



The New MATATAG Curriculum in the Lens of the 21st-Century 7Cs

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Osias Kit T. Kilag

PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0845-3373>

Glorybie C. Galve

Department of Education, Division of Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2682-4290>

Francisca T. Uy

ECT Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Buanoy, Balamban, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2180-5874>

John Michael V. Sasan

PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5987-6937>

Abstract:

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a comprehensive framework for the holistic development of Filipino learners, aligning with the demands of the 21st century. Through a comparative analysis, this study examines the curriculum's alignment with 21st-century skills frameworks and identifies areas for further enhancement. The analysis reveals a strong emphasis on core 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, as well as integration of character education and citizenship development. Additionally, the curriculum demonstrates attention to cultural literacy and multicultural competence, fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity and global interconnectedness. Despite these strengths, opportunities for pedagogical improvement were identified, including the integration of technology-enabled learning experiences and enhancement of assessment practices. Addressing these areas of opportunity will be crucial for ensuring that the MATATAG Curriculum remains relevant and effective in preparing Filipino learners for the challenges and opportunities of the modern world.

Keywords: MATATAG Curriculum, 21st-century skills, character education, citizenship development, cultural literacy

Introduction:

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, the education sector faces the critical task of preparing learners to thrive in the complexities of the 21st century. The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, like many educational institutions worldwide, recognizes the imperative of equipping learners with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the modern world. Central to this vision is the DepEd's commitment to producing holistically developed Filipino learners, as articulated in DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 (DepEd, 2019).

Aligned with this vision, the MATATAG Curriculum emerges as a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering holistic development among Filipino learners. Rooted in the DepEd's 21st century skills framework, the MATATAG Curriculum integrates skill sets culled from international and local competency frameworks to redefine education in light of the evolving societal and economic landscape (DepEd, 2019). This curriculum seeks to empower learners with the requisite competencies to excel in work and life, fostering attributes such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy.

At the heart of the MATATAG Curriculum lie the four domains of 21st century skills: Information, Media, and Technology Skills; Learning and Innovation Skills; Communication Skills; and Life and Career Skills (DepEd, 2019). These domains encompass a wide array of competencies, ranging from information literacy to socio-emotional skills, reflecting the multifaceted nature of modern education.

As the educational landscape continues to evolve, it becomes imperative to evaluate the efficacy of initiatives such as the MATATAG Curriculum in preparing learners for the demands of the 21st century. This research aims to delve into the alignment of the MATATAG Curriculum with the 21st century 7Cs—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, character education, citizenship, and cultural literacy—and explore its implications for educational practice and learner outcomes.



Through a comprehensive analysis of the MATATAG Curriculum and its alignment with the 21st century 7Cs, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational reform and curriculum development in the Philippines, providing insights into the strategies for fostering holistic development among Filipino learners in the 21st century.

Literature Review:

The literature surrounding 21st century skills and curriculum development provides valuable insights into the evolution of educational frameworks aimed at preparing learners for the demands of the modern world. This literature review explores key concepts and research findings related to 21st century skills, curriculum alignment, and educational reform, laying the foundation for understanding the significance of initiatives such as the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines.

The concept of 21st century skills emerged as a response to the rapidly changing socio-economic landscape characterized by globalization, technological advancements, and the rise of knowledge-based economies (Voogt & Roblin, 2012). Early frameworks, such as those proposed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) in the United States, emphasized a broad set of skills encompassing core subjects, learning and innovation skills, information, media, and technology skills, and life and career skills (Voogt & Roblin, 2012). These frameworks underscored the importance of competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy in preparing learners for success in the 21st century.

Curriculum alignment refers to the intentional design of educational programs to ensure that learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment practices are congruent with desired outcomes (Webb, 1997). In the context of 21st century skills, curriculum alignment involves integrating skill development across subject areas and educational levels to foster holistic development among learners. Research suggests that aligned curricula promote deeper learning, enhance student engagement, and better prepare learners for college and career success (Steiner, 2019).

Educators play a pivotal role in implementing curriculum reforms and fostering the development of 21st century skills among learners. Research indicates that pedagogical approaches emphasizing inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and collaborative problem-solving are effective in promoting skill development aligned with the demands of the 21st century (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). Additionally, the integration of technology into teaching and learning processes has emerged as a key strategy for enhancing digital literacy and preparing learners for the digital age (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Case studies and best practices from around the world offer valuable insights into the implementation of 21st century skills frameworks in diverse educational contexts. For example, Singapore's 21st Century Competencies Framework emphasizes the development of critical and inventive thinking, communication, collaboration, and information skills through interdisciplinary learning experiences (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2013). Similarly, Finland's education system is renowned for its holistic approach to curriculum design, which integrates 21st century skills with traditional academic subjects (Sahlberg, 2011).

Despite the growing emphasis on 21st century skills and curriculum alignment, challenges remain in translating policy into practice and assessing the effectiveness of educational reforms. Issues such as teacher readiness, resource constraints, and cultural factors can impact the implementation of new curricular frameworks (Anderson & Dexter, 2005). Moving forward, research suggests the need for ongoing professional development for educators, robust assessment practices aligned with 21st century skills, and greater collaboration between educational stakeholders to address these challenges (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

In summary, the literature review highlights the significance of initiatives such as the MATATAG Curriculum in fostering the development of 21st century skills among Filipino learners. By drawing on insights from research on curriculum alignment, educational best practices, and global trends in education, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational reform and curriculum development in the Philippines.

Methodology:

A comparative analysis approach was employed to examine the alignment of the MATATAG Curriculum with the 21st century 7Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, character education, citizenship, and cultural literacy). This methodology involved systematically comparing the key components of the MATATAG Curriculum against established frameworks and research findings related to 21st century skills and curriculum development.

The data collection process involved gathering relevant documents, including the MATATAG Curriculum guidelines, DepEd orders and memoranda, educational policy documents, and scholarly literature on 21st century skills



frameworks and curriculum alignment. These documents provided insights into the objectives, content, and pedagogical approaches of the MATATAG Curriculum, as well as the theoretical underpinnings of 21st century skills.

A systematic comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate the extent of alignment between the MATATAG Curriculum and the 21st century 7Cs. The analysis focused on identifying similarities and differences in terms of overarching goals, skill development objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Specific criteria, such as the presence of key 21st century skills in curriculum objectives and the integration of pedagogical approaches conducive to skill development, were used to assess alignment.

The findings of the comparative analysis were interpreted in light of established research findings and best practices in curriculum development and educational reform. Key themes and patterns emerging from the data were identified and discussed to provide insights into the effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum in fostering 21st century skills among Filipino learners. Interpretation also involved considering the implications of the findings for educational policy and practice in the Philippines.

Findings and Discussion:

Strong Emphasis on Core 21st Century Skills

The MATATAG Curriculum demonstrates a robust emphasis on cultivating core 21st century skills essential for success in today's dynamic and interconnected world. Through a comparative analysis, it becomes evident that the curriculum prioritizes the development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity among Filipino learners, aligning with global educational trends and frameworks.

Critical thinking, a fundamental skill for problem-solving and decision-making, is intricately woven into the fabric of the MATATAG Curriculum. The curriculum emphasizes the ability to analyze information critically, evaluate evidence, and construct reasoned arguments (Ennis, 1987). By incorporating inquiry-based learning activities and problem-solving tasks across subject areas, the curriculum fosters a culture of intellectual curiosity and analytical rigor (Duron et al., 2006).

Communication skills are another cornerstone of the MATATAG Curriculum, with a focus on both verbal and written expression. Effective communication is essential for conveying ideas, collaborating with others, and engaging in meaningful dialogue (National Communication Association, 2020). The curriculum integrates activities that promote active listening, persuasive writing, and effective presentation skills, empowering learners to articulate their thoughts with clarity and confidence (Grant et al., 2016).

Collaboration is emphasized as a core competency within the MATATAG Curriculum, recognizing the importance of teamwork and cooperation in today's interconnected society. Collaborative learning experiences, such as group projects and peer-to-peer interactions, are embedded throughout the curriculum to foster teamwork, empathy, and collective problem-solving skills (Johnson et al., 2014). By working collaboratively, learners develop essential interpersonal skills and learn to appreciate diverse perspectives, preparing them for success in collaborative work environments (Dillenbourg, 1999).

Creativity is celebrated as a vital skill within the MATATAG Curriculum, acknowledging the importance of innovation and originality in addressing complex challenges. The curriculum provides opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and artistic expression across various domains, nurturing learners' imagination and ingenuity (Robinson, 2001). Through creative tasks and open-ended projects, learners are encouraged to think outside the box, embrace ambiguity, and explore alternative solutions (Sawyer, 2012).

The alignment of the MATATAG Curriculum with core 21st century skills underscores its commitment to equipping Filipino learners with the competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By prioritizing critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, the curriculum lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success in the 21st century.

Integration of Character Education and Citizenship

The integration of character education and citizenship development within the MATATAG Curriculum reflects a holistic approach to education, emphasizing the cultivation of moral and civic virtues alongside academic skills. Through a comprehensive analysis, it becomes evident that the curriculum strives to instill DepEd core values such as Maka-Diyos (God-loving), Makatao (Humanity), Makakalikasan (Environment-Friendly), and Makabansa (Nationalistic) across all grade levels, fostering a sense of social responsibility and ethical awareness among Filipino learners.

Character education plays a vital role in the MATATAG Curriculum, providing learners with the ethical framework needed to navigate moral dilemmas and make principled decisions (Lickona, 1991). By integrating DepEd core values into curriculum content and instructional practices, the curriculum promotes the development of virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect for others (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Through storytelling, role-



playing, and reflective exercises, learners are encouraged to internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives, fostering a culture of ethical behavior and responsible citizenship (Narvaez et al., 2017).

Furthermore, citizenship development is a cornerstone of the MATATAG Curriculum, aiming to cultivate active and engaged citizens who contribute positively to society. By emphasizing DepEd core values such as Makabansa (Nationalistic) and Makatao (Humanity), the curriculum fosters a sense of civic pride and social awareness among learners (Maceda, 2008). Through service-learning projects, community engagement initiatives, and experiential learning opportunities, learners are encouraged to take an active role in addressing social issues and promoting the common good (Battistich et al., 2004).

The integration of character education and citizenship development within the MATATAG Curriculum extends beyond academic content to encompass the entire school environment. Through the Whole School Approach, schools are encouraged to create a culture of values-based education, where DepEd core values are reinforced through daily routines, school policies, and extracurricular activities (Ryan et al., 1997). By fostering a values-driven school climate, the curriculum creates a supportive and nurturing environment where learners can develop their character and civic identity (Battistich et al., 2004).

Moreover, the MATATAG Curriculum recognizes the importance of family and community involvement in character education and citizenship development. Through partnerships with parents, guardians, and community stakeholders, schools are encouraged to extend learning beyond the classroom and into the broader community (Epstein, 2018). By involving families in values-based discussions and community service projects, the curriculum strengthens the connection between home, school, and community, fostering a sense of collective responsibility for the moral and civic development of learners (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

The integration of character education and citizenship development within the MATATAG Curriculum underscores its commitment to fostering the holistic development of Filipino learners. By promoting DepEd core values such as Maka-Diyos, Makatao, Makakalikasan, and Makabansa, the curriculum seeks to cultivate ethical behavior, social responsibility, and active citizenship among learners, preparing them to contribute positively to society and participate fully in the democratic process.

Attention to Cultural Literacy and Multicultural Competence

The MATATAG Curriculum exhibits a significant emphasis on cultural literacy and multicultural competence, reflecting a commitment to preparing learners for success in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. Through an in-depth analysis, it becomes evident that the curriculum integrates content and instructional materials that highlight diverse cultural perspectives, fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity and promoting global interconnectedness among Filipino learners (Kilang et al., 2024).

Cultural literacy, defined as the understanding of and appreciation for diverse cultural traditions, plays a pivotal role in the MATATAG Curriculum (Hirsch, 1987). The curriculum features content that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Philippines, encompassing indigenous knowledge, traditions, languages, and customs (King & Schielmann, 2004). By incorporating cultural content across various subject areas, the curriculum aims to nurture a sense of pride and identity among learners while promoting an inclusive understanding of Filipino culture (Gonzalez, 2017).

Moreover, the MATATAG Curriculum goes beyond the confines of national identity to embrace a broader multicultural perspective. Instructional materials showcase diverse cultural perspectives from around the world, exposing learners to different ways of life, beliefs, and traditions (Banks, 2008). Through literature, arts, music, and social studies, learners are encouraged to explore the complexities of cultural diversity and develop empathy and respect for people from diverse backgrounds (Bennett, 2013).

The emphasis on multicultural competence within the MATATAG Curriculum aligns with the 21st-century imperative of preparing learners to thrive in a globalized society (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). Multicultural competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Sue et al., 1982). By integrating multicultural education into the curriculum, the MATATAG Curriculum equips learners with the tools they need to navigate cultural differences and engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions (Gay, 2010).

Furthermore, the MATATAG Curriculum recognizes the importance of promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in educational settings. Teachers are encouraged to create a culturally responsive learning environment where all students feel valued and respected (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Through the use of culturally relevant teaching materials and instructional strategies, teachers can create opportunities for students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum while also learning about the experiences of others (Milner, 2010).

The MATATAG Curriculum's attention to cultural literacy and multicultural competence reflects its commitment to preparing learners for success in a diverse and interconnected world. By incorporating diverse cultural perspectives



into curriculum content and instructional materials, the curriculum fosters an appreciation for cultural diversity, promotes global interconnectedness, and equips learners with the skills they need to thrive in a multicultural society.

Opportunities for Further Pedagogical Enhancement

While the MATATAG Curriculum demonstrates alignment with 21st-century skills frameworks, there are notable opportunities for further pedagogical enhancement. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study identified areas where improvements can be made to better prepare Filipino learners for the demands of the modern world. Specifically, these opportunities include strengthening the integration of technology-enabled learning experiences, promoting more student-centered and inquiry-based instructional approaches, and enhancing assessment practices to better measure the attainment of 21st-century skills (Kilag et al., 2024).

One area for improvement lies in the integration of technology-enabled learning experiences within the curriculum. While the MATATAG Curriculum acknowledges the importance of information, media, and technology skills, there is room to further leverage digital tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning (Means et al., 2009). Research suggests that technology integration can facilitate personalized learning experiences, foster collaboration, and develop digital literacy skills essential for success in the digital age (Zhao & Frank, 2003). By incorporating innovative technologies such as educational apps, online resources, and interactive multimedia, educators can create engaging learning environments that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences (Puentedura, 2006).

Furthermore, there is a need to promote more student-centered and inquiry-based instructional approaches within the MATATAG Curriculum. While the curriculum outlines the importance of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, there is an opportunity to shift towards more experiential and hands-on learning experiences (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Research indicates that inquiry-based learning promotes deeper understanding, encourages active engagement, and fosters curiosity and independent thinking among students (Harlen, 2015). By adopting pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and collaborative inquiry, educators can empower learners to take ownership of their learning journey and develop essential lifelong learning skills (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

Moreover, there is a need to enhance assessment practices within the MATATAG Curriculum to better measure the attainment of 21st-century skills. While traditional forms of assessment such as exams and quizzes remain prevalent, there is a growing recognition of the limitations of these methods in capturing the complex skills and competencies required in the 21st century (Wiggins, 1998). Alternative assessment strategies such as performance tasks, portfolios, and authentic assessments offer more holistic ways of evaluating student learning and mastery of 21st-century skills (Boud, 1995). By incorporating diverse assessment methods that emphasize real-world application and problem-solving, educators can provide more meaningful feedback and support learners' development of essential skills for success in work and life (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

While the MATATAG Curriculum aligns with 21st-century skills frameworks, there are opportunities for further pedagogical enhancement to better prepare Filipino learners for the challenges of the modern world. By strengthening the integration of technology-enabled learning experiences, promoting student-centered and inquiry-based instructional approaches, and enhancing assessment practices, educators can create more dynamic and effective learning environments that empower learners to thrive in the 21st century.

Conclusion:

The comparative analysis of the MATATAG Curriculum has provided valuable insights into its alignment with 21st-century skills frameworks and its potential for further enhancement. The study has highlighted the curriculum's strong emphasis on core 21st-century skills, integration of character education and citizenship, attention to cultural literacy and multicultural competence, and opportunities for pedagogical improvement.

The findings underscore the importance of a curriculum that not only equips learners with academic knowledge but also fosters the development of essential skills, values, and attitudes needed to thrive in today's rapidly changing world. By emphasizing critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and character development, the MATATAG Curriculum lays a strong foundation for the holistic development of Filipino learners.

Furthermore, the curriculum's attention to cultural diversity and global interconnectedness reflects a commitment to preparing students for success in a multicultural society and a globalized economy. By incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into curriculum content and instructional materials, the MATATAG Curriculum promotes cultural awareness, empathy, and respect for others.

Despite its strengths, the study has identified areas for improvement, particularly in the integration of technology-enabled learning experiences, promotion of student-centered and inquiry-based instructional approaches, and enhancement of assessment practices. Addressing these areas of opportunity will be crucial for ensuring that the



MATATAG Curriculum remains relevant and effective in preparing Filipino learners for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a significant step forward in Philippine education, providing a framework for the holistic development of learners that aligns with the demands of the modern world. By building on its strengths and addressing areas for improvement, the curriculum has the potential to empower Filipino learners to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, responsible citizens, and lifelong learners capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st century.

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