Analysis

The data was collected through the interview schedule that was analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method designed to identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns or

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themes within narrative data. This method allows the researcher to gain insights into the experiences of the participants, the lived experiences of the kindergarten teachers regarding the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum.

Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify meanings, both implicit and explicit, in participants' stories. It is especially useful for educational research that attempts to comprehend intricate social systems. Nowell et al. (2021) argue that thematic analysis increases transparency and trust in qualitative research because it requires researchers to code and interpret data in a way that is systematic.

The researcher employed Braun and Clarke's (2023) thematic analysis to interpret the data obtained from the interviews. It is a powerful tool for describing and interpreting patterns (themes) in qualitative data.

The analysis followed the standard six-phase process:

1. Familiarization with Data: Transcripts are read multiple times (both the local language and the translated version).

2. Generating Initial Codes: This involves designating brief phrases or titles to specific data segments (for example, "shared phone," "fear of being judged," "bad signal").

3. Searching for Themes: This is the process of clustering the initial codes into various higher-order themes and sub-themes that encapsulate the dominant patterns (for example, Codes such as "no insult" and "private correction" will be categorized under one theme).

4. Reviewing Themes: Refining and checking the themes against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' meanings and the study's focus.

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5. Defining and Naming Themes: Developing clear, concise, and academically sound names for the final emergent themes (will be presented in Chapter 4).
6. Producing the Report: Weaving the themes, supported by direct quotes, into the narrative structure of the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data (Chapter 4), and linking them to the theoretical framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the insights drawn from the findings, and the recommendations arrived at by the researcher.

Summary

This study was conducted to determine the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers on the rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum as a basis for an enhancement program in the Schools District of Calinog II during the school year 2025-2026.

This study utilized the qualitative method using in-depth interviews.

The participants of the study were 10 purposely selected Kindergarten teachers of the District of Calinog II, Division of Iloilo. A purposive sampling design was used in this study.

The research instrument utilized in this study was a researcher-made interview schedule.

A Voice and video recorder was used for data gathering and documentation, depending upon the permission of the participants.

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A panel of experts validated the interview guide. All comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool were considered.

All permits, especially from the individual respondents obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study.

Permits from the adviser, Dean of the Graduate School, Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, School Head, and individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher personally went to the schools/community/place convenient for the participants to conduct the interview.

The researcher consolidated all the collected data after a series of interviews. A thematic approach was used to analyze and interpret the data.

This study focused on the phenomenology of kindergarten teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, and the modifications and difficulties encountered during the rollout.

Based on the analysis of the interview responses, the following findings were obtained:

(1) Positive Experiences (2) Negative Experiences (3) Coping Strategies

For the Positive Experiences, there was a more focused curriculum, more student-centered assessment, and Supportive School Leaders.

For the Negative Experiences, there were Resistance to Change and Lack of Resources.

For the Coping Strategies, there were trainings and seminars attended, learning the new curriculum, updating materials, conducting personal research, conducting evaluations, and collaborating with Other stakeholders.

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Insights

With the new MATATAG Curriculum, both teachers and students can have more active, richer, and more meaningful interactions with learning. Teachers feel more professionally developed and more adaptable as content and processes are streamlined, and they adopt more student-centered ways. Students experience greater independence and a more confident self-expression. With greater hands-on assessment and more practical and specific competencies, teachers can more effectively close the learning gaps, and the learners can get a better understanding. Also, accessible and understanding school leaders seem to ease the transition and collaboration, and encourage teachers to confidently use new practices in their classrooms.

It demonstrates the dual complexity of professional growth and professional stress. More closely with the stress, transitions include anxiety, emotional drain, and instructional gaps. More positively, these gaps provided reflective and adaptive opportunities for teachers to witness the gradual, and sometimes, autonomous and confident growth in their students. This indicates that change, in periods of challenges, fosters more resilience and innovativeness in instructional methods, when teachers have the flexibility, and most importantly, the time to do so. Also, the stress and support demands illustrate the challenges and growth that come with a strong focus on both professional and student growth.

Adaptation to the MATATAG Curriculum shows that to manage change successfully, one must possess flexibility, creativity, and proactive problem-solving. Educators who seek professional development, revise their teaching resources, engage in self-reflection, and work

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with others to manage ambiguity and the potential loss of learning remain productive. In addition to compliance with regulatory change, these approaches foster resilience and build a confidence and learning community that is both engaging and supportive to educators and students alike. Adaptation is about more than learning new content. It is about developing a positive, change-oriented mindset.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings and understandings obtained from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

As an improvement program, this study proposes the following: Strengthening Kindergarten Teacher Capacity for Effective MATATAG Curriculum Implementation.

With regards to the student-centered assessment approach, teachers must additionally receive extensive professional training and development on the components of observation, portfolio assessment, and instructional differentiation. Schools must create and provide a supportive infrastructure that includes accessible leaders to mediate/prioritize teacher issues, promote inter-staff collaboration, and facilitate.

For the purpose of narrowing the gap for teachers, improving the quality of instruction, and increasing student learning outcomes, the following recommendations are provided: strengthen teacher readiness and improve the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. Empirical studies have found positive outcomes in teaching quality and student learning outcomes based on the following recommendations: comprehensive professional development and clear expectations, instructional resources/directive materials and classroom

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support, professional and emotional support, incremental curriculum changes, and teacher self-evaluation.

Strengthening Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with interactive training, providing prepared teaching and learning materials to minimize the teaching burden (workload) of teachers, and motivating teachers to practice reflection are the ultimate ways to improve the understanding of the curriculum. It is also very important that the understanding of the curriculum and its implementation framework is evaluated periodically, and that teachers closely collaborate with their fellow teachers, school administrators, and parents. Support for teachers to manage their workloads, provide them with flexibility and motivation, and encourage innovation is very important. This is how quality learning can be guaranteed for Kindergarten learners and the effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Professional development, structured teaching resources, and a supportive environment for teachers to practice reflection and to evaluate, collaborate, and support flexibility will be contributing factors that will sustain the effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and will promote a high learning standard for Kindergarten learners.

What is proposed for future studies is the assessment of the effects of the MATATAG Curriculum on learners after a given period of time. Additionally, future studies should examine how teacher aid, resources, and collaboration impact the effectiveness, engagement, and practices of early childhood education.

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