



MATATAG Curriculum Rollout: Understanding Challenges for Effective Implementation

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Abstract:

This study examines the challenges and implications associated with the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, a significant educational reform initiative in the Philippines. Through an integrative literature review, encompassing academic research, news articles, and policy documents, key findings highlight the multifaceted nature of challenges, including teacher readiness, support systems, inclusive education, and equity concerns. The study emphasizes the critical importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess curriculum effectiveness and address emerging obstacles. Recommendations include investing in comprehensive teacher training, enhancing support systems, and promoting inclusive practices to ensure the success of the MATATAG Curriculum. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and accountability, stakeholders can overcome challenges and harness the transformative potential of curriculum reform to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and quality education system in the Philippines.

Keywords: MATATAG Curriculum, curriculum reform, Philippines, challenges, teacher readiness

Introduction:

In response to concerns about the effectiveness of the Philippine education system, particularly highlighted by the perceived weaknesses of the K to 12 program, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum as a strategic initiative to address these challenges. The MATATAG Curriculum, also known as "Bansang Makabata, Batang Makabansa," aims to prioritize the mastery of literacy and numeracy skills among learners while decongesting the existing curriculum to focus on foundational skills.

The introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum follows a period of scrutiny over the educational outcomes of Filipino learners, as evidenced by their weak performance in various assessments. Issues such as overloaded curriculum, excessive teaching demands, and an overwhelming academic load have hindered the mastery of fundamental skills like reading and mathematics (Tarraya, 2023). Consequently, there has been a growing demand for curriculum reforms that prioritize the development of core competencies and address the diverse needs of learners (De Guzman, 2003).

The MATATAG Curriculum, launched under the leadership of Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte, represents a concerted effort to address these concerns by streamlining the curriculum and focusing on key competencies. It aims to reduce the number of competencies and emphasize the development of literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills among Kindergarten to Grade 3 learners (Presidential Communication Office, 2023). By doing so, it seeks to improve learning outcomes and equip students with the essential skills needed for future success in a rapidly changing world.

However, the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is not without its challenges. Initial pilot runs have revealed various obstacles, including the need for appropriate implementation approaches, inadequate government policies for inclusive education, and technical problems in implementation (Javier, 2023). Moreover, issues such as teacher readiness, lack of access to information resources, and infrastructural limitations pose significant challenges to the effective rollout of the curriculum (Macasero, 2023).

This paper explores these challenges in detail and propose strategies for addressing them to ensure the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. By identifying key areas of concern and providing actionable recommendations, this study aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to improve the quality and relevance of education in the Philippines.





Literature Review:

The literature on educational reform in the Philippines provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with curriculum changes, such as the introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on curriculum reform efforts, educational outcomes, and the factors influencing the successful implementation of new curricula.

Challenges in Philippine Education Reform

Numerous studies have highlighted the persistent challenges facing the Philippine education system. Abalde and Oco (2023) emphasize the need to address weaknesses in student performance, particularly in areas such as reading and mathematics. These challenges are exacerbated by factors such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and teacher shortages (Guiaselon, et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Philippine education system has historically struggled with curriculum overload, with educators facing immense pressure to cover a wide range of competencies within constrained timeframes (Pillay & Panth, 2022).

The rationale behind curriculum reform efforts, such as the MATATAG Curriculum, is rooted in the desire to improve educational outcomes and address the diverse needs of learners. Gouédard, et al. (2020) argues that curriculum reforms should prioritize the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and socio-emotional competencies. By streamlining the curriculum and focusing on foundational skills, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to provide students with the necessary tools for success in an increasingly complex and competitive global environment (Abragan, et al., 2022).

Teacher Readiness and Support Systems

Teacher readiness and support systems play a crucial role in the successful implementation of new curricula. Padillo, et al. (2021) highlight the importance of providing teachers with adequate training, resources, and professional development opportunities to effectively navigate curriculum changes. Moreover, teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and instructional practices significantly influence student learning outcomes (Hajan, et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential to establish support systems that empower teachers and foster a positive learning environment.

The MATATAG Curriculum seeks to promote inclusive education and address disparities in learning outcomes among diverse student populations. However, challenges related to inclusive education persist, including inadequate government policies, lack of resources, and infrastructural limitations (DepEd Memorandum 54, s. 2023). To ensure equitable access to quality education, policymakers must prioritize the needs of marginalized and underserved communities and implement targeted interventions to address systemic barriers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential components of curriculum reform efforts. DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2015, emphasizes the importance of collecting data, soliciting feedback from stakeholders, and adjusting strategies based on empirical evidence. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and identifying areas for improvement, policymakers can ensure that educational reforms align with the evolving needs of learners and educators.

The literature on curriculum reform in the Philippines underscores the multifaceted nature of educational challenges and the importance of holistic approaches to address them. By drawing on insights from existing research, policymakers can develop evidence-based strategies to support the successful implementation of initiatives like the MATATAG Curriculum and ultimately improve educational outcomes for all learners.

Methodology:

An exploratory integrative literature review was conducted to delve into the complexity of curriculum reform challenges and anticipate potential obstacles associated with the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines. This methodology integrated various sources, including academic studies, reports, news articles, magazines, and other literatures, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The research methodology involved the following steps:

Initially, a comprehensive search was conducted across diverse sources to gather relevant literature on curriculum reform efforts in the Philippines, with a specific focus on the MATATAG Curriculum. This process involved accessing academic databases, online repositories, news archives, magazines, and official documents. The gathered literature encompassed a wide range of sources to capture diverse perspectives and insights into curriculum reform challenges and strategies.

The identified literature was critically analyzed to extract key themes, trends, and patterns related to curriculum reform and its implications. Special attention was given to factors influencing the successful implementation of new curricula, including teacher readiness, support systems, inclusive education practices, and monitoring mechanisms. The analysis involved synthesizing information from various sources, coding relevant data, and categorizing findings to identify commonalities and discrepancies across different studies.

Drawing on insights from the literature review and analysis, an educational projection and prediction were formulated to anticipate potential challenges of the MATATAG Curriculum. This process involved extrapolating findings from existing research to forecast obstacles and barriers that could affect the implementation of the new curriculum. Emphasis was placed on identifying areas of concern such as teacher preparedness, infrastructural limitations, policy gaps, and equity issues, and projecting their potential impact on educational outcomes.

Based on the educational projection and prediction, recommendations and implications were derived to guide future curriculum reform efforts in the Philippines. Strategies for addressing anticipated challenges of the MATATAG Curriculum were proposed, drawing on insights from the integrated literature review. These recommendations aimed to inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders about potential areas of intervention and support required to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of the new curriculum.





Findings and Discussion:

Complexity of Curriculum Reform Challenges in the Philippines

Curriculum reform in the Philippines has long been recognized as a crucial avenue for improving the quality and relevance of education. However, the implementation of new curricula, such as the MATATAG Curriculum, has been fraught with challenges that underscore the multifaceted nature of educational reform efforts. This study delves into the complexities surrounding curriculum reform in the Philippines, highlighting the diverse dimensions of challenges encountered during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

One of the primary challenges identified in the study is the issue of teacher readiness. Research by Padillo, et al. (2021) emphasizes the pivotal role of teachers in curriculum implementation and underscores the importance of ensuring that educators are adequately prepared to navigate new curriculum frameworks. However, inadequate training, limited resources, and resistance to change among teachers pose significant obstacles to the successful rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Infrastructure limitations also present formidable challenges to curriculum reform efforts in the Philippines. A study by Teixeira, et al. (2017) highlights the critical importance of educational infrastructure in supporting effective teaching and learning practices. However, many schools in the Philippines grapple with inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient learning materials, which impede the implementation of innovative curriculum initiatives such as the MATATAG Curriculum.

Policy gaps further compound the challenges of curriculum reform in the Philippines. Despite efforts to enact education reforms, inconsistencies in policy implementation and bureaucratic hurdles continue to hinder progress in the education sector. The lack of alignment between policy objectives and on-the-ground realities poses significant challenges to the effective implementation of new curricula, undermining efforts to improve educational outcomes.

Equity issues also loom large in the context of curriculum reform in the Philippines. Research by Perry and McConney (2010) underscores the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities to ensure equitable access to quality education. However, marginalized communities often face systemic barriers that limit their participation in educational reform initiatives (Ciuffetelli Parker & Conversano, 2021). Addressing equity concerns requires targeted interventions to bridge the gap between privileged and underserved learners and promote inclusive education practices.

The findings of this study underscore the need for a holistic approach to address the diverse challenges of curriculum reform in the Philippines. Concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, and stakeholders are essential to overcome barriers related to teacher readiness, infrastructure limitations, policy gaps, and equity issues. By adopting a collaborative and inclusive approach, stakeholders can work together to navigate the complexities of curriculum reform and ensure the successful implementation of initiatives such as the MATATAG Curriculum.

Teacher Readiness and Support Systems in Curriculum Implementation

A pivotal aspect underscored by the study is the indispensable role of teacher readiness and robust support systems in the seamless implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Extensive literature underscores the significance of equipping teachers with requisite training, resources, and continuous professional development to adeptly navigate curriculum transitions. Moreover, the establishment of comprehensive support mechanisms aimed at empowering educators and cultivating conducive learning environments emerges as imperative for the successful delivery of the novel curriculum.

Teacher readiness is paramount in ensuring the effective execution of curriculum reforms. Research by Buabeng-Andoh (2012) emphasizes that adequately prepared teachers are better equipped to embrace and integrate new pedagogical approaches into their instructional practices. However, studies reveal pervasive concerns regarding the readiness of Filipino educators to implement curriculum changes, with many facing challenges related to pedagogical knowledge gaps, inadequate training, and limited access to instructional materials (Abragan, et al., 2022).

Professional development plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher readiness and efficacy in curriculum implementation. Findings from the study conducted by Germuth (2018) underscore the positive impact of targeted professional development programs in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and competencies to navigate curriculum reforms successfully. By providing ongoing training and support, educators can enhance their pedagogical practices, adapt to curriculum changes, and effectively cater to the diverse needs of learners.

In addition to individual teacher readiness, the establishment of robust support systems is essential for the effective delivery of the MATATAG Curriculum. Research by Roos and Borkoski (2021) highlights the importance of creating supportive school cultures that prioritize teacher well-being and professional growth. Supportive environments foster collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, enabling educators to thrive amidst the complexities of curriculum reform initiatives.

Moreover, mentorship programs and peer networks play a crucial role in supporting teachers during curriculum transitions. Studies by Cornu (2005) emphasize the value of mentorship in providing guidance, encouragement, and practical insights to novice educators. By facilitating peer learning and collaboration, mentorship programs contribute to the development of a community of practice wherein teachers can share best practices, seek guidance, and collectively navigate curriculum challenges.

Furthermore, the provision of adequate resources and infrastructure is essential for supporting teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Research by Tety (2016) underscores the importance of ensuring access to instructional materials, technology tools, and conducive learning environments. Insufficient resources can impede curriculum delivery and limit the effectiveness of teaching strategies, underscoring the need for targeted investments in educational infrastructure.

The study highlights the critical importance of teacher readiness and robust support systems in the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. By prioritizing professional development, fostering supportive school cultures, and providing adequate resources, policymakers and educational leaders can empower teachers to effectively navigate curriculum changes and promote positive learning outcomes for all students.

Inclusive Education and Equity Concerns in Curriculum Implementation





Inclusive education and equity concerns emerge as critical challenges with the potential to impact the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Despite concerted efforts to promote inclusive educational practices, persistent issues such as inadequate government policies, resource shortages, and infrastructural limitations continue to pose barriers to equitable access to quality education for all learners. This section delves into the multifaceted nature of inclusive education challenges and equity concerns, drawing insights from existing literature and research.

Inclusive education, characterized by its commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities for all learners, remains a cornerstone of educational reform efforts worldwide. However, the realization of inclusive education principles faces numerous challenges in the Philippine context. A study by Peters (2004) highlights the inadequacy of government policies and frameworks in supporting inclusive education initiatives, leading to fragmented implementation efforts and inconsistent practices across schools. Without robust policy support, the effective integration of diverse learners into mainstream educational settings becomes increasingly challenging.

Resource shortages, including limited funding allocations and inadequate provision of support services, further exacerbate equity concerns in education. Research by Churchwell, et al. (2020) underscores the detrimental impact of resource disparities on marginalized and underserved communities, perpetuating inequities in access to quality education. Insufficient resources hinder schools' capacity to implement inclusive practices effectively, resulting in disparities in learning opportunities and outcomes for students with diverse needs.

Furthermore, infrastructural limitations pose significant barriers to inclusive education implementation, particularly in rural and remote areas. A study by Gal, et al. (2010) highlights the lack of accessible facilities and accommodations for learners with disabilities, limiting their participation in mainstream educational settings. Inadequate infrastructure not only impedes physical access to schools but also restricts the implementation of inclusive teaching methodologies and accommodations, further marginalizing vulnerable student populations.

Addressing the challenges of inclusive education and equity requires a multifaceted approach encompassing policy reforms, resource mobilization, and capacity-building initiatives. Policy advocacy plays a crucial role in influencing legislative frameworks and institutional arrangements to prioritize inclusive education. Strengthening policy coherence and coordination at the national and local levels can enhance the alignment of inclusive education initiatives with broader education reform agendas, fostering a conducive environment for sustainable change.

Resource mobilization efforts are essential to address resource shortages and infrastructure deficits in education. Public-private partnerships, donor collaborations, and innovative financing mechanisms offer avenues for mobilizing additional resources to support inclusive education initiatives (Councils, 2014). By leveraging external funding sources and optimizing existing resources, policymakers can bridge resource gaps and enhance the capacity of schools to cater to diverse learner needs.

Capacity-building programs for educators and school administrators are integral to promoting inclusive education practices and fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion within educational institutions. Professional development initiatives that provide training on inclusive pedagogies, differentiated instruction, and classroom management strategies empower teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of all students (Salend, 2010). Moreover, leadership development programs equip school administrators with the knowledge and skills to create inclusive school environments that celebrate diversity and promote equitable access to education.

Inclusive education and equity concerns pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to enact policy reforms, mobilize resources, and build capacity within the education sector. By prioritizing inclusive education principles and fostering a culture of equity and inclusion, stakeholders can work towards realizing the vision of providing quality education for all learners, irrespective of their background or abilities.

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: Enhancing Curriculum Implementation

A central finding of the study underscores the imperative for continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the efficacy of the MATATAG Curriculum and mitigate emerging challenges. The literature underscores the significance of data-driven decision-making, stakeholder feedback incorporation, and adaptive strategy adjustments based on empirical evidence. By consistently monitoring curriculum implementation and identifying improvement areas, policymakers can ensure that educational reforms align with the evolving needs of learners and educators, thereby bolstering the quality and relevance of education in the Philippines.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation serve as indispensable tools for gauging the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and informing evidence-based decision-making. As noted by Young and Kim, (2010), ongoing assessment enables policymakers and educators to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and make timely interventions to enhance educational outcomes. By collecting and analyzing relevant data on curriculum delivery, student performance, and teacher capacity, education authorities gain valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented curriculum, facilitating targeted interventions to address areas of concern.

Furthermore, soliciting feedback from various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and community members, is essential for capturing diverse perspectives and experiences related to curriculum implementation. A study by Smith and Benavot (2019) emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement in curriculum evaluation, highlighting its role in fostering transparency, accountability, and ownership among key actors. By actively involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the on-the-ground realities of curriculum implementation, identify systemic challenges, and co-create solutions in partnership with affected communities.

Adaptive management approaches, characterized by their flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances, are instrumental in addressing emerging challenges and optimizing curriculum effectiveness. According to Fernández-Giménez, et al. (2019), adaptive management principles prioritize iterative learning, experimentation, and adaptation, enabling education systems to navigate complexity and uncertainty effectively. By embracing a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, policymakers can leverage emerging insights to refine curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and support mechanisms, thereby enhancing the overall quality and relevance of education.





Moreover, investing in robust monitoring and evaluation infrastructure, including data collection systems, evaluation frameworks, and capacity-building initiatives, is essential for building institutional capacity and fostering a culture of evidence-based decision-making. Research by Naidoo (2011) underscores the need for long-term investment in monitoring and evaluation capacity, highlighting its role in promoting accountability, transparency, and learning within education systems. By equipping stakeholders with the tools and resources necessary to collect, analyze, and utilize data effectively, education authorities can strengthen their ability to assess curriculum implementation, identify areas for improvement, and drive continuous quality enhancement efforts.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are indispensable processes for enhancing the effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum and addressing emerging challenges in the Philippine education system. By adopting data-driven decision-making, soliciting stakeholder feedback, and embracing adaptive management principles, policymakers can ensure that curriculum reforms are responsive to the evolving needs of learners and educators, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in education.

Conclusion:

This study has provided valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges associated with the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines. Through an integrative literature review encompassing academic research, news articles, and policy documents, key findings have emerged regarding the complexities of curriculum reform, the critical importance of teacher readiness and support systems, the imperative of inclusive education and equity considerations, and the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a significant initiative aimed at addressing longstanding issues in the Philippine education system, particularly concerning the quality and relevance of curriculum content and delivery. However, as evidenced by the findings of this study, successful curriculum implementation requires careful consideration of various factors, including teacher preparedness, resource allocation, policy alignment, and social equity.

Moving forward, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must work collaboratively to overcome the challenges identified in this study and maximize the potential of the MATATAG Curriculum to improve educational outcomes for all learners. This entails investing in comprehensive teacher training programs, enhancing support systems for educators, addressing infrastructural limitations, and promoting inclusive practices that cater to the diverse needs of learners.

Furthermore, the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential for tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement, and driving evidence-based decision-making in curriculum reform initiatives. By continuously assessing the effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum and adapting strategies based on empirical evidence, education authorities can ensure that educational reforms remain responsive to the evolving needs of learners and educators.

While the challenges of curriculum reform in the Philippines are formidable, they are not insurmountable. By fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and accountability, stakeholders can harness the transformative potential of the MATATAG Curriculum to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and quality education system for future generations.

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