

ILLUMINATING TEACHER LIVED EXPERIENCES IN THE NEW REVISED CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT. This study explored the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in the Lapu-Lapu City Division during the early implementation of the New Revised Curriculum for the 2024-2025 school year. The curriculum aimed to streamline content, strengthen foundational competencies, and foster learner-centered instruction across grade levels. Given the pace of its roll-out, the study sought to understand how teachers adjusted their practices, responded to systemic challenges, and supported one another in real time. As part of nationwide implementation, these insights provide timely evidence to inform broader policy refinement and implementation strategies. Using a qualitative descriptive phenomenology design, the research gathered data through in-depth interviews with twelve Kindergarten, Grade One, and Grade Four teachers from Marigondon, Sudtunggan, and Agus Elementary Schools. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis guided the coding and interpretation of data, allowing themes to emerge from the participants' shared lived experiences. Five major themes were identified: (1) *Navigating the Curriculum Shift through Resourcefulness, Creativeness, and Resilience* – teachers improvised materials and remained steadfast despite uncertainty; (2) *Professional Growth and Enthusiasm* – teachers exhibited willingness to learn but found training inadequate, emphasizing the need for ongoing, contextual development; (3) *Learner Engagement Champion with Focused Content Delivery* – streamlined competencies enhanced participation, inclusivity, and comprehension; (4) *Growth Collaborator* – teachers built informal support systems to extend professional and emotional assistance; and (5) *Teaching-Learning Methodologist Amidst Systemic Change* – educators reevaluated their teaching philosophies. The findings informed a policy brief recommending practical, school-based interventions, sustained teacher support, and collaborative environments to ensure the success of curriculum reform.

Keywords: *New Revised Curriculum, lived experiences, curriculum reform, policy brief, descriptive phenomenology, professional development, Philippine Education.*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine education system had reached a crossroads, facing a decisive moment that shaped the future of its students. Across the country, educators had been preparing for the transition from the K-12 curriculum to the New Revised Curriculum—a new initiative introduced by the Department of Education (DepEd) to enhance learning outcomes and equip students with essential life skills. This change came in response to the growing need for quality education that aligned with global standards—an education that nurtured critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and personal growth beyond rote memorization (DepEd, 2022). However, this shift presented both opportunities and challenges, not only for students but also for the teachers tasked with bringing these changes to life in their classrooms. As the curriculum was rolled out, a deeper question emerged: How did teachers illuminate their untold stories—how they endured, adapted, and persevered amid the rapid transformation brought by the new curriculum?

The transformation of the Philippine education landscape is part of a larger global phenomenon. In recent years, education systems across the world have undergone reform efforts aimed at aligning instructional strategies with 21st-century skills. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2015). The New Revised Curriculum is the Philippine response to this call—specifically targeting foundational learning to combat what the World Bank now terms as "learning poverty." As of 2022, the World Bank estimated that 9 out of 10 Filipino children aged 10 could not read and understand a simple story (World Bank, 2022). This statistic not only triggered concern among stakeholders but also compelled DepEd to take immediate curricular action.

At the national level, the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that Filipino learners ranked last among 79 countries in reading literacy and second to the last in mathematics and science (PNU, 2020). These alarming results painted a clear picture of systemic weaknesses in the curriculum and classroom instruction. In response, DepEd issued Order No. 013, s. 2023, and more recently, DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024, mandating the implementation of the New Revised Curriculum with a sharper focus on foundational literacy, numeracy, and

essential learning competencies. This shift was not merely a technical adjustment but a fundamental transformation in how schools approached teaching and learning—demanding not just compliance, but creativity, commitment, and courage from teachers.

Zooming in on the regional context, Central Visayas has mirrored these national trends. In the most recent regional learning assessments, learners in key stages exhibited below-mastery performance in reading comprehension and critical thinking tasks (DepEd RO7, 2023). Lapu-Lapu City Division, the specific setting of this study, has not been exempt from these challenges. With diverse school profiles—from highly urbanized settings to underserved island schools—the division represents a microcosm of the broader curriculum implementation realities. It is within this complex and dynamic environment that teachers were expected to bring the New Revised Curriculum to life.

Despite the promise of reform, early implementation feedback from the field suggests that many teachers were ill-equipped for the transition. Training rollouts were often too condensed or heavily theoretical, leaving teachers unsure of how to apply the new framework in their classrooms (Magsino, 2023). Resource gaps persisted, particularly in marginalized schools where printed guides, manipulatives, and digital support remained limited. Teachers reported juggling administrative tasks, co-curricular duties, and compliance requirements, all while trying to internalize and execute a curriculum they barely had time to study. Some expressed apprehension and fatigue, while others demonstrated innovation and resilience. These tensions between policy expectations and classroom realities form the crux of this study.

Against this backdrop, there is a clear research gap. While policy papers and technical reports outline the structure and goals of the New Revised Curriculum, there is limited scholarly literature that documents how teachers experience this change on the ground—especially during its inaugural implementation year. Existing studies tend to focus on learning outcomes or instructional design, but few elevate the voices of teachers as frontline implementers. Their lived experiences remain underrepresented, yet these narratives carry powerful insights that could reshape how support systems are structured, how professional development is delivered, and how curriculum changes are monitored.

This study, therefore, seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of public-school teachers in Lapu-Lapu City Division as they implement the New Revised Curriculum during School Year 2024–2025. It investigates how teachers interpret and enact the curriculum under varying conditions of preparedness, access, and support. Through a qualitative phenomenological lens, the research delves into the challenges teachers face, the strategies they develop, and the support structures that help—or hinder—them in their work. By capturing these stories, the study aims to contribute to evidence-based recommendations for policy, particularly in refining training modalities, strengthening school-level instructional leadership, and building more responsive curriculum support mechanisms. In doing so, it bridges the gap between policy intention and practical execution—placing teachers' voices at the heart of education reform (Fullan, 2007; Priestley & Biesta, 2013). These insights, while grounded in personal experience, carry meaningful implications for the broader education system.

The significance of this research reaches beyond the individual narratives of teachers. Their lived experiences are not only personal but also deeply systemic, reflecting the broader conditions that shape education delivery in the country. For school leaders and DepEd officials, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how curriculum reforms are received, interpreted, and enacted at the ground level. These insights are critical in informing improvements in teacher preparation, access to localized materials, and leadership responsiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Policymakers may also benefit from the findings as they highlight the dissonance between national reform intentions and on-the-ground realities (Avalos, 2011). By identifying these gaps, the study helps in crafting more coherent, contextually grounded, and teacher-informed curriculum policies.

Learners stand to benefit most from this research. When teachers are adequately prepared, meaningfully supported, and professionally empowered, students experience richer, more engaging, and effective instruction. The findings affirm that the quality of learning outcomes is inextricably linked to the realities teachers face (Borko, 2004; Magsino, 2023). As such, strengthening support for teachers directly contributes to improving the educational experiences of learners—particularly those in under-resourced or marginalized contexts (World Bank, 2022).

This study also holds significance for parents, local stakeholders, and the broader community, as it sheds light on how teacher preparedness and systemic support directly influence the quality of education learners receive. By revealing the systemic enablers and constraints that influence classroom practices, the research supports a more informed, participatory, and accountable education ecosystem (Manasan, 2015). Understanding what teachers need and how they respond to reform allows families and community members to play more active roles in advocating for better conditions in schools.

Finally, this study will culminate in a policy brief synthesizing key findings and recommendations, serving as a practical and accessible resource for decision-makers. This knowledge translation effort underscores the study's commitment not only to academic contribution but also to influencing real-world educational practice. In documenting

and analyzing the lived stories of teachers, this research reinforces the necessity of grounding reform in field-based insights—ensuring that future policy directions are shaped not only from the top, but also by those who live and lead them every day.

Philosophical Stance

This study was guided by the philosophical tradition of descriptive phenomenology, grounded in the work of Edmund Husserl (1970), which valued the exploration of lived experience as it unfolded—prior to interpretation, categorization, or theorizing. In the context of this research, the aim was to illuminate how public-school teachers experienced the implementation of the New Revised Curriculum in Lapu-Lapu City during the 2024–2025 school year. This required listening intently to the voices of teachers as they navigated, responded to, and made sense of the curriculum shift, particularly under varying degrees of preparedness and support.

At the core of this inquiry was the belief that reality was not singular or fixed but rather constructed through individual consciousness and experience. Each teacher's account represented a unique version of reality, influenced by institutional policies, classroom conditions, personal philosophies, and community culture. These multiple realities were acknowledged and respected throughout the research process, aligning with the ontological assumption that truth in qualitative research is subjective and shaped by context (Lincoln et al., 2011). Rather than seeking a single explanation, the study embraced this plurality and aimed to bring forward the richness of diverse educational experiences.

In line with the epistemological assumptions of phenomenological research, knowledge in this study was seen as co-constructed—emerging through reflective dialogue between the participants and the researcher. The researcher, a teacher from the same division, engaged in bracketing to suspend personal biases and focus instead on the meaning expressed by each participant (Finlay, 2009). Through this lens, the study recognized that authentic understanding came not from observing from a distance, but from entering into the world of those who lived the experience and allowing insights to emerge naturally from their narratives.

The study was also shaped by axiological awareness, acknowledging that all research carried values. The researcher's identity as a fellow teacher was both an asset and a responsibility. With empathy and reflexivity, the researcher remained conscious of how shared experiences could enrich the connection with participants while also committing to ethical rigor and neutrality. The voices of teachers were treated not just as data but as lived truths that carried weight in policy conversations and curriculum planning.

Methodologically, the research followed an inductive path consistent with qualitative tradition. Rather than testing existing theory, the study used semi-structured interviews and Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to allow themes to emerge from the narratives themselves. This bottom-up process aligned with the belief that theory was not a starting point in phenomenology, but an outcome—a conceptualization grounded in the real-world struggles and insights of practitioners (Vagle, 2014). Whether the resulting themes affirmed, challenged, or extended existing frameworks, the study prioritized teacher experience as the foundation of curriculum understanding.

Furthermore, the rhetorical style of this research was intentionally descriptive and narrative. The presentation of findings included direct quotations to preserve the authenticity of participants' expressions and highlight emotional truths that often went unrecorded in formal educational discourse. Rather than reducing voices to codes, the study aimed to tell the story of curriculum implementation from the ground—where policy met practice, and reform was felt most deeply. In doing so, it hoped not only to inform future initiatives but to honor the profession and the people who lived through its constant evolution.

Grounded in descriptive phenomenology, the study centered on the lived realities of teachers, allowing meaning to emerge through their reflections on implementing the New Revised Curriculum. By engaging deeply with their narratives—shaped by personal, institutional, and cultural contexts—the research aimed to better understand how educational reform was experienced at the classroom level. These insights laid the groundwork for addressing the central questions that guided the research inquiry.

METHODOLOGY

The research procedure was described in this chapter. It contained details on the study's research design and methodology. This chapter also discussed the steps taken in procuring the data needed, such as methods, environment, participants' selection, instrument, data collection, and analysis. The ethics of the research were also addressed.

Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach, specifically descriptive phenomenology, to explore the lived experiences of public-school teachers during the initial implementation of the New Revised Curriculum. The deliberate selection of this design was grounded in the need to gain a deep, unfiltered understanding of how teachers interpreted, responded to, and adapted to systemic curricular changes. Rather than analyzing events from an external perspective, this approach allowed the researcher to focus on the subjective, day-to-day experiences of teachers as they navigated a new educational reality.

Descriptive phenomenology, grounded in the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl, seeks to understand human experiences as they are lived, without imposing theoretical assumptions (Husserl, 1970). It involves the process of “bracketing” or setting aside researcher preconceptions to focus on the participants’ perspectives (Giorgi, 2009). This was particularly relevant given the complexities of the New Revised Curriculum, which introduced streamlined content, unfamiliar pedagogical strategies, and new performance expectations. Teachers were not only adjusting to policy shifts—they were rethinking their methods, remaking materials, and re-centering their classrooms in real time.

Though the adoption of this design, the study was able to illuminate both the visible and invisible aspects of curriculum implementation. Descriptive phenomenology has been recognized as a valuable method for surfacing essential structures of lived experiences and generating insights that are often overlooked in technical or survey-based evaluations (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). In this context, it allowed the researcher to capture how teachers managed instructional gaps, coped with emotional challenges, and crafted adaptive strategies during a critical period of reform.

Moreover, this design aligned with the ethical commitment of qualitative research to center the voices of participants who experience the impact of reform firsthand. Teachers are often tasked with implementing top-down initiatives without sufficient input or support. As emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative inquiry must honor the perspectives of participants in their natural settings. Thus, the choice of descriptive phenomenology was not only methodologically sound—it was also a way to ensure that teachers’ voices shaped understanding of the New Revised Curriculum from the ground up.

Environment

This study was conducted in Lapu-Lapu City, a dynamic urban locality situated on Mactan Island in Cebu, Philippines. Known for its blend of historical heritage and fast-growing urban development, the city is home to diverse communities ranging from coastal barangays to densely populated residential zones. Within this city, the Department of Education’s Lapu-Lapu City Division oversees a wide network of public schools that cater to learners from various socioeconomic backgrounds. The educational environment here is marked by classrooms that often operate with limited resources, yet are filled with committed teachers striving to meet learners’ needs.

The research took place in three public elementary schools: Agus Elementary School (District 4), Marigondon Elementary School (District 5), and Sudtunggan Elementary School (District 6). These schools were purposively selected because they represent a cross-section of public-school contexts within the city—spanning both coastal and residential zones, with a mix of new and experienced teaching staff. The study focused on Kindergarten, Grade one, and Grade four classes, which were among the first to implement the New Revised Curriculum during the school year 2024–2025. These grade levels were chosen to capture the lived experiences of teachers handling different developmental stages of learners under the new system. Their inclusion offers a balanced perspective on how foundational education is being shaped by the curriculum shift across early and middle childhood education levels.

Informants

The study involved twelve (12) elementary teachers from three public schools in Lapu-Lapu City: Marigondon Elementary School (District 5), Sudtunggan Elementary School (District 6), and Agus Elementary School (District 4). Participants were purposefully selected to represent a mix of grade levels—Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4—as well as varying lengths of teaching experience. Both newly hired and tenured teachers were included to capture diverse perspectives and lived experiences in implementing the New Revised Curriculum across different school contexts.

Inclusion criteria required that participants be currently teaching either Kindergarten, Grade 1, or Grade 4 during the 2024–2025 school year and have direct experience implementing the New Revised Curriculum. Participants also had to be full-time public-school teachers assigned to one of the identified schools under the Lapu-Lapu City Division. Teachers on leave or assigned to purely administrative roles were excluded from the study, as their input would not reflect firsthand classroom implementation. By setting these criteria, the study ensured the credibility of data by focusing solely on those actively engaged in curriculum delivery and adaptation during the early phase of implementation.

Table 1
Participants' Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participant s	Age	Gender	Grade Level	School	Years of Teaching	Status
Liza	50	F	Grade 1	Marigondon Elementary School	24	Tenured
Belle	46	F	Grade 1	Sudtunggan Elementary School	14	Tenured
Karen	30	F	Grade 1	Sudtunggan Elementary School	6	New
Richelle	42	F	Grade 1	Sudtunggan Elementary School	7	New
Ben	27	M	Grade 4	Marigondon Elementary School	3	New
Jona	45	F	Grade 4	Marigondon Elementary School	20	Tenured
Latina	57	F	Grade 4	Agus Elementary School	30	Tenured
Jade	43	F	Grade 4	Agus Elementary School	19	Tenured
Kyla	32	F	Kinder	Marigondon Elementary School	7	New
Kaye	26	F	Kinder	Marigondon Elementary School	6	New
Joy	44	F	Kinder	Agus Elementary School	10	Tenured
Marie	41	F	Kinder	Agus Elementary School	12	Tenured

Note. $n=12$

In this study, the researcher employed purposive random sampling and snowball sampling to gather insights from teachers actively involved with the New Revised Curriculum. Purposive random sampling allowed for the selection of participants based on their direct engagement with the curriculum across various grade levels and subjects, ensuring that their experiences were relevant (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, snowball sampling enabled existing participants to recommend other teachers who fit the inclusion criteria, helping to expand the network of educators (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Aiming for a sample size of twelve, the study facilitated in-depth exploration of individual experiences while keeping the data manageable for qualitative analysis (van Manen, 2016). Ultimately, these techniques helped capture diverse perspectives and provided rich descriptions of teachers lived experiences amidst the implementation of the New Revised Curriculum.

Instrument

The researcher served as the main instrument for data collection in this descriptive phenomenological study, consistent with the principles of qualitative research and phenomenological inquiry. The researcher was responsible for designing the interview questions, conducting in-depth interviews, actively listening, and interpreting the meanings in participants' responses. (Finlay, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher who collected and analyzed data took an active role with participants through attentive listening to explore real-time emerging insights which ensured teachers' voices received authentic understanding.

Semi-structured interviews served as the data collection method because they combined structured questions with opportunities for participants to share their lived experiences freely. The research design allowed participants to share extensive personal accounts while maintaining complete freedom to express their thoughts (Adams, 2015; Brinkmann, 2020). The researcher-created interview guide consisted of ten open-ended questions which explored teachers' readiness and their received support and their professional development activities and their experiences with the New Revised Curriculum implementation.

Three teachers from Suba-Basbas Elementary School participated in the pilot-tested guide before formal data collection to validate the questions for Kindergarten and Grade one and Grade four levels. The testing process confirmed that questions were both understandable and relevant to the research goals. The tool received improvements through teacher feedback which enhanced both its flow and relevance and ensure alignment with the study's objectives according to Castillo-Montoya (2016).

Data Gathering Procedures

To ensure a rigorous, ethical, and methodologically sound data collection process, the researcher adopted a phased approach that unfolded in three distinct but interconnected stages: the Pre-Gathering Phase, the Gathering Phase, and the Post-Gathering Phase. This structure provided a systematic roadmap for implementing qualitative procedures, while also emphasizing the ethical obligations to participants and institutions involved. Each phase was purposely designed to uphold the credibility, trustworthiness, and integrity of the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Pre-Data Gathering Phase. The first phase focused on fulfilling administrative, ethical, and preparatory requirements essential to initiating fieldwork. As part of institutional protocol, the researcher first secured official approval from the Dean of the University of the Visayas Graduate School, Dr. Aileen C. Costas, EdD. This approval served as an academic validation of the study's research framework, objectives, and feasibility. Upon receiving this endorsement, the researcher formally submitted a request to Dr. Marilyn S. Andales, EdD, CESO V, the Schools Division Superintendent of the Department of Education – Lapu-Lapu City Division. The purpose of this request was to seek formal authorization to conduct the study in three selected public elementary schools within the division.

Following the superintendent's approval, the researcher issued individualized transmittal letters addressed to the school heads of the identified institutions: Dr. Marichu M. Ligan (Marigondon Elementary School), Mr. Perceous G. Vano (Sudtunggan Elementary School), and Ms. Veronica E. Malulan (Agus Elementary School). These letters provided a comprehensive overview of the study's purpose, theoretical grounding, and potential impact on curriculum implementation, specifically focusing on teacher experiences under the New Revised Curriculum. The letters also articulated the researcher's commitment to voluntary participation, confidentiality, and professional integrity. Through these correspondences, the researcher formally requested the participation of teachers handling Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 classes—grade levels directly involved in the initial implementation of the curriculum reform.

To ensure the research aligned with ethical research standards, the study underwent a thorough review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of the Visayas. The submitted proposal included a detailed presentation of the study's background, objectives, methodology, risk assessments, participant safeguards, and data management protocols. In compliance with national and international guidelines for research involving human subjects, the IRB carefully reviewed and endorsed the proposal. Participants were also provided with the IRB's contact information via phone at 253-7401 local 116 or through email at uvirb2017@gmail.com, allowing them to raise any ethical concerns, seek clarifications, or inquire about their rights—further affirming the ethical transparency of the study (World Health Organization, 2022; Resnik, 2020).

As a final step in this preparatory phase, the researcher conducted a pilot testing activity at Suba-Basbas Elementary School. This involved three volunteer teacher participants—one each from Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4—who were not part of the main study sample. The purpose of this pilot was to test the clarity, flow, and relevance of the semi-structured interview guide. Feedback from the pilot participants was invaluable, leading to minor refinements in question phrasing and sequencing to ensure that the actual data collection would be both participant-friendly and aligned with the research objectives.

Actual Data Gathering Phase. With administrative and ethical clearance secured, and the interview tool refined, the study transitioned into the data collection phase. The researcher began by contacting the approved teacher participants and arranging interview schedules based on their availability. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher organized a short pre-interview orientation, either individually or in small groups. During these sessions, participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the study's background, purpose, and scope, as well as their rights—including the right to withdraw at any point and the right to skip any questions they found uncomfortable. Informed Consent Forms were distributed and thoroughly explained, ensuring that each participant voluntarily consented to join the study with full understanding and without coercion.

Interviews were conducted in quiet, private, and familiar settings such as unused classrooms or guidance offices within the school premises. These locations were selected to ensure participants' psychological safety and physical comfort—factors known to encourage openness and honest sharing in qualitative interviews (Patton, 2015). Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes, though participants were given the freedom to extend or shorten their time depending on their comfort level and availability.

To preserve the richness of the data, the interviews were video-recorded in full, with participants' consent. In addition, the researcher took detailed field notes capturing non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and contextual factors such as tone, hesitations, or visible affect—elements that would later enrich the interpretive depth of the analysis. Before, during, and after each interview, the researcher regularly checked in on the participants' emotional well-being. If at any point participants exhibited signs of emotional discomfort—especially when recalling challenges encountered in implementing the New Revised Curriculum—the researcher offered them the option to pause, take a break, or discontinue the session.

While no participants required psychological intervention during data collection, the researcher had coordinated in advance with the school's guidance counselor and had prepared a list of mental health professionals for referral if necessary. This contingency plan reflects the researcher's proactive approach to minimizing harm and ensuring ethical responsibility during qualitative inquiry (Cypress, 2017).

Post-Data Gathering Phase. This phase reflected the researcher's commitment to honoring participants' voices while ensuring that the analytical process adhered to established qualitative research standards and institutional guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Immediately after each interview, the video recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. This process involved capturing not just the words spoken, but also significant pauses, emphases, and emotional expressions, which are essential in qualitative studies focused on lived experiences. Transcribing the data personally allowed the researcher to immerse themselves deeply in the narratives, fostering early familiarity with recurring patterns and themes (Nowell et al., 2017).

To enhance credibility and confirmability, the researcher implemented member checking within 24 to 48 hours after transcription. Participants were invited to review their own transcripts, either as printed documents or digital files, based on their preference. This step provided participants with the opportunity to verify the accuracy of their statements and to clarify or revise portions of the dialogue that may have been misinterpreted or inaccurately phrased. Participants could choose to review the transcripts on school premises or in the privacy of their homes, with the option to submit feedback through phone calls, text messages, or in-person follow-ups. This validation process ensured that the data remained grounded in the participants' authentic experiences and perceptions, aligning with best practices in reflexive qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016).

Upon confirmation, the researcher proceeded with thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. This analytical framework allowed the researcher to distill meaning from complex narratives while remaining sensitive to the nuanced realities of the teaching profession under the New Revised Curriculum. Emerging themes were supported by direct quotations from participants, with all identifying information removed to protect confidentiality.

To uphold ethical obligations regarding anonymity, all participants were assigned coded identifiers (pseudonyms), and these codes were used consistently across transcripts, analytic memos, and final reporting. No real names or school-specific details were included in the published outputs. This approach not only protected participants' identities but also safeguarded their professional relationships within their institutions and the broader educational community (Tracy, 2010).

All data—including video recordings, transcriptions, field notes, and informed consent forms—were managed with strict data security protocols. Digital files were encrypted and stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher's private laptop, which was not connected to public internet networks. A secure backup copy was maintained on an encrypted external hard drive, providing redundancy in case of device failure. Physical documents such as consent forms and handwritten field notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet inside the researcher's home office, with access limited solely to the researcher.

In compliance with the University of the Visayas Institutional Review Board and international data protection standards, the researcher committed to retaining all research data for a period of three years following the completion of the study. After this retention period, all digital files will be permanently deleted using secure file erasure software, while physical documents will be shredded using a cross-cut shredder to prevent unauthorized reconstruction. No data will be shared with external entities, and findings will only be reported in aggregated or anonymized forms to ensure the confidentiality and dignity of all participants (Resnik, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022).

Throughout the post-gathering phase, the researcher maintained open and respectful communication with participants. Updates regarding the study's progress were shared with those who expressed interest, and participants were offered access to summary findings upon request. This ongoing dialogue underscored the ethical principle of respect for persons and reflected the researcher's belief that qualitative inquiry is not only a scholarly activity but also a human exchange built on trust, transparency, and mutual respect (Tracy, 2010).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this qualitative study followed a rigorous, reflective, and methodical approach aimed at illuminating the lived experiences of public-school teachers from Marigondon Elementary School, Sudtunggan Elementary School, and Agus Elementary School during the initial implementation of the New Revised Curriculum under the Lapu-Lapu City Division. The researcher employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, a widely respected framework in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data.

This approach enabled the researcher not only to capture surface-level responses but also to interpret the deeper pedagogical, emotional, and institutional dimensions embedded within teachers' narratives.

Preparation and Familiarization. The first phase involved deep familiarization with the raw data. Each interview, conducted across the three schools, was transcribed verbatim immediately after the data collection. This allowed the researcher to engage closely with the words, expressions, and rhythms of the participants' accounts. Each transcript was read multiple times, accompanied by field notes that captured participants' non-verbal cues, emotional tones, and contextual environments—such as when a Grade 1 teacher in Sudtunggan Elementary shared anxieties about time constraints, or when a Kindergarten teacher in Agus Elementary expressed pride in designing her own visual aids due to a lack of contextualized materials. These immersive readings helped the researcher form an intuitive sense of the patterns and tensions present in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Generating Initial Codes. Following engagement, the researcher engaged in inductive coding, allowing themes to emerge from the data itself rather than applying a predefined coding structure. This process was conducted manually, with codes recorded and tracked using a digital spreadsheet for organizational clarity. Initial codes were assigned to significant excerpts, such as "adjusting to daily lesson preparation," "unclear content pacing," "collaboration with co-teachers," "using personal funds for resources," and "observing increased learner engagement." For example, multiple participants from Marigondon and Agus Elementary Schools shared that they often "modified modules and used printed visuals from previous curricula," which was coded under "instructional improvisation." These codes captured both shared challenges and coping mechanisms that teachers implemented at the classroom level (Nowell et al., 2017).

Searching for Themes. With an extensive set of initial codes, the researcher proceeded to cluster conceptually related codes to identify broader patterns. Codes such as "teacher-made materials," "recycling visual aids," and "drawing charts by hand" were grouped under the emerging theme "Resourcefulness and Creativity in the Face of Curriculum Gaps." Similarly, codes including "consulting colleagues," "group chats for clarification," and "sharing lesson guides" coalesced under the candidate theme "Collaborative Survival and Peer Support." The researcher consistently referred back to the research questions during this process, ensuring that the codes and themes were grounded in the inquiry's central focus: how teachers perceived and navigated the New Revised Curriculum in the early stages of implementation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Reviewing Themes. The initial themes were then refined through iterative review, where the researcher re-examined each theme alongside the coded extracts and the complete transcripts. During this phase, some themes were merged or split for greater accuracy. For instance, what began as a single theme on "Professional Growth" was divided into two distinct themes: one focused on teacher adaptation and self-directed learning, and the other on unmet training needs and instructional gaps. Peer debriefing sessions with colleagues from Subabasbas Elementary School provided an additional layer of scrutiny, helping the researcher identify areas where interpretive bias might have influenced theme development. This collaborative checking process enhanced the dependability and confirmability of the findings (Birt et al., 2016).

Defining and Naming Themes. After refinement, each theme was clearly defined and named to capture its central meaning. Descriptive names were chosen to reflect the tone and experience embedded in participants' words. For example, the theme "Navigating the Curriculum Shift through Resourcefulness, Creativeness and Resilience" encapsulated the improvisational strategies and emotional strength teachers displayed despite lacking DepEd-issued materials or clear pacing guides. Another theme, "Professional Growth and Enthusiasm," reflected participants' perception that while initial orientations were helpful, they were insufficient for mastering the day-to-day demands of the revised curriculum. Subthemes were also developed to capture finer distinctions—such as differences in support experiences between Kindergarten and Grade 4 teachers.

Each theme was supported by rich participant excerpts, drawn directly from the transcripts and presented in anonymized form. These were carefully selected to represent the core ideas of the theme while preserving the speaker's voice and emotional tone (Tracy, 2010).

Producing the Report. The final phase the integration of participant voices ensured that findings were not merely analytical abstractions but grounded representations of actual classroom realities in the Lapu-Lapu City Division. Additionally, findings were positioned within the broader context of Philippine curriculum reform, drawing on recent studies to underscore the relevance and implications of teachers' narratives (Patton, 2015).

Throughout the analysis, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal, documenting thought processes, coding decisions, and reactions to emotionally charged data. This journal served as a check against personal bias, especially given the researcher's own position as a public-school teacher within the same division. Reflexivity played a critical role in maintaining analytic integrity, allowing the findings to reflect participants' voices rather than the researcher's assumptions (Nowell et al., 2017; Cypress, 2017).

Through this layered and iterative process, the researcher was able to transform raw qualitative data into meaningful themes that offer insight into the challenges, strategies, and professional growth experienced by public-school teachers from Marigondon Elementary School, Sudtunggan Elementary School, and Agus Elementary School during the initial implementation of the New Revised Curriculum under the Lapu-Lapu City Division.

Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted with full adherence to ethical research standards to protect the rights, dignity, and confidentiality of all participants. Approval was granted by the University of the Visayas Institutional Review Board (UV-IRB) under Reference No. NP2025MAED-025, issued on 06 February 2025. Twelve participants—Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 public school teachers from Marigondon, Sudtunggan, and Agus Elementary Schools in Lapu-Lapu City Division—voluntarily participated after signing informed consent forms. Their identities were anonymized through pseudonyms, and all data (recordings, transcripts, field notes) were securely stored in password-protected folders. Reflexive journaling, an audit trail, and member checking were used to ensure credibility, confirmability, and transparency. The study followed the ethical principles of beneficence, respect for persons, and justice (World Health Organization, 2022; Resnik, 2020), and applied Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness framework—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—to ensure rigor throughout the qualitative inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented the lived experiences of Kindergarten, Grade one, and Grade four public school teachers from the Lapu-Lapu City Division during the initial implementation of the New Revised Curriculum. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, five key themes emerged from recurring patterns across participant narratives. These themes reflected not only the technical aspects of adapting to the curriculum but also the emotional, professional, and reflective processes that teachers underwent throughout the school year.

The first theme, *Navigating the Curriculum Shift through Resourcefulness, Creativeness, and Resilience*, captured how teachers responded to the absence of instructional materials and guidance with creativity and determination. Despite limited resources, many crafted their own tools and adapted strategies to suit their learners' needs. The second theme, *Professional Growth and Enthusiasm*, revealed how educators continued to grow professionally, even in the face of insufficient training. They relied on self-initiative and peer collaboration to fill knowledge gaps and build confidence in delivering the New Revised Curriculum.

The third theme, *Learner Engagement Champion with Focused Content Delivery*, described how teachers embraced the curriculum's streamlined focus by designing engaging and learner-centered lessons that promoted deeper comprehension and active participation. The fourth theme, *Growth Collaborator – Collaboration as a Pillar of Survival and Growth*, emphasized how peer support and teamwork served as lifelines during periods of stress. Teachers formed informal learning communities to co-create lessons, exchange materials, and provide 1 another with emotional encouragement. Finally, the fifth theme, *(Teaching Learning Methodologist Amidst Systemic Change)*, illustrated how teachers re-evaluated their teaching philosophies and methods in response to new demands.

Collectively, these themes illustrated that teachers did not simply receive and implement the curriculum; they interpreted it, reshaped it, and infused it with their professional judgment and lived realities. The succeeding sections narrated each theme in detail, drawing from participants' voices and supporting literature to present a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

Theme 1: Navigating The Curriculum Shift Through Resourcefulness, Creativeness, And Resilience

The first theme, *Navigating the Curriculum Shift through Resourcefulness, Creativeness, and Resilience*, captured how teachers responded to the absence of instructional materials and guidance with creativity and determination. This theme not only reflects the emotional labor involved in adaptation, but also contextualizes the conditions that led to such responses. When the New Revised Curriculum was first introduced, it arrived with promises of simplification and learner-centered instruction. However, in reality, its implementation confronted teachers with an overwhelming absence of materials, unclear guidelines, and minimal institutional support. What followed was not a story of defeat, but of courage, improvisation, and solidarity among public school teachers who found ways to rise to the challenge. Their stories are not only testaments to their resourcefulness but also reflections of what it truly means to be a teacher amid educational reform. As noted by Fullan (2007), the success of reforms lies not in the policy documents, but in the hearts and hands of those who enact them in classrooms.

Subtheme 1: Resourcefulness. One of the most compelling examples of teacher resourcefulness emerged from Liza, a tenured Grade one teacher with 24 years of classroom experience. Faced with the opening of the school year under the New Revised Curriculum and without a single updated instructional material, she recounted how she had to rely solely on her own initiative, crafting teaching aids from scratch just to ensure her learners wouldn't fall behind. Her experience reflected not just a response to insufficiency—but a deep, enduring commitment to learning, forged through decades of service and a refusal to let change become a barrier. This level of initiative reflects what Darling-

Hammond et al. (2017) describe as “pedagogical agency”—where educators respond to challenges not with resignation but with innovation, adapting to policy shifts by designing their own contextualized solutions when top-down support falls short.

“Wala gyud koy nakit-an nga mga materyales sa sinugdanan. pananglitan, katong mga flash cards nga among gigamit sauna, dili na kini angay sa mga giusab nga competency sa New Revised Curriculum. Karon, kinahanglan nga mas kontekstwalisado na siya—mao nga kinahanglan ilisan ang mga drawing ug ang pinulongan. Wala pa gyud klarong guide, mao nga ako na gyud mismo ang nag-research, nag-edit, ug naghimo sa tanan.” (Liza, Line 12)

(I couldn’t find any materials at first. Like the flash cards we used before, they no longer match the New Revised Curriculum competencies. Now, everything has to be more contextualized—so I had to change the drawings, change the language. There was no clear guide yet, so I had to research and edit everything myself.)

This kind of self-reliance was echoed by Belle, another Grade 1 teacher, who not only had to navigate the challenges of the new curriculum but also shouldered the financial burden of producing her own teaching materials. With no ready-made resources provided, she described how she spent her own money on printing, laminating, and crafting classroom aids—often after school hours. The strain, she explained, was not just physical but financial as well, as teachers were left to bridge the gap on their own. She went on to share her frustration:

“Sa daang kurikulum, naa pa gihapoy magamit bisag gamay. Pero karon, mura mig nibalik sa zero. Daghan kaayo’g mga competency sa NEW Curriculum Guide nga lahi gyud sa una. Tanán mi nag-cram og buhat sa among kaugalingong materyales—flashcards, posters, activity sheets, apil na ang rubrics. Gikan pa gyud ni tanan sa among kaugalingong bulsa.” (Belle, Line 21)

(Under the old curriculum, we still had usable materials. However, it now feels as though we are beginning anew. There are so many new competencies in the curriculum guide that are different from before. We’re all scrambling to make our own materials—flashcards, posters, activity sheets, even rubrics. All paid from our pockets.)

Karen, another Grade 1 teacher, also showcased her ingenuity:

“Wala mi giingnan unsaon pagtudlo aning bag-ong subject nga Reading and Literacy. Pero para sa akong mga bata, ako gyud nagbuhat og picture dictionary gamit ang recycled folders ug mga ginunting nga picture. Gipalaminato nako gamit among daang plastic cover para magamit nila balik-balik. Simple ra kaayo, pero dako na kaayo og tabang sa ilang pagbasa.” (Karen, Line 24)

“We weren’t told how to teach this new subject called Reading and Literacy. But for my students, I made a picture dictionary using recycled folders and cut-out pictures. I laminated them using our old plastic covers so the children could reuse them over and over. It’s very simple, but it has really helped a lot with their reading.” (Karen, Line 24)

Teachers were not merely implementers of policy during the implementation of the New Revised Curriculum—they became curriculum designers in real time. In the absence of clear, contextualized instructional resources from the Department of Education, teachers were forced to create their own teaching tools, lesson plans, and learning materials, all while meeting the daily demands of classroom instruction. This dual role—as both content producers and facilitators—highlighted a complex layer of professional labor often overlooked in reform narratives.

Such improvisation aligns with the findings of Tang and Chow (2023), who emphasized that in the face of unclear implementation frameworks, teachers often assumed the role of “creative agents,” interpreting abstract policy into actionable, learner-centered practice. Their creativity, however, was not optional—it was necessary for survival in under-resourced conditions. Valli and Buese (2007) similarly observed that policy shifts, particularly those introduced without adequate preparation or material support, tend to amplify teacher workload and emotional labor. In these contexts, teachers are expected to uphold professional standards while simultaneously absorbing the gaps left by systemic shortcomings.

What emerged from the field, then, was not just compliance—but innovation born out of necessity. Teachers engaged in iterative, on-the-ground decision-making that merged content mastery, pedagogical judgment, and contextual awareness. In this way, they embodied what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) called “lead professionals”—those who lead learning not through formal authority but through adaptive, learner-centered practice in complex conditions.

Subtheme 2: Creativeness. In the absence of textbooks and structured lesson guides, teachers transformed scarcity into innovation. Rather than waiting for standardized materials, many took the initiative to design their own, tailoring content to the needs of their learners and the realities of their classrooms. This improvisational approach not only filled instructional gaps but also reflected a deeper pedagogical creativity. This mirrors what Mishra and Koehler (2006) describe in their Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework—emphasizing that effective teaching in complex environments requires adaptive, creative combinations of technology, pedagogy, and content to meet students’ contextual needs.

Ben, a Grade four MAPEH teacher, had no books to reference for most subjects, yet he viewed the situation as a challenge rather than a setback. He created visual aids, designed his own assessment tools, and even crafted localized examples to make lessons more relatable to his students. In his words:

Walay libro nga gi-provide, mao nga dili gyud ko makasalig sa textbook kay wala man jud. Sa tanang subjects, kami ra gyud ang nagbuhat sa tanang gamit. Kung walay klarong instruction sa curriculum guide, ako na lang ang maghimo og akong activity. Mag-research ko, magtan-aw ko og YouTube videos, mangayo ko'g tabang sa akong kauban, o maghimo ko og simple nga game o worksheet nga masabtan sa mga bata. Lisod, pero kinahanglan kay sayang ang oras kung maghulat pa mi og materials. Mas importante nga makakat-on gyud sila bisan og kami ra nagbuhat sa tanan."

– (Ben, Line 49)

(No books were provided, so I couldn't rely on any textbook—because there really weren't any. For all subjects, we had to create all our own materials. When the curriculum guide wasn't clear, I made my own activities. I would research, watch YouTube videos, ask colleagues for help, or create a simple game or worksheet that my learners could understand. It was difficult, but necessary, because waiting for materials would waste time. What matters most is that the students actually learn—even if we have to make everything from scratch.)

Creativeness was also evident among younger teachers who brought fresh strategies and digital adaptability into the classroom. Karen, a relatively new Grade one teacher, lacked formal instructional materials but leveraged her familiarity with technology to design her own content. Rather than being hindered by the absence of a guide, she crafted PowerPoint presentations, downloaded interactive videos, and online activities to meet her learners' needs. Her innovation became her solution.

"Wala koy kapilian... Pero kay kabalo man ko mogamit og technology, naka-adjust ra ko. Akong gibuhay, nag-search ko og mga videos sa YouTube, nangita ko og mga interactive na games nga makapa-enganyo sa mga bata. Usahay, ako pa mismo ang mag-edit og PowerPoint para sa lesson. Bisay og lisod, kay walay klarong gi-provide nga materials gikan sa taas, nagkugi lang gyud ko para dili mabyaan ang mga bata. Sa una, kahadlok ko kay bago ang curriculum ug kulang og support, pero tungod sa akong kahibalo sa technology, nakapangita ko og paagi."

– (Karen, Line 73)

(I had no choice... but because I knew how to use technology, I was able to adjust. I searched for YouTube videos, looked for interactive games that would keep my students engaged, and sometimes even created my own PowerPoint lessons. It was difficult since there were no clear materials provided from above, but I really worked hard so my students wouldn't be left behind. At first, I was scared because the curriculum was new and the support was lacking, but through my knowledge of technology, I was able to find a way.)

Creativeness emerged as a vital response among teachers facing the realities of implementing the New Revised Curriculum without sufficient instructional support. With the absence of textbooks, modules, and structured lesson guides, teachers took it upon themselves to design learning materials that suited their students' needs. Many of them improvised—using recycled materials, crafting their own worksheets, integrating local examples, and employing digital tools like PowerPoint and educational videos to deliver lessons effectively. Their day-to-day planning reflected not only initiative, but a deeper commitment to ensuring that learning remained active and contextualized despite resource limitations.

This form of creative problem-solving aligns with Almendarez et al. (2022), who found that in under-supported systems, teacher-designed instruction directly contributes to learner engagement and success. It also mirrors the framework of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) proposed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), which emphasizes the value of blending content knowledge, teaching strategies, and technology. In this study, such creativity was not merely an enhancement but a practical necessity—demonstrating how teachers thrive even in challenging curricular settings.

Subtheme 3: Resilience. Beyond creativity and resourcefulness, what stood out most among teachers was their quiet resilience—the ability to persist, adapt, and show up each day despite emotional fatigue, physical exhaustion, and lack of systemic support. For many, the demands of the New Revised Curriculum came with long nights of preparation, uncertainty in delivery, and the pressure of meeting evolving expectations—all while continuing to care deeply for their learners. Their strength was not loud or dramatic, but shown in the consistency of their effort, even when they felt overwhelmed or alone. This reflects what Beltman et al. (2011) describe as "teacher resilience," a dynamic capacity that enables educators to thrive personally and professionally despite challenging contexts. It is built not only on internal motivation but also on supportive relationships and a sense of meaning in their work.

Kyla, a Kindergarten teacher, shared her daily struggle:

"Kapoy kaayo magbuhat matag gabii... Dili lang kay isa ka worksheet kundi visual aids pa, activity sheets, ug usahay mag-research pa ko sa internet para lang naa koy makuha nga idea. Naa na

gani mga higayon nga halos wala nako'y tulog kay kinahanglan gyud mahuman ang mga gamit para sa klase. Pero bisan kapoy, ako lang gihunahuna nga para gyud ni sa mga bata. Kung dili ko mag-andam, kinsa man? Dili man pwede nga walay mahatag sa ila. Mao nga bisan og gikapoy na, padayon gihapon ko." – (Kyla, Line 59)

(It's exhausting to prepare every night—not just 1 worksheet, but visual aids, activity sheets, and sometimes I even have to research online just to get ideas. There were times I barely had sleep because I needed to finish everything for class. But even though I was tired, I kept reminding myself this is all for the learners. If I don't prepare, then who will? I can't let them go to class with nothing. So even when I'm exhausted, I keep going.)

Marie, a tenured Kindergarten teacher, expressed a reflective growth mindset amidst the chaos. Despite the overwhelming demands of implementing a new curriculum with little guidance, she viewed the experience as a moment of professional self-discovery. The unfamiliar structure and expectations pushed her to rethink her long-held teaching strategies and explore new ways of reaching her young learners. While the shift was difficult, it opened doors to personal growth and transformation.

"Sa kadugay nakong nagtudlo, karon ra gyud nako narealize nga daghan pa diay ko'g mga pamaagi nga pwede pa nako ma-explore. Abi nako nga kabalo na ko sa tanan, pero pag-abot sa bag-ong curriculum, nausab gyud akong panan-aw. Nakat-on ko nga pwede pa diay ko mag-adjust sa akong style, nga naay mga bagong paagi nga mas makapa-enganyo sa mga bata. Pero ang lisod, kulang gyud ang materyales. Naay gusto nakong buhaton, pero usahay mapugos ko tungod kay walay gamit o klarong guide. Kung naa lang unta'y supporta, daghan pa unta kog mahatag nga mas interactive ug m akalingaw nga pagtulon-an." – (Marie, Line 73)

(Even after many years of teaching, I've only now realized how much more I can still explore in my teaching approaches. I thought I already knew everything, but when the new curriculum came, it completely shifted my perspective. I learned that I could still adjust my style, that there were new ways to engage the children better. But the problem is the lack of materials. There are things I want to do, but I'm often limited because there are no tools or clear guides. If only there were more support, I could offer even more fun and interactive learning.)

Gu and Day (2013) refer to this sense of purpose as "moral commitment," the internal drive that keeps teachers dedicated even when systems falter. Tanangada and Sanga (2021) similarly emphasize that in under-resourced systems, it is the resilience of educators—not the curriculum—that sustains reform. The concept of "emotional resilience" as discussed by Beltman et al. (2011) reflects how teachers draw strength from personal and professional values to withstand and grow through hardship.

Perhaps most touching was Liza's emotional reflection on her pupils' progress. As a tenured Grade one teacher with over two decades of experience, she had seen many shifts in curriculum and pedagogy—but the transition to the New Revised Curriculum, without materials or clear instructional models, tested her deeply. She had to rebuild her classroom practices from the ground up, crafting lessons nightly with only her instincts, experience, and deep care for her students as her guide. Yet amid the uncertainty, what kept her going was the small, powerful victories she witnessed in her learners.

"Lipay kaayo ko atong panahona. Sauna, upat sa akong mga estudyante dili gyud kamao mobasa, bisan og usa ka pulong lisod gyud para nila. Kada gabii, maghimo ko og simple nga worksheets, magbuhat og flashcards, ug magbasa-basa mi og hinay-hinay. Grabe gyud ang akong pagpaningkamot, pero karon, kabalo na sila mobasa og tibuok nga sentence. Mura kog makahilak sa kalipay kay kabalo ko nga bisan og kulang mi og gamit, nagmalampuson gihapon mi tungod sa akong pagpugos ug pagkugi." – (Liza, Line 82)

(I was really so happy that day. Before, four of my students couldn't even read a single word—it was truly difficult for them. Every night, I made simple worksheets, created flashcards, and we practiced reading slowly. It took so much effort, but now, they can already read full sentences. I almost cried out of joy because I knew that even though we lacked resources, we still succeeded because I didn't give up and worked so hard.)

Such triumphs reveal the invisible victories that happen daily in Filipino classrooms—powered not by perfect systems but by teacher devotion. These stories exemplify what Creswell and Poth (2018) call the "rich, thick descriptions" that elevate qualitative inquiry by showing how real people shape educational change.

In truth, the New Revised Curriculum's initial implementation lacked structure, yet what rose from that vacuum was a deeply human response. Teachers like Liza, Belle, Ben, Karen, Kyla, and Marie transformed gaps into bridges. Through their hands, reform became real—not as theory, but as tangible learning experiences built from scratch, love, and grit. Their stories urge policymakers and stakeholders to look beyond frameworks and see the real

reformers: the teachers who make the curriculum live, breathe, and matter. Yet adaptation was only the beginning. What followed was a quiet revolution in mindset, as teachers took charge of their own growth, building capacity through collaboration and courage.

Theme 2: Professional Growth and Enthusiasm

The second theme, *Professional Growth and Enthusiasm*, revealed how educators continued to grow professionally, even in the face of insufficient training. They relied on self-initiative and peer collaboration to fill knowledge gaps and build confidence in delivering the New Revised Curriculum. One of the most defining realities of the New Revised Curriculum's implementation was that it placed teachers in unfamiliar territory—both in content and pedagogy. Yet rather than resisting the changes, many teachers approached it with cautious enthusiasm. While the promise of a revitalized educational structure energized some, the lack of practical preparation challenged even the most committed. This response aligns with Avalos' (2011) findings that teachers, when placed in complex reform environments, often pursue professional growth with both eagerness and apprehension. Still, amidst the uncertainty, teachers found ways to adapt, grow, and remain hopeful for long-term improvement. This theme captures the tension between the desire to grow and the challenges of navigating inadequately supported change.

Subtheme 1: The Gap Between Training and Classroom Setting. The training sessions provided for the New Revised Curriculum were intended to guide and equip teachers for implementation. However, for many, these sessions felt too theoretical and far removed from the realities they faced inside their classrooms. While competencies and frameworks were introduced, teachers were often left without practical tools—such as lesson exemplars, classroom demonstrations, or context-based strategies—to effectively translate theory into practice. This disconnect mirrors the concerns raised by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that professional development must be ongoing, practice-based, and closely aligned with teachers' classroom contexts to be meaningful and effective. The absence of hands-on guidance became a common concern, particularly among those handling performance-based subjects and early-grade learners.

Jade, a Grade 4 teacher, described her frustration after the five-day training:

"Wala gyud mi gihatagan og modules. Lima ra ka adlaw ang training, pero halos tanan lecture ra, walay klaro kung unsaon gyud pagdala sa lesson sa klase. Puro lang storya, pero walay gi-provide nga guide nga among magamit pagkahuman. Naa silay gipakita nga sample pero paspas ra kaayo ug kulang og detalye. Mao to nga pagkahuman sa training, kami-kami ra pud ang nagtinabangay og buhat sa among kaugalingong plano kay wala gyud mi gisaligan nga materials gikan sa taas."
– (Jade, Line 36)

(We weren't given any modules at all. The training lasted only five days, and most of it was just lectures—nothing concrete about how to actually deliver the lessons in class. It was all talk, and no usable guide was provided afterward. They showed a sample, but it was too fast and lacked detail. That's why after the training, we had to rely on 1 another and create our own plans, because we didn't receive any dependable materials).

Liza, a tenured Grade 1 teacher, emphasizing how the training lacked the kind of practical support that would have helped her navigate daily classroom demands. Despite her years of experience, the shift brought by the New Revised Curriculum required clearer examples and tools—particularly for early-grade learners who need more structured, interactive instruction. She expected the training to provide real classroom applications, but instead found herself returning to school with unanswered questions and echoed this concern:

"Murag lecture ra gyud tanan. Wala mi gihatagan og bisan usa ka sample lesson plan. Wala gyud klaro kung unsaon pag-integrate sa mga competency sa klase mismo. Nag-expect mi nga ipakita kung giunsa buhaton sa aktwal—unsay approach, unsay strategies, unsay assessment—but wala. Lisod kaayo kay bag-o ang curriculum, unya kami pa gyud ang mag-adjust nga walay klarong giya. Pag-abot sa klase, among kaugalingong pagsabot na lang among gisunod." – (Liza, Line 51)

(It really felt like everything was just a lecture. We weren't even given a single sample lesson plan. There was no clear instruction on how to integrate the competencies into actual classroom teaching. We expected them to show us how it's really d1—what approach to use, what strategies, how to assess—but there was n1. It was hard because the curriculum was new, and yet we were the 1s expected to adjust without any clear guidance. When classes started, we just followed our own understanding.)

Teachers consistently faced difficulties because the training materials did not align with actual classroom teaching needs. The five-day training program intended to prepare teachers for the New Revised Curriculum yet most participants found the content focused mainly on theoretical concepts instead of practical teaching methods. The teachers expected to receive concrete examples along with strategy demonstrations and classroom practice opportunities but instead they received lectures and slides and lists of competencies. Teachers had to interpret

guidelines independently after returning to their classrooms because they received little formal training and had to depend on peer assistance and experimental methods.

The gap between training content and classroom application produced anxiety and uncertainty especially for teachers who worked with foundational years since their instructional decisions directly affect early literacy development and learning habits. The research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) supports the idea that professional development becomes effective when it directly addresses classroom realities. The absence of practical modeling and guided application opportunities during training leaves educators without the necessary preparation for implementation.

The teachers in this study required more than printed manuals because they needed to observe lesson delivery methods and see how competencies transformed into teaching actions and learn strategies for handling unexpected classroom challenges. According to Borko (2004) teacher learning becomes meaningful when professional development occurs within authentic teaching environments which enable educators to test new approaches and develop their skills through reflection in their own classrooms. The absence of this support system makes even the best-designed curriculum fail when put into practice

Subtheme 2: Teacher Adaptation Despite Incomplete Training. Despite the clear gaps in training, many teachers took it upon themselves to connect the division between policy orientation and daily classroom practice. For them, waiting for follow-up support was not an option—learners needed to be taught, and the responsibility fell on their shoulders. With limited instructional guidance and no concrete examples to model after, teachers drew from their instincts, past experience, and peer collaboration to make sense of the new curriculum. In many cases, they began to adjust strategies in real-time, reworking their routines and experimenting with what worked best for their students. These acts of adaptation were not only practical responses but also reflections of deep professional commitment. This process reflects what Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) describe as “interconnected professional growth,” where teachers learn through a cycle of reflection and enactment despite systemic limitations.

Kyla, a Kindergarten teacher, recalled how she had no choice but to figure things out on her own:

"Gi-explain lang sa training ang concepts, pero wala gyud mi gipasabot unsaon pag-deliver ana sa klase. Murag naa lang sa papel tanan, pero lahi ra gyud ang actual. Wala ko kabalo unsaon pag-apply sa play-based learning nga giingon nila, so ako nalang ang nag-experiment. Ako mismo ang nagplano og mga duwa, nagtan-aw sa YouTube, ug nag-try-try lang kung unsay epektibo. Nakulbaan ko pirmi kay basin sayop akong gibuhay, pero mao ra man gyud ang akong paagi para makakat-on ang mga bata bisan walay klarong giya." (Kyla, Line 28)

(They explained the concepts during training, but they didn't really show us how to deliver those in the classroom. Everything was just on paper, but actual teaching was different. I didn't know how to apply the play-based learning they menti'd, so I just experimented. I planned games myself, watched YouTube for ideas, and just kept trying what I thought might work. I was always nervous that I might be doing something wrong, but it was the only way I could help my students learn, even without a clear guide.)

Similarly, Richelle, a Grade 1 teacher handling fast learners, shared how she had to rely on her own judgment and experimentation to adjust to the realities of her classroom. With no differentiated strategies discussed during the training, she found herself continuously revising her lessons, especially when handling students who progressed faster than the rest. Richelle's adaptation was guided not by policy, but by close observation of her pupils' needs and her own willingness to try, fail, and try again.

"Kadi adlaw, lain-lain akong suwayan nga approach—usahay mag-buhay ko og extra task, usahay magtudlo ko ahead of the class. Kabalo ko nga dapat naay enrichment, pero walay template o example nga gihatag. Ako nalang ang nagbuhay-buhay sa akong own materials."

(I had to try things on my own until I figured out what worked. Every day, I would try different approaches—sometimes I gave them extra tasks, other times I taught them lessons in advance. I knew there should be enrichment activities, but we weren't given any template or example. I just created my own materials.)

Marie, a Kindergarten teacher, also shared her frustration with the disconnect between the training content and the actual classroom environment. Handling very young learners required a different approach—one rooted in play, movement, and interaction. However, the training she attended offered little guidance on how to implement the play-based strategies emphasized in the New Revised Curriculum. In the absence of concrete examples or classroom demonstrations, she was left to figure things out on her own, guided only by instinct and close observation of her pupils.:

"Lisod kaayo kay lahi ra gyud ang actual sa tinuod. Sa training, giingnan mi nga gamiton ang play-based nga approach, pero wala mi'y guide kung unsaon gyud pag-apply. Wala mi'y sample session, walay clear nga instruction. So akong gibuhay, gi-obserbahan nako ang reaksyon sa mga bata kada activity. Kung murag malipay sila, ako na lang nang i-develop nga strategy. Kung dili sila ganahan,

ako dayon usbon. Murag kada adlaw, trial and error akong buhat. Nakapoy pero fulfilling sad kay makita man nimo nga nalingaw ug nakakat-on sila.”- (Marie, Line 48)

(It was really difficult because the real situation was very different. In training, they told us to use the play-based approach, but we weren't given any guide on how to actually apply it. No sample sessions, no clear instructions. So what I did was observe the children's reactions during every activity. If they seemed happy, I developed that strategy further. If they weren't interested, I changed it right away. It felt like every day was trial and error. It was tiring, but also fulfilling because I could see that they were having fun and learning at the same time.)

This proactive stance among teachers mirrors what Avalos (2011) describes as “teacher-initiated learning”—a form of professional development that arises not from structured programs but from the teacher's own initiative and sense of responsibility when institutional support is lacking. In the absence of concrete lesson plans, demonstration teaching, or post-training guidance, teachers began learning by doing—experimenting with strategies, revising approaches based on classroom feedback, and seeking help from colleagues or online sources. Such efforts reflect a powerful internal drive to adapt and succeed, even when systems fall short.

This behavior also echoes Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) interconnected model of teacher professional growth, which emphasizes that development occurs not in a straight line, but through iterative cycles of experimentation, reflection, and personal meaning-making. According to their framework, change happens across four domains—personal, external, practice, and consequence—connected by processes of reflection and enactment. The teachers in this study engaged all of these: as they reflected on what worked in their classrooms, enacted new strategies, interpreted outcomes, and used these experiences to revise their understanding of the curriculum. In doing so, they didn't wait for top-down solutions; they became active agents of reform within their own classrooms.

These teachers showed what actual professional development means by actively engaging with policy instead of receiving it passively while their practice evolved through their experiences and the learning environment and their students' needs.

Subtheme 3: Collaboration as an Extension of Training. In the absence of sustained institutional support, many found strength in each other. Colleagues became co-learners, coaches, and sounding boards—filling the practical gaps left behind by formal training. Across schools, informal collaboration emerged as a survival mechanism. Teachers shared resources, exchanged activity ideas, and co-planned lessons, forming small learning communities rooted in trust and shared experience. These support systems became an extension of professional development, grounded not in formal policy, but in real classroom needs. This reflects what Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) identified as the core function of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): improving instructional practice through sustained, collaborative inquiry among educators.

Joy, a tenured Kindergarten teacher, emphasized how collaboration became essential to their daily practice: *“Mas klaro pa usahay ang tambag sa akong kauban kaysa sa training. Sa klase, dili man malikayan nga maglibog gyud ta, labi na sa bag-ong curriculum. Pero kung naa koy pangutana, mas dali ko makasabot kung akong kauban ang motubag kaysa kung sa lecturer. Nagtabangay gyud mi, labi na sa pagplano og mga activity para sa bata—mga dula, mga kanta, unsaon pag-connect sa lesson sa real-life experience sa mga bata. Murag adto na mi mismo sa among grupo nangita og klarong tubag kaysa magsalig sa training nga kulang og detalye.”- (Joy, Line 64)*

(Sometimes, my colleague's advice was even clearer than the training. In class, it's really hard not to get confused—especially with this new curriculum. But when I had questions, I understood things better when my fellow teacher explained it than when it came from the trainer. We truly helped 1 another, especially when planning activities for the kids—like games, songs, and how to connect the lesson to real-life experiences. We found clearer answers in our group than in the vague training sessions.)

Ben, a Grade 4 teacher, described how informal meetings with colleagues after class became more helpful than the formal orientation sessions they initially received. While training gave a general overview, it was the day-to-day conversations with fellow teachers—often held during after-school hours or quick breaks—that helped him make sense of how to translate competencies into actual lessons. These interactions offered both clarity and emotional support, making the curriculum feel more manageable and less isolating.

“Kung kami ra bitaw sa among grupo magtinabangay, mas dali pa namo masabtan ang buot ipasabot sa curriculum kaysa kung naa sa training. Sa training, daghan kaayo'g lecture pero kulang sa tinuod nga example. Pero kung among grupo mag-meeting after class, adto na namo i-breakdown ang guide. Mo-suggest mi og paagi, mag-share og activity, unya mas klaro pa ang kasabutan. Usahay, didto pa gyud namo masabtan unsaon pagdala sa lesson, kaysa sa gipasabot sa training.”- (Ben, Line 124)

(When our group worked together, we often understood the curriculum better than we did during the training. The training had so many lectures but lacked real examples. But when our group met after class, we broke down the curriculum guide ourselves. We suggested strategies, shared activities, and reached clearer understandings. Sometimes, it was only during those informal meetings that we really figured out how to deliver the lessons—something we didn't get from the training sessions.)

Belle, a Grade one teacher further emphasized how technology—particularly group chats—became a lifeline for many teachers during the initial implementation of the New Revised Curriculum. These digital spaces, though informal, allowed teachers to stay connected throughout the day and quickly crowdsource solutions to instructional challenges. When a lesson didn't go as planned or a curriculum guide was unclear, the group chat became a virtual staff room—immediate, responsive, and grounded in lived experience. It served as a place not just for sharing files, but for giving encouragement, validating frustrations, and co-constructing new strategies:

"Makatabang gyud ang group chat kay dali ra mi makapangutana kung naa mi'y dili masabtan. Kung sayo sa buntag o bisan gabii, kung naay assignment o competency nga medyo libog, dali ra mi makareplyay. Usahay didto ra gyud mi makakuha og klaro nga explanation kay sa training, general ra kaayo. Sa chat, mohatag ang kauban og sample worksheet, uban mag-share og PowerPoint. Naa pud uban nga mohatag og link sa mga idea online. Bisin informal, mas produktibo pa usahay kaysa sa orientation." – (Belle, Line 96)

(The group chat really helped because we could quickly ask questions whenever something was unclear. Whether early in the morning or even at night, if there was a confusing task or competency, we could reply to each other right away. Sometimes, we only got clear explanations there because the training was too general. In the chat, a colleague might send a sample worksheet, others would share PowerPoint files, and some would even send helpful online links. Even though it was informal, it was sometimes more productive than the formal orientation sessions.)

This kind of teamwork reflects what Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) describe as professional learning communities—groups of teachers who regularly work together to improve their teaching. Their study showed that ongoing support from fellow teachers often helps improve classroom practice more than one-time training sessions. In these informal, teacher-led spaces—whether over lunch, through handwritten lesson exchanges, or in fast-paced group chats—teachers engaged in continuous dialogue that refined their strategies and deepened their understanding.

Furthermore, Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) emphasize the value of "collaborative professionalism," where genuine peer engagement fosters both teacher agency and long-term sustainability during educational reform. In this study, the collaboration among teachers was not simply about sharing materials—it was about building trust, affirming one another's ideas, and co-owning the success of curriculum implementation.

Subtheme 4: The Call for Practical, Ongoing Support. Teachers expressed a strong belief in the vision of the New Revised Curriculum, particularly its emphasis on foundational skills, streamlined competencies, and learner-centered instruction. While they supported its goals, they also voiced a shared concern: the absence of practical, sustained support following the initial implementation. The five-day training offered an overview of the curriculum's structure and key concepts, but it lacked the concrete instructional tools teachers needed for daily implementation. Many described returning to their classrooms without sample lesson plans, model demonstrations, or coaching—resources that are crucial when transitioning to a new framework. As a result, they were left to interpret the competencies independently, often through trial and error, which created stress and uncertainty in their practice.

This sentiment reflects the work of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasize that professional development must be continuous, job-embedded, and responsive to real classroom needs. Without structured follow-through, even well-designed reforms can fall short in practice. Joyce and Showers (2002) similarly argue that for professional development to result in actual instructional change, it must include opportunities for modeling, guided practice, and coaching. In this study, teachers were not resistant to the curriculum itself—they believed in its purpose. What they needed was a system of ongoing, practical support to help them deliver it confidently and effectively within the realities of their own classrooms.

Jona, a Grade 4 teacher, captured this concern in her reflection:

"Ang training kay lima ka adlaw ra, pero ang panginahanglan sa klase adlaw-adlaw. Sa training, daghan kaayong concepts ug competencies nga gipaila, pero wala mi gi-andaman og klarong sunod nga suporta. Pagkahuman sa training, murag gibyaan ra mi. Wala nay follow-up sessions, walay coaching, walay materials nga makapa-tabang sa among klase kada adlaw. Unsaon man namo nga kada subject, kada estudyante, lahi-lahi ang panginahanglan? Mao nga kami nalang mismo ang nagsabot-sabot unsaon pag-adjust. Ang training importante, pero dapat naa untay padayon nga trainings and seminars." – (Jona, Line 79)

(The training lasted five days, but the classroom demands are every single day. In the training, we were introduced to so many concepts and competencies, but there was no clear follow-up support. After the training ended, it felt like we were left on our own. There were no follow-up sessions, no coaching, no materials to help with daily teaching. But every subject and every student has different needs. So we had to figure things out on our own. The training is important, yes—but there should also be continuous trainings and seminars.)

Karen, a Grade 1 teacher, echoed this concern with clarity and emotion. As someone navigating the demands of a new curriculum with early-grade learners, she recognized the importance of foundational teaching—but also felt the deep uncertainty that came from working without sustained guidance. The training gave her a starting point, but after the sessions ended, she felt that teachers were left on their own to interpret, apply, and troubleshoot. There were no structured check-ins, feedback sessions, or opportunities to ask questions once challenges arose in the classroom:

"Kulang og monitoring. Kahibaw mi nga bag-o ni nga curriculum, pero kinahanglan unta og sunod-sunod nga suporta, dili kay human sa training, wala na mi kabalo unsay buhaton." – (Karen, Line 42)

(There's a lack of monitoring. We know this is a new curriculum, but there should be continued support—not just training and then nothing after.)

This finding aligns with Opfer and Pedder (2011), who contend that effective professional development must be continuous, situated in real classroom practice, and supported by timely and responsive feedback. Kennedy (2016) similarly warns that without sustained, contextualized mentoring, even well-designed reforms risk becoming superficial, with little impact on actual teaching and learning. The experiences of teachers in this study reflect that reality. Though many expressed genuine enthusiasm for the New Revised Curriculum's goals, they were often left to grow professionally on their own—through experimentation, peer support, and reflection.

Their persistence in adapting amidst gaps in institutional support reflects not only professionalism, but a deep commitment to their students' success. "As Desimone and Garet (2015) emphasize, when educators are empowered with consistent and meaningful support, professional development can truly lead to transformative classroom practice. Theme two underscores a critical truth: while policy may outline the path of reform, it is the teacher who brings it to life.

Theme 3: Learner Engagement Champion with Focused Content Delivery

In the midst of navigating new routines, unclear pacing guides, and limited resources, many teachers began noticing something unexpected: their students were more engaged. Despite the challenges that came with implementing the New Revised Curriculum, teachers shared how learners—especially in the early grades—were becoming more eager to participate, more focused during activities, and more confident in their responses. Lessons felt less rushed, and students had more time to absorb and apply what they were learning. For the first time in a long while, teachers saw the spark of genuine learning emerge from simpler, clearer, and more targeted instruction.

This theme captures how the streamlined design of the New Revised Curriculum—by reducing the number of competencies and focusing on essential skills—allowed for deeper understanding and stronger classroom routines. Teachers noted that with fewer topics to cover, they could spend more time reinforcing key ideas and adjusting to the pace of their learners. This finding aligns with Peters and Woolnough (2020), who emphasized that curricula with narrowed learning goals tend to support improved comprehension, as learners are less cognitively overloaded and more able to connect with the material. As instruction became more focused, students became more responsive. This shift reminded many teachers why they entered the profession in the first place. In their own words, it was not about covering content—it was about making learning count, and helping students find joy in it.

Subtheme 1: Turning Point in Engagement. One of the most noticeable changes teachers observed during the early implementation of the New Revised Curriculum was a shift in student engagement. For many, this came as a welcome surprise. The simplified structure of the curriculum gave teachers more room to be creative, focus on essential competencies, and design lessons that felt less rushed. As a result, learners had more opportunities to actively participate and enjoy classroom activities. Teachers shared that with more focused content and fewer distractions, learners became more responsive—not only academically, but also emotionally. This echoes the findings of Kennedy (2021), who explained that instructional designs that balance cognitive structure with learner-centered methods result in better focus, motivation, and engagement—especially for young learners.

Liza, a Grade 1 teacher, recounted how her students became more enthusiastic and attentive during class when she began incorporating songs and visual elements into her lessons:

"Mas ganahan na sila moapil sa activity, labi na kung naay drawing o kanta-kanta. Usahay, kung magbasa mi og storya, muingon gyud sila, 'Ma'am, gusto pa mi og isa!' Mas dali nako makuha

ilang attention basta interactive ang lesson. Dili parehas sauna nga halos tanan hilum ra.”- (Liza, Line 125)

(They’re more interested in joining activities now, especially when there’s drawing or singing. Sometimes when we read a story, they even ask, ‘Ma’am, can we have 1 more?’ It’s easier to get their attention when the lesson is interactive. Unlike before, when most of them were just quiet.)

Liza’s story demonstrates not only a shift in learner participation but also how well-chosen strategies can enhance classroom dynamics. As Kennedy (2021) notes, incorporating visual and auditory modalities—such as songs, images, and storytelling—significantly boosts memory and attention among younger learners. This was evident in Liza’s experience, where interactive activities did not just capture interest, but also led to smoother transitions between tasks and fewer behavioral disruptions. Her classroom, once quiet and passive, became a space where learners eagerly anticipated what came next—proof that even simple creative approaches could make a meaningful difference in engagement and learning flow.

Karen, another Grade 1 teacher, echoed similar observations about learner engagement, especially among students who had previously been withdrawn or hesitant. She described how the clarity of the New Revised Curriculum’s pacing and competency structure helped her design more targeted activities that better matched her learners’ needs. With less pressure to cover numerous competencies all at once, she felt more confident in crafting lessons that were inclusive, differentiated, and responsive to student readiness. This, in turn, allowed more learners—especially the quiet 1s—to find their voice in class.

“Sa una, moapil ra ang uban kung sayon ra ang buhaton. Pero karon, kay klaro na ang agi sa lesson ug unsay tumong, makabuhay na gyud ko og mga activities nga fit para nila. Bisan gani tong mga hilum kaayo sauna, moapil na pud karon.”- (Karen – 136)

(Before, some would only join if the task was easy. But now, since the pacing and objectives are clearer, I can create tasks that really fit them. Even the quiet 1s now participate.)

Karen’s demonstrates how curriculum clarity can empower teachers to meet learners where they are. With better pacing and clearly defined objectives, she was able to design activities that were not only developmentally appropriate but also engaging for all types of learners—even those who had previously withdrawn. The shift from broad, fast-paced lessons to more intentional and focused teaching allowed her to slow down, observe her students more closely, and create learning moments that mattered. As she described, even the quietest learners began to participate—an encouraging sign that learning was reaching those who had often remained on the margins.

This reflects what Hattie (2012) identifies as the importance of learning clarity—where clearly stated objectives and well-planned instruction significantly increase learner engagement and achievement. Hammond and Jackson (2015) further argue that culturally and developmentally responsive teaching helps create equitable spaces where all students can access meaningful learning. For Karen and others, this wasn’t just about following a new curriculum guide—it was about finally being able to teach in a way that made learning accessible, inclusive, and joyful. Subtheme one with this affirmation: that learner engagement is not a product of grand innovation, but of thoughtful, well-supported instruction that makes every child feel seen and capable.

Subtheme 2: Focused Curriculum – Deeper Learning. As the New Revised Curriculum narrowed down the number of competencies and placed greater emphasis on foundational skills, many teachers observed a shift not just in what was being taught, but in how deeply learners were engaging with the material. With fewer learning outcomes to address, teachers found themselves less pressured to rush through units and more able to invest in activities that promoted understanding. This shift allowed educators to revisit concepts, adapt pacing, and focus on mastery—particularly vital in foundational years such as Kindergarten and Grades one and four. For teachers, this clarity in content structure helped reduce confusion, encouraged better planning, and opened the door to deeper student involvement.

Rather than merely browsing topics to meet curriculum demands, teachers reported a more meaningful teaching experience. They were able to differentiate lessons, cater to the needs of both struggling and advanced learners, and ensure stronger concept retention. This was especially significant for fast learners who often needed extra challenges, and for learners who previously struggled to keep up under the old curriculum’s overloaded scope. With more instructional time per topic, educators had the freedom to slow down, explain more, and allow students to explore content with greater depth and confidence. This aligns with the findings of Pellegrino and Hilton (2012), who emphasized that a focused curriculum, anchored in core concepts and supported by opportunities for application, promotes deeper learning and long-term retention—especially when paired with thoughtful pacing and instructional flexibility.

Richelle, a Grade 1 teacher handling a class of fast learners, highlighted how the simplified list of competencies gave her room to enrich and deepen the learning experience:

“Tungod kay mas gamay ra ang mga competency karon, mas sayon na namo mafocus ang coverage sa matag lesson. Dili nami magsige og dagan para lang mahuman ang tanan. Mas nakahatag pa

mi og dugang pagbasa, pangutana, ug mga hagit para sa mga estudyante nga gusto pa gyud makat-on."-(Richelle, Line 129)

(With fewer competencies now, it's easier for us to focus on each lesson. We're no longer rushing just to finish everything. We can now give more reading time, ask deeper questions, and offer challenges for students who want to learn more.)

Richelle's experience mirrors what Peters and Woolnough (2020) recommend in their study of curriculum depth—that simplifying content allows learners to process and apply knowledge more effectively, especially when teachers are empowered to extend learning opportunities. In this way, the curriculum shift supported not only instructional quality but also equitable differentiation.

Jona, a Grade 4 teacher, similarly shared how the revised curriculum helped her become more intentional in her instructional decisions:

"Sa una, basta matapos lang ang topic, okay na. Karon, tan-awon gyud nako kung nasabtan ba gyud nila. Kung murag naglibog pa, i-review namo kaysa ipadayon nga walay klaro. Sa una, walay panahon para ana."-(Jona, Line 151)

(Before, finishing the topic was enough. Now, I really check whether they understood it. If they seem confused, we review it instead of just moving on. Before, we didn't have time for that.)

Jona's insight underscores the benefit of depth over breadth. When teachers are not forced to rush, they become more reflective and responsive—adjusting instruction based on learners' understanding rather than pacing schedules. This supports the work of Dylan Wiliam (2011), who emphasizes formative assessment as a tool for deep learning, where instruction is guided by student feedback and mastery is prioritized over mere coverage. Together, Richelle and Jona's accounts reveal a key strength of the New Revised Curriculum's simplified design: the capacity for intentional, learner-centered teaching. By promoting depth, the reform created space for both challenge and reinforcement, allowing learners to engage more fully and meaningfully. As noted by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), deep learning emerges when students have time to reflect, apply, and connect ideas—conditions made possible when educators are given the structure and flexibility to teach well.

Ultimately, this subtheme emphasizes that deeper learning is not just a product of good curriculum design—it is sustained by teachers who are given the room to slow down, observe, and respond. With thoughtful pacing and fewer distractions, learning becomes less about checking boxes and more about nurturing understanding that lasts.

Subtheme 3: Inclusive Participation Across Learners. One of the most encouraging effects of the New Revised Curriculum, as shared by teachers, was its ability to create a more inclusive learning environment. With its clearer sequence, simplified structure, and learner-centered design, even students who previously struggled to keep pace or participate in class began to show signs of progress. Teachers observed that the more structured daily lessons helped reduce anxiety, especially for younger learners and those with developmental needs, by creating predictable routines and providing multiple entry points for participation. This finding aligns with Almendarez et al. (2022), who emphasized that simplified, consistent instructional design enhances participation and learning outcomes for students with varying readiness levels. For many teachers, inclusivity wasn't just about physical presence—it was about engagement, understanding, and involvement in daily classroom life.

This highlights how clearer lesson flow, repetition, and physical engagement opened doors for a wider range of learners. Movement-based activities, scaffolded instructions, and routines designed for early grades became powerful tools in creating inclusive spaces. Teachers shared how even small, intentional adjustments—like song-based openings or tactile activities—had a noticeable impact on focus and behavior. Participation was no longer limited to the academically confident; it extended to the quiet, the hesitant, and those still developing basic skills.

Marie, a Kindergarten teacher, emphasized how the New Revised Curriculum's consistent sequencing helped her manage a diverse group of learners, particularly those needing developmental support:

"Mas sayon na karon i-manage ang klase kay klaro na ang mga daily episode. Kabalo na pud ang mga bata sa sunod buhaton. Mas focused gyud sila kung structured ang klase ug naa silay physical activities. Sa una, dali sila madistract pero karon, murag mas kabalo na sila sa flow sa adlaw."-(Marie, Line 168)

(It's easier to manage the class now because the daily sequence is clearer. The kids know what comes next. They're more focused when lessons are structured and include physical activities. Before, they got distracted easily, but now, they seem to understand the flow of the day.)

Marie's reflection is supported by Almendarez et al. (2022), who found that cognitive engagement among young learners significantly improves when routines are predictable and include kinesthetic elements. For Marie, the shift

in structure helped not just with attention but with classroom management—giving her the confidence to create a space where every child could follow along.

Kaye, another Kindergarten teacher, echoed this experience. She found that even small changes in routine—like incorporating music at the start of the day—contributed to smoother classroom dynamics:

"Gamay ra nga adjustment, pero kung sayo magsugod sa morning routine nga kanta-kanta, murag smooth ang tibuk adlaw. Dili lang sila malipay, pero mas dali nako sila i-guide sa sunod buhaton." (Kaye, Line 135)

(Just a small adjustment, but if we start with a morning routine like singing, the whole day flows better. They're not just happy—they're easier to guide through the rest of the day.)

Kaye's insight reveals how even low-cost, practical strategies grounded in rhythm and repetition can support inclusive learning. As noted by Pianta et al. (2008), emotionally supportive and well-structured classroom environments are especially effective for young and at-risk learners. In this case, the New Revised Curriculum offered not only academic focus but the structure needed for these inclusive practices to flourish.

By creating more predictable and accessible routines, the New Revised Curriculum empowered teachers to ensure that no child was left behind—academically or emotionally. For learners who previously faded into the background, these thoughtful routines and structures became invitations to participate more fully. Teachers weren't simply delivering content—they were creating conditions where all learners, regardless of ability or personality, could belong and thrive.

This reveals that inclusion doesn't always require complex interventions. Often, it begins with the clarity of what comes next, the rhythm of a classroom song, or the consistency of how the day unfolds. And in that rhythm, even the quietest children found their place.

Subtheme 4: Alignment Between Curriculum and Learner-Centered Practice. As the New Revised Curriculum unfolded in classrooms, teachers began to experience a shift in how they approached instruction. With clearer learning outcomes and a more streamlined structure, the curriculum allowed them greater flexibility to adapt lessons to the needs and interests of their learners. Many teachers reported that instead of simply delivering prescribed content, they were now empowered to become facilitators of learning—designing classroom activities that connected better with their students' learning styles, environments, and personalities. This shift represented more than just a change in method; it marked a deeper alignment between what the curriculum intended and how learners actually engaged.

The move from rigid compliance to meaningful connection was a turning point for many educators. Teachers shared that with the curriculum's reduced breadth, they could integrate movement, music, games, and storytelling into their teaching. These strategies not only made lessons more enjoyable but also increased students' motivation and retention. As noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), effective curriculum implementation occurs when teachers can align instruction with learners' interests, cultural backgrounds, and prior knowledge—turning content into a bridge for meaningful engagement. The structure gave teachers the confidence to trust their instincts and be creative, knowing they were still aligned with learning standards. This learner-centered transformation created a space where students became active participants—curious, involved, and more confident.

Ben, a Grade 4 MAPEH teacher, illustrated how he reshaped the curriculum into interactive tasks that resonated with his learners:

"Sa PE, wala mi'y libro. Mao nga ako nalang maghimo og paagi nga malingaw ug makat-on ang mga bata. Ako silang pa-perform o pa-roleplay para mas ma-motivate sila. Usahay maghimo mi og mga eksena nga sila ang mag-instructor, para mutuo pud sila nga kabalo diay sila. Makita gyud nimo nga mas excited sila kung sila ang bida sa lesson. Mu-improvise ra pud ko kung unsay bagay sa ilahang kinaiya ug interest, labi na sa mga batang dili ganahan mobasa pero ganahan molihok." (Ben, Line 93)

(In PE, we don't have any books. So, I create ways for students to learn while having fun. I let them perform or roleplay to keep them motivated. Sometimes, we create scenes where they act as the instructor, so they start to believe that they actually know what they're doing. You can really see they're more excited when they get to be the star of the lesson. I also adjust based on their personality and interests—especially for kids who don't like to read but love to move.)

Ben's method reflects what Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasize: that instruction becomes more powerful when it is tailored to students' interests, learning preferences, and lived realities. By using roleplay and performance, he turned physical education into a space of self-expression and peer learning, shifting away from rote repetition toward a more empowering approach.

This captures a fundamental shift: teaching not only became more engaging but more meaningful. Teachers were no longer bound by rigid formats; instead, they could design lessons that honored learners' voices and abilities. As one student shared, as reported by Belle, a Grade one teacher:

"Mas ganahan na ko mo-eskwela karon kay mas sayon sabton ang leksyon. Sa una sige ra mi'g kanta, karon makabasa na ko gamay. Sauna, mosayaw ra mi, pero karon, nakat-on na ko mobasa og tibuok nga sentence. Makalingaw ang klase, pero makat-on sad gyud mi." -(Belle, Line 126)

(I enjoy going to school now because I understand the lessons better. Before, we just kept singing, but now I can already read a little. Before, we would just dance, but now I've learned how to read full words. Class is fun, but we also really learn.)

This simple yet powerful reflection shows how learner-centered teaching can directly impact not just engagement, but foundational learning itself. The transformation described by teachers and learners aligns with Tanangada and Sanga's (2021) assertion that even under-resourced educational reforms can succeed when guided by inclusive, student-focused philosophies. With creativity, structure, and trust in their learners' capabilities, teachers became architects of classrooms where learning came alive. Despite these inspiring classroom efforts, the broader realities of implementation told a more difficult story.

Theme 4: Growth Collaborator – Collaboration as A Pillar of Survival and Growth. When the New Revised Curriculum was introduced, it came with a wave of expectations but without the matching support structures. Teachers were met with new pacing guides, revised competencies, and little to no instructional materials. The pressure was high, and the guidance was often unclear. However, what could have been isolating became a collective effort. Teachers turned to each other—not out of mere convenience, but out of necessity. This theme explores how collaboration evolved from optional to essential, how teachers built their own systems of survival, and how those systems nurtured not only instructional quality but also emotional resilience. As noted by Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008), sustained teacher collaboration significantly enhances instructional practice, especially during periods of change or reform.

Amid systemic limitations, educators created their own communities of practice. Collaboration moved beyond formal meetings and became embedded in daily routines—through text groups, shared folders, weekly consultations, and spontaneous acts of kindness. From these informal yet consistent exchanges emerged not only solutions, but also trust and emotional safety. Teachers were no longer alone in navigating the complexities of the New Curriculum. Instead, they became one another's most valuable resource.

Subtheme 1: Collaboration as Lifeline During Reform. During the early days of the New Revised Curriculum implementation, many teachers felt overwhelmed by the lack of clear direction and sufficient materials. The sudden shift in competencies and pacing guides left little time for thorough preparation. With limited top-down support, educators found themselves navigating unfamiliar territory. In response, collaboration among colleagues quickly transitioned from optional to indispensable. Teachers instinctively leaned on one another for clarity, direction, and reassurance—proving that in times of systemic change, peer support often becomes the most immediate and reliable resource. This mirrors the findings of Vangrieken et al. (2022), who emphasized that collaborative engagement becomes a survival mechanism in poorly scaffolded reforms, enabling teachers to co-construct meaning and reduce professional isolation.

Latina, a tenured Grade 4 teacher, described the urgency of finding immediate solutions:

"Pag-abot sugod curriculum, wala gyud mi kabalo asa magsugod. Mao nga nakig-coordinate ko dayon sa kauban nakong Grade 4. Ang ilang plano, akong gigamit as guide para makabuhay pud ko. Kung wala sila, basin naglibog pa ko hangtod karon." – Latina (Line 120)

(When the curriculum starts, we didn't really know where to begin. So, I immediately coordinated with my fellow Grade 4 teachers. I used their plans as a guide to create my own. If it weren't for them, I'd probably still be confused.)

Richelle, a Grade 1 teacher, emphasized how quick help from others became crucial:

"Usahay mangayo ko'g idea sa uban Grade 1 teacher kung unsa ilang gi-extend nga activity. Mas dali gyud kung naa kay makashare kaysa maghuna-huna ra ko tanan." – Richelle (Line 141)

(Sometimes I ask other Grade 1 teachers what enrichment activity they used. It's easier when someone can share instead of thinking it all up by myself.)

Ben, a newly reassigned Grade 4 teacher, echoed this survival instinct:

"Bisan bag-o pa ko sa level, sa tabang sa uban, nakasugod ra gyud ko og tarong. Gi-explain nila unsa ang pasabot sa weekly plan, ug gi-share nila ilang mga sample activity." – Ben (Line 160)

(Even if I was new to the level, I managed to start properly with the help of others. They explained what the weekly plan meant and shared sample activities.)

This kind of peer-driven support is similar to what Vangrieken et al. (2022) describe as "mutual engagement," where colleagues actively co-construct understanding. It allowed teachers to survive the rollout stage when formal instruction was still unclear.

Subtheme 2: Systems of Sharing and Mutual Support. In the absence of centralized support systems, teachers across grade levels took the initiative to build their own grassroots solutions. Rather than wait for formal guidelines or digital repositories from the Department of Education, they created their own shared drives, collaborative group chats, and weekly planning discussions. These informal systems became lifelines—not only for accessing instructional materials but also for fostering a sense of collective accountability and belonging. This practice mirrors what Little, J. W. (2003) called "communities of practice," where sustained collaboration among educators facilitates professional learning through mutual engagement and knowledge-sharing. Additionally, Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) emphasized that strong professional communities positively impact both teaching practices and student achievement, especially when teachers share responsibility for instructional improvement.

Teachers did not wait for official repositories—they built their own. Kaye, a Kindergarten teacher, shared:

"Wala pa koy daghang nahibaw-an atong sugod sa school year. Pero naa ra koy ma-message pirme, mag-share pud sila ug mga sample activity o poster. Makaingon ko nga dako gyud to'g tabang para nako." – (Kaye, Line 124)

(I didn't know much at the start of the school year. But I always had someone I could message, and they would share sample activities or posters. It really helped me a lot.)

Joy elaborated on how her grade level team organized materials:

"Nagkasabot mi sa among grade level nga maghimo og shared folder sa Google Drive para mausa ang among mga gamit. Didto namo gibutang ang tanang lesson plans, assessment tools, ug bisan mga PowerPoint presentation. Kay usahay, naay panahon nga kalit lang ka og tapok o naay kinahanglan ipasa nga dali. Kung malimtan sa usa, dali ra ma-access sa uban. Dili na kinahanglan mangita pa og laing kopya or mangutana pa. Mura na gyud siya og team drive nga dali ra gyud makatabang labi na kung busy ang adlaw." – (Joy, Line 139)

(Our grade-level team agreed to create a shared Google Drive folder to centralize all our resources. We placed all our lesson plans, assessment tools, and even PowerPoint presentations there. Sometimes, there are unexpected meetings or urgent submissions, and when one of us forgets something, the others can access it easily. We no longer have to ask around or look for copies. It has really become like a team drive that helps a lot, especially on hectic days.)

Latina recalled how these systems reduced daily stress:

"Kada Biyernes, magtapok mi sa among mga ka-team. Maghisgot kung unsay buhaton sa sunod semana, unsay mga lesson nga lisod, ug unsay pacing na gamiton. Mao pud na nga panahon nga maklaro namo kung unsay kinahanglan usbon or i-adjust. Usahay didto pa mi magkat-on sa sakto nga pacing, kay makita nimo unsa na ang nahuman sa uban ug unsay epektibo nila nga approach. Dako gyud og tabang kay dili ka mag-inusara, makabati ka nga naay uban nga pareho nimo og agi." – (Latina, Line 143)

(Every Friday, our team would gather. It wasn't a formal meeting—we discussed what to do for the next week, which lessons were difficult, and what pacing we should follow. Sometimes, that's where we really learned the correct pacing, by hearing what others had already covered and what approaches worked for them. It helped a lot because you didn't feel alone—you felt like you had people who were going through the same journey with you.)

These practices echo the findings of Little, J. W. (2003) on "communities of practice", where professional knowledge is not solely acquired through formal training, but also constructed and disseminated collaboratively within the everyday flow of school life. In these informal spaces—such as spontaneous huddles in the faculty room or quick catch-ups before class—teachers engage in shared problem-solving, reflect on lesson delivery, and co-construct strategies based on lived classroom experiences.

For many of the participants, these moments became critical avenues for professional learning. Teachers like Latina found that casual weekly conversations helped clarify pacing, adjust teaching strategies, and align learning objectives across the grade level. Rather than relying entirely on formal workshops, educators depended on each other as knowledge resources—sharing templates, lesson pacing tips, or even moral support during challenging weeks.

This kind of organic collaboration is a hallmark of what Little, J. W. (2003) describes as a community of practice, where sustained interactions among practitioners foster a culture of mutual learning, improvement, and trust. Within such spaces, knowledge is not imposed top-down but emerges from shared experiences, feedback loops, and a

collective commitment to improve instruction for students. As a result, professional growth becomes embedded in the routine practices of teaching rather than being isolated in occasional seminars or formal trainings.

Subtheme 3: Collaboration Fostered Emotional Well-being. Beyond lesson plans and pacing guides, the New Revised Curriculum's abrupt implementation placed an emotional weight on teachers—many of whom were navigating overwhelming changes without sufficient guidance. In this landscape, emotional support from colleagues became just as vital as instructional help. Informal conversations during breaks, late-night messages in group chats, and after-class venting sessions served as an emotional release valve.

These social bonds did more than alleviate stress—they strengthened morale and helped teachers feel seen and supported. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) describe this phenomenon as "collaborative professionalism," where genuine human connection underpins sustainable professional growth. Similarly, Beltman et al. (2011) argue that emotional resilience in teaching is often reinforced through shared experiences and peer encouragement.

Belle, a tenured Grade 1 teacher, emphasized how emotional support became as important as instructional help:

"Importante kaayo nga makastorya ka og pareho nimo nga teacher. Maka-relate mo sa usag usa, labi na kung pareho mo og struggle. Dili lang ka pasagdan; makabati ka nga naa kay kauban nga maminaw." – Belle (Line 135)

(It's important to talk to fellow teachers. You relate with each other, especially when you're going through the same struggles. You're not just left alone; someone listens.)

Kyla shared how her co-teachers' presence eased her anxieties:

"Grabe gyud akong kaba sa una—di ko kabalo kung sakto ba akong gibuhay, labi na sa first few weeks of the Revised Curriculum Implemented. Pero sa among GC, bisan gabii na usahay, naa gyud dayon mu-reply kung naay pangutana. Dili lang kay makatabang sila og tubag, pero makabati pud ka nga dili ka nag-inusara. Maka-leson gyud sa pressure kay naa kay kauban nga kasabot sa imong kahadlok ug kalibog." – (Kyla, Line 166)

(I was very anxious at the start—I wasn't even sure if I was doing things right, especially during the first few weeks of the Revised Curriculum Implemented. But in our group chat, even late at night, someone would always respond when I had a question. It wasn't just about getting answers—it felt reassuring to know I wasn't alone. It really helped reduce the pressure because I had people who understood my fear and confusion.)

Marie, a Grade 4 teacher, emphasized how emotional support from colleagues helped her get through demanding school days:

"Bisan pa sa kakapoy—labina kung mag-check pa kag daghang papel, mag-prepare sa lesson, unya naa pay duty sa feeding o extracurricular—lain gyud ang feeling kung naa kay kauban nga kasabot nimo. Usahay, maski simple ra nga 'Maayo ra ka?' nga pangutana or tabang nga magbantay sa klase kung mangihi lang ka, dako na kaayo'g tabang. Makaingon gyud ko nga dili ra ko nag-inusara sa tanan. Naa koy masandigan nga maayong tawo." – (Marie, Line 148)

(Even with all the exhaustion—especially when you still have to check piles of papers, prepare lessons, and handle duties like feeding or extracurricular activities—it feels different when you have someone who truly understands. Sometimes, even a simple 'Are you okay?' or a quick favor to watch your class while you step out means so much. I can honestly say I'm not alone in everything. I have someone dependable beside me.)

This reflects what Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) call "collaborative professionalism," which thrives not just on task-based cooperation but on human connection. Emotional bonds formed in high-stress environments contribute to greater resilience (Beltman et al., 2011) and reduce burnout.

In the face of systemic gaps, human systems filled the void. Teacher collaboration served not only as a practical workaround but as a powerful force of encouragement and growth. It was through each other—not through formal memos or rigid modules—those teachers discovered strength, solutions, and solidarity. This spirit of collaboration not only sustained instruction but also created space for deeper introspection.

Theme 5: Teaching Learning Methodologist Amidst Systemic Change – Realigning Teaching Philosophies

As the New Revised Curriculum began to shape classroom instruction, its effects were not limited to content delivery or lesson planning—it also prompted teachers to reflect deeply on their role and purpose. Many educators, especially those in the early grades, found themselves facing difficult questions: *What kind of teacher do I want to be in this new system? What really matters in my classroom?* Faced with unclear pacing guides, limited teaching resources, and increased accountability, teachers began to move beyond just "teaching the curriculum" and toward redefining *why* they teach and *how* they connect with learners.

This shift reflects what Day (2004) describes as a return to “moral purpose” in teaching—a renewed focus on the deeper values that guide one’s work as an educator. Teachers began to see themselves not just as deliverers of knowledge, but as methodologists who choose and adapt strategies based on learner needs and personal conviction. For some, this meant letting go of strict, performance-based expectations and embracing slower, more focused learning. For others, it meant creating time to talk with students, listen to their struggles, and build stronger relationships. These actions echo Geert Kelchtermans’ (2009) view that teacher identity evolves through experiences and reflection, especially during times of educational reform. Teaching became more than meeting learning competencies—it became a balance of heart, skill, and personal belief, re-anchoring teachers in their commitment to nurture, inspire, and grow alongside their learners.

Subtheme 1: Realigning Teaching Philosophies Amid Systemic Change. The introduction of the New Revised Curriculum created a space for teachers to re-evaluate their deeper sense of purpose. For many, teaching had previously followed a predictable path: cover content, meet deadlines, prepare tests. But with the sudden shift in expectations and the lack of ready-made materials or uniform guides, educators found themselves in unfamiliar terrain. Rather than being paralyzed, many took this disruption as an opportunity to return to the core of their professional identity. What emerged was a renewed commitment to teaching with intention, heart, and clarity. This shift reflects what Kennedy (2021) describes as a pedagogical reawakening, where curriculum reform challenges educators to reconnect with their core teaching values and learner-centered intentions in the face of systemic change.

Karen, a Grade 1 teacher, reflected on how her practice evolved:

"Sa sinugdan, lisod gyud kay walay klaro nga materyales ug kami pa mismo ang maghimo sa tanan. Pero karon, nakakat-on ko nga pwede ra diay ko mag-adjust ug maghimo og simple pero epektibong paagi basta klaro ang tumong sa lesson. Ang importante, makasabot ang bata, dili lang matapos ang oras." (Karen, Line 149)

(At first, it was really difficult because there were no clear materials, and we had to make everything ourselves. But now, I’ve learned I can adjust and create simple but effective ways to teach, as long as the lesson objective is clear. What matters most is that the children understand—not just finishing the class period.)

Jade, a Grade 4 teacher, expressed a similar realization when it came to her role in shaping learner behavior:

"Karon, mas mo-focus ko unsaon pagtabang nila nga dili sila maulaw o mahadlok mangutana kung unsa ang wala nila nasabtan sa lesson. Ako gyud silang ginahangyo nga mosulti kung asa sila nalibog. Usahay gani, akong ipa-explain sa ila kung unsay nasabtan para mas mailhan nako asa sila dapita nasayop." (Jade, Line 138)

(Now, I focus more on how to help them so they don’t feel embarrassed or afraid to ask what they didn’t understand. I really encourage them to say where they are confused. Sometimes, I even ask them to explain what they’ve understood so I can know where the confusion lies.)

These reflections embody what Kennedy (2021) describes as a *pedagogical reawakening*—a moment where teachers shift from procedural delivery to reflective, learner-centered practice. The New Revised Curriculum, though framed as a structural reform, catalyzed deeper professional introspection among educators. Teachers were no longer merely executors of pacing guides; they became thoughtful facilitators of understanding, adjusting methods to suit their students’ needs and lived realities. This transformation is echoed in recent research by Kraft, Marinell, and Shen-Wei Yee (2020), who emphasize that meaningful instructional change occurs when teachers are given space to critically reflect, collaborate, and take ownership of pedagogy grounded in student impact.

Subtheme 2: Deeper Commitment to Learning Over Pacing. As the New Revised Curriculum unfolded in classrooms, many teachers began letting go of the traditional pressure to finish lessons by the clock. They discovered that real progress meant making space for understanding, even if it meant revisiting topics or slowing the pace. This subtheme captures the growing belief that learning depth matters more than lesson completion. For these teachers, the classroom became a space not just for instruction, but for insight—where students could absorb, reflect, and meaningfully engage with content at their own pace.

Jona, a Grade 4 teacher, reflected on how the reduced number of competencies in the New Revised Curriculum allowed her to prioritize student understanding over simply finishing the lessons:

"Sa una, basta mahuman lang ang topic, okay na. Usahay, maski kita pa mi nga wa gyud kasabot ang uban, ipadayon lang gihapon para lang makasunod sa schedule. Karon nga mas gamay na ang competencies kaysa sa K to 12, mas makapokus na ko sa unsay mas importante—kung nasabtan ba gyud nila. Kung kinahanglan, i-review namo ang lesson kaysa magpadayon nga walay klaro. Dili ko ganahan nga mo-graduate lang ang bata nga wala diay kasabot." (Jona, Line 165)

(Before, I was focused on finishing the topic just to stay on schedule. Sometimes, even if we saw that students didn’t really understand, we still moved forward. But now, with fewer competencies

than in the K to 12 curriculum, I can focus more on what really matters—whether they truly understand the lesson. If needed, we go back and review instead of pushing forward without clarity. I don't want a child to move up without fully understanding.)

Liza, a seasoned Grade 1 teacher, also spoke about how her own mindset toward pacing evolved: *"Dili na ko pareho sauna nga magdali og human sa topic. Mas gusto nako nga makasabot gyud ang bata. Kung kinahanglan, balik-balik lang basta ready na sila. Kay para nako, ang leksyon nga nasabtan, mas bililhon kaysa leksyon nga gitapos lang."* — (Liza, Line 147)

(I'm no longer the same as before, rushing to finish every topic. I'd rather the child truly understands it. If we need to repeat it, we will—because to me, a lesson that's understood is far more valuable than one that's merely completed.)

These sentiments reflect what Black and Wiliam (2009) define as assessment for learning—a formative process in which instruction adapts to the learner's readiness. Teachers transitioned from focusing on deadlines to emphasizing clarity, depth, and individual learning pace. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stress the importance of responsive instruction: educators should use real-time feedback to guide decisions and support struggling learners, even if it slows the curriculum's progression.

By embracing this deeper approach, teachers reshaped the culture of the classroom. Learning became less about keeping up, and more about catching on. In this way, the New Revised Curriculum acted not only as a policy shift but as a philosophical invitation—to prioritize comprehension over coverage, and learning over lesson plans.

Subtheme 3: Renewed Focus on Learning. As teachers navigated the shifting demands of the New Revised Curriculum, many began to experience a quiet transformation—not in policy, but in purpose. What initially began as a compliance with new mandates evolved into something more personal: a heartfelt recommitment to ensuring that real learning was happening. Teachers stopped asking, *"Did I finish the lesson?"* and began asking, *"Did my students really understand?"* This shift, subtle but powerful, reflected a deeper emotional investment in their learners. Teachers adjusted their pacing, repeated lessons when needed, and explored more flexible approaches based on how their students were responding. Learning became a shared journey, not a checklist.

This renewed focus highlights the emergence of empathy-driven instruction, where teaching was guided less by rigid plans and more by authentic learner needs. It aligns with the work of Lucas and Nacer (2021), who emphasize the importance of "pedagogical presence"—the ability of teachers to tune into the emotional and cognitive states of their students in real time. It also echoes Cruz and Salandanan's (2022) findings that when curriculum reform is implemented with learner-centered values, the outcome is not just academic success but increased student trust, participation, and motivation. In this way, teachers did not simply apply the curriculum—they humanized it.

Richelle, a seasoned Grade 1 teacher, reflected on this change:

"Makapamalandong gyud ka. Sa kadugay nakong nagtudlo, usahay kalimtan nato nga ang pinakaimportante diay kay ang bata mismo, dili lang ang leksyon." — (Richelle (Grade 1, Line 159)

(It really makes you reflect. After teaching for so long, sometimes we forget that the most important thing is the child—not just the lesson.)

Her statement aligns with the philosophy of Tanangada and Sanga (2021), who emphasize that sustainable curriculum reform must be anchored in learner-centered principles. When children become the focal point, pedagogy evolves into a nurturing act—not just an instructional one.

Marie, a Kindergarten teacher, offered a heartfelt perspective about the way she began to see her learners:

"Karong panahona, akong ginatan-aw ang bata isip bata. Dili lang siya learner kundi usa ka bata nga naay kaugalingong pagbati ug panginahanglan. Usahay ang ilang panginahanglan kay dili leksyon kundi paminawon ra sila." — (Marie, Line 155)

(These days, I see the child as a child—not just a learner but a person with feelings and needs. Sometimes, what they need isn't the lesson—it's just to be listened to)

Marie's reflection echoes Noddings' (2012) ethic of care, a pedagogical approach that centers on empathy, attentiveness, and emotional support in education. In this view, learning is deeply human, and teachers must recognize and respond to the whole child—not just their academic output.

Latina, a Grade 4 teacher nearing retirement, shared how this shift brought a renewed sense of purpose:

"Kaniadto, trabaho ra gyud ni siya. Karon, murag na-remind ko nganong nisulod ko sa pagtudlo. Dili lang kay magtudlo, kundi magtabang. Mas ganahan ko makadungog og pangutana sa estudyante karon kaysa maghuman lang og lesson." — (Latina, Line 119)

(Before, this was just work. But now, I've been reminded why I entered teaching. Not just to teach—but to help. I enjoy hearing student questions now more than just finishing a lesson.)

This shift from transactional to transformational teaching reflects the concept of reflective pedagogy (Schon, 1983)—where teachers examine not only their methods but their purpose, choosing intentionality over habit.

Across these reflections, the central message was clear: curriculum reform, at its most powerful, is not about new content or new schedules. It is about awakening old values. Theme Five's third subtheme shows how, amidst the pressure of change, many educators rediscovered their purpose—not just to complete a syllabus, but to guide, nurture, and listen to learners with renewed focus and compassion.

As the number of competencies was reduced, teachers found more space to engage meaningfully with students and reflect on their instructional choices. This shift echoes Fullan's (2001) idea that real educational change happens when reform connects with teachers' moral purpose and professional identity. Likewise, Palmer (2007) emphasizes that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher, not just technical skill.

In the context of the New Revised Curriculum, educators were not merely adjusting methods—they were reawakening the heart of their profession. What emerged was not only instructional improvement, but also a deepened sense of calling to shape both minds and values in every classroom.

In summary, from crafting their own materials to reimagining what it means to teach, the teachers in this study showed that change doesn't happen in policy documents—it happens in classrooms. Through five themes, their stories revealed a journey of grit, growth, and purpose. With limited training and few materials, they learned from each other and their own creativity to make the curriculum come alive. Peer support became their lifeline, and student engagement their compass. In the end, the reform wasn't just about competencies or pacing guides—it was about rediscovering what truly matters: the heart of teaching.

EPILOGUE

This study explored the lived experiences of public-school teachers in the Lapu-Lapu City Division during the first-year implementation of the New Revised Curriculum in School Year 2024–2025. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, the research uncovered five major themes: (1) Navigating the Curriculum Shift through Resourcefulness, Creativeness, and Resilience; (2) Professional Growth and Enthusiasm; (3) Learner Engagement Champion with Focused Content Delivery; (4) Growth Collaborator – Collaboration as a Pillar of Survival and Growth; and (5) Teaching Learning Methodologist Amidst Systemic Change – Realigning Teaching Philosophies. These themes reflect both the struggles and the strength of educators who have adapted to systemic change through practical ingenuity, collaboration, and deep commitment to their learners.

Implications of the Study

The New Revised Curriculum was designed to strengthen learners' foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, and life-readiness, and to make learning more relevant to their everyday lives (DepEd, 2023). However, the achievement of these goals is largely dependent on the readiness, resilience, and continuous support of teachers.

Adaptation to the curriculum reform demanded more than compliance; it called for creativity, emotional commitment, and resourcefulness. Teachers responded by crafting their own instructional materials, actively seeking collegial support, and reshaping their pedagogical approaches to meet the evolving needs of their learners. These findings affirm Avalos' (2011) assertion that meaningful professional development emerges from teachers' real-life challenges and reflective practices. For these efforts to be sustained, teachers must be provided with more than one-time training; they need regular access to contextualized resources, dedicated time for collaborative planning, and embedded peer coaching that values their voices and realities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Effective curriculum reform requires more than policy issuance—it demands practical, ongoing support where implementation matters most: the classroom. This study underscores the necessity of sustained mentoring, teacher-led innovation, and emotional scaffolding throughout the transition process. DepEd officials and curriculum planners must recognize that what works in policy must also resonate in practice. Without continuous follow-up and collaborative structures, reforms risk falling short of their intended impact. As Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) affirm, authentic professional collaboration is not optional—it is foundational to system-wide educational improvement.

This study highlights the critical importance of grounding policy decisions in the lived experiences of teachers—the very individuals responsible for enacting reform. For curriculum developers and policy brief writers, authentic and sustainable change emerges not from top-down mandates but from engaging educators as co-creators of

transformation. As Fullan (2007) affirms, the success of any educational reform depends on the meaningful involvement of teachers who bring policy to life in everyday classroom practice.

The study affirms that well-supported teachers contribute significantly to positive student outcomes. When educators are empowered through training, collaboration, and adequate resources, learners demonstrate greater engagement, motivation, and academic success. Lessons become more meaningful, cultivating curiosity and confidence in students. Gu and Day (2013) note that emotionally resilient teachers often foster stronger learning environments, even in challenging contexts. Community involvement also grows as parents and stakeholders witness the dedication and progress of both teachers and students.

Therefore, this study illuminated how the success of the New Revised Curriculum rested not merely on its design but on the shoulders of the teachers who brought it to life. It was not policy alone that shaped classroom realities, but the quiet persistence of educators who crafted materials from scratch, leaned on peers for guidance, and reimagined their roles amid uncertainty. These acts of resilience affirmed that meaningful reform was lived, not dictated. While policymakers provided the blueprint, it was the teachers who built the structure—often with limited tools but boundless dedication. In classrooms where teachers felt supported, learners thrived, curiosity bloomed, and communities took notice. The findings called for a deeper commitment to sustained, context-aware professional development and reminded all stakeholders that lasting change begins with those who teach.

Conclusion

This research journey captured not just data, but human stories—of late nights spent preparing materials, quiet mentorship between colleagues, and small classroom victories that reminded teachers of their purpose. Each theme reflects how educators showed up—not because they were told, but because they cared. They adapted, collaborated, and persevered in the face of uncertainty. Their responses show that educational transformation lives not in policy memos, but in the hearts of those who teach.

Their voices—often underrepresented in formal education discourse—serve as compelling reminders that meaningful reform begins with truly listening to those at the frontlines. Beneath each coded theme emerged lived realities, shaped by both frustration and resilience, uncertainty and hope. This reflection affirms the value of qualitative research not merely as a tool for data generation, but as a means of illuminating the humanity behind educational systems. Teachers are not passive recipients of reform—they are curriculum shapers, community builders, and everyday frontliners of learning. As Avalos (2011) and Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) argue, teacher insights must inform the foundational processes through which educational reforms are designed, implemented, and sustained.

Ultimately, this study serves as both a document of findings and a tribute—to every teacher who stayed, adjusted, and gave their best despite limited resources. The real measure of curriculum success lies not only in national assessments, but in the strength, creativity, and compassion of those who make learning possible every day. When driven by purpose and supported by responsive policy, education holds the power to transform each learner's life (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight that meaningful curriculum reform is not realized in policy documents alone—it unfolds in the day-to-day realities of classrooms, shaped by the hands and hearts of teachers. In light of these findings, the following recommendations are offered to strengthen both the support mechanisms for the New Revised Curriculum and future inquiries that may build upon this work. These are divided into specific and general recommendations, grounded in evidence and aligned with the lived experiences of those who implement reform on the frontlines of Philippine education.

At the core of these recommendations is the call for sustained, context-sensitive support for teachers. The Department of Education (DepEd) is encouraged to move beyond one-time training and offer professional development that is continuous, responsive, and embedded in the realities of daily teaching. This includes regular subject-specific workshops, access to localized and grade-appropriate instructional materials, classroom-based coaching, and reflective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers can collaborate and problem-solve together.

As the findings show, adaptation to the New Revised Curriculum demanded creativity, emotional labor, and personal sacrifice—from designing their own visuals to using personal funds for materials. These are not isolated stories but reflections of a larger systemic need: teachers need to be supported not just as implementers of reform, but as co-creators of its success. Effective professional development must be long-term, teacher-driven, and situated in the classroom context where learning happens (Avalos, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Equally critical is the role of school leaders and division officials. Their influence extends far beyond managerial functions—they shape the environment in which reform is either nurtured or stifled. Principals and supervisors should be empowered to build school cultures grounded in trust, collaboration, and openness to innovation. Teachers thrive

in spaces where their ideas are heard and their efforts acknowledged. Leadership programs must therefore include training in distributed leadership, coaching strategies, and evidence-informed decision-making (Fullan, 2016).

While this study offers a close look at the experiences of Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 teachers in selected Lapu-Lapu City schools, further research is needed to broaden the understanding of New Revised Curriculum implementation. Future studies should expand in scope to include a variety of grade levels, subject areas, and school settings—particularly rural, multigrade, or under-resourced schools that may face unique challenges. The richness of teacher voices across these contexts will deepen our understanding of what makes reform truly equitable and inclusive.

Moreover, longitudinal research is recommended to examine how teacher practices, learner engagement, and institutional support systems evolve over time. Short-term studies offer a snapshot, but long-term tracking can uncover whether professional growth is sustained, which interventions are most effective, and how reforms shift as they mature. These insights are crucial to keeping the New Revised Curriculum responsive to real-world classroom needs (Patton, 2015).

There is also value in conducting replication studies in other regions or divisions. Triangulating findings across contexts not only strengthens the credibility of insights but also highlights common threads and divergent experiences. Such comparative perspectives can inform national policy refinement with both nuance and clarity (Nowell et al., 2017).

Furthermore, methodological innovation is encouraged. Future studies might consider integrating mixed methods—blending narrative interviews with classroom observations, learner outputs, or teacher reflection journals. Addressing limitations such as sample size or short timeframes will enhance the trustworthiness and richness of future inquiries (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In essence, these recommendations echo what teachers have already begun to show: that reform is not a static event, but a living process. When teachers are listened to, supported, and trusted as professionals, they do not merely comply—they lead. Supporting this leadership is not only a policy imperative but a moral one, ensuring that reform is felt, lived, and sustained in every Filipino classroom.

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