



## Character and Competence: The Values Education in the MATATAG Curriculum

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### Abstract:

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a holistic approach to education, integrating values education across all grade levels and subjects in the Philippines. This research examines the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum with a focus on values education. Preliminary findings indicate positive impacts on student behavior and academic performance. Challenges such as varying support and resistance to changes were identified. Strategies including the Whole School Approach and continuous professional development for teachers are proposed to address these challenges. The curriculum's emphasis on values integration fosters not only academic excellence but also the development of character and essential life skills. Moving forward, ongoing evaluation and refinement of values education initiatives are crucial for sustained success. The MATATAG Curriculum signifies a significant step towards preparing students to become responsible citizens equipped with the values and skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

*Keywords:* MATATAG Curriculum, values education, holistic education, whole school approach

### Introduction:

The landscape of education is constantly evolving to meet the dynamic needs of society. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced the New MATATAG Curriculum as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance educational quality and relevance. This curriculum, set for phased implementation starting in the School Year (SY) 2024-2025, emphasizes not only academic excellence but also the holistic development of students through intensified values education (DepEd, 2023). The integration of values education is crucial in fostering moral and ethical principles, which are essential for nurturing responsible citizens and effective contributors to society (Belarmino, et al. 2024).

Values education is increasingly recognized as a vital component of comprehensive education systems globally. According to Lickona (1991), values education encompasses the deliberate teaching of moral values such as respect, responsibility, and integrity, which are foundational for personal and social development. In the context of the MATATAG Curriculum, values education is systematically embedded across all learning areas, ensuring that students receive a balanced education that combines competence and character development (DepEd, 2023).

The MATATAG Curriculum aims to address the gaps identified in previous educational frameworks by introducing a learner-centered approach that integrates play-based and developmentally appropriate activities, particularly in early childhood education (Bustos-Orosa, 2021). Furthermore, the curriculum seeks to cultivate essential life and career skills such as informed decision-making, adaptive leadership, intercultural understanding, self-discipline,



future orientation, and resilience (DepEd, 2023). These skills are integral for preparing students to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing global environment (Calleja, 2022).

This research paper explores the integration of values education within the New MATATAG Curriculum, examining its implementation, impact, and potential for fostering well-rounded individuals. By analyzing the curriculum's design and the strategies employed for its execution, this study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of values education in shaping students' character and preparing them for future challenges.

### **Literature Review:**

Values education has emerged as a fundamental aspect of modern educational frameworks, aiming to cultivate not only intellectual abilities but also moral and ethical values in students. The New MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines integrates values education comprehensively to foster holistic development. This literature review explores various dimensions of values education, its implementation strategies, and its impact on students and society.

Values education refers to the process of teaching and learning about the values that underpin social living. According to Lovat and Toomey (2009), values education involves the deliberate effort to foster the development of moral and ethical values such as respect, responsibility, and integrity. These values are essential for the personal and social development of individuals, enabling them to contribute positively to their communities.

In the context of the Philippines, values education is mandated by the Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) and Values Education Act (RA 11476). This law emphasizes the systematic integration of values education across all learning areas, ensuring that students develop both competence and character (DepEd, 2023).

### **The Role of Values Education in Holistic Development**

Holistic education seeks to develop all aspects of a learner, including intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual potentials. Values education is central to this approach, as it nurtures the moral and ethical dimensions of students (Nucci, 2001). Research indicates that values education significantly impacts students' behavior, attitudes, and academic performance (Thornberg, 2008).

The New MATATAG Curriculum integrates values education into its framework to address these holistic needs. It includes life and career skills such as informed decision-making, adaptive leadership, intercultural understanding, self-discipline, future orientation, and resilience (DepEd, 2023). These skills are critical for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world and contribute to sustainable development (Calleja, 2022).

Effective implementation of values education requires a multi-faceted approach. According to Lickona (1991), successful values education programs involve explicit teaching of values, integrating values into the curriculum, and creating a school environment that reinforces these values. Additionally, the role of teachers is crucial in modeling and fostering these values through their interactions with students (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011).

The MATATAG Curriculum employs several strategies to implement values education: Values education is systematically integrated across all subjects, ensuring that students encounter and engage with values in various contexts (DepEd, 2023). The use of interactive and experiential learning methods, such as role-playing, discussions, and community service projects, helps students internalize values more effectively (Hernez-Broome, 2012). Teachers receive specialized training to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to teach values education and to act as role models for their students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

### **Impact of Values Education**

Values education has a profound impact on students' personal and social development. Studies have shown that students who receive values education are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors, such as respect, responsibility, and empathy (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). These students also tend to perform better academically and are more engaged in their learning (Benninga et al., 2006).

In the context of the MATATAG Curriculum, the integration of values education aims to produce well-rounded individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally and ethically grounded (DepEd, 2023). Early reports from pilot implementations indicate that students are showing increased awareness of ethical issues and a stronger commitment to social responsibility (Belarmino, et al. 2024).

Despite its benefits, implementing values education presents several challenges. One major challenge is the varying levels of support from teachers, parents, and the community. Effective values education requires a collaborative effort, and disparities in support can hinder its success (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). Additionally, there can be resistance to changes in teaching methods and curriculum content, particularly from educators who are accustomed to traditional approaches (Nucci, 2001).



To address these challenges, the MATATAG Curriculum emphasizes a Whole School Approach, involving home, school, and community in the co-curricular and extra-curricular programs related to values formation (DepEd, 2023). This approach ensures a consistent and supportive environment for students to learn and practice values. Furthermore, ongoing professional development for teachers and active engagement with parents and the community are critical for overcoming resistance and fostering a collaborative effort (Calleja, 2022).

### **Comparative Perspectives**

Values education is a global phenomenon, and examining international models can provide valuable insights. For instance, the Character Education Partnership in the United States advocates for a comprehensive approach to character education that includes explicit teaching, curriculum integration, and a positive school culture (Lickona, 1991). Similarly, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) program in the United Kingdom focuses on developing emotional intelligence and social skills alongside academic learning (Hernez-Broome, 2012).

Comparing these models with the MATATAG Curriculum reveals common strategies such as the integration of values across subjects, interactive learning methods, and the importance of teacher training. However, the MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on culturally relevant values and its legal mandate for values education provide a unique framework that addresses the specific needs of Filipino students (Belarmino, et al. 2024).

The evolving educational landscape requires continuous adaptation and improvement of values education. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of values education on students' personal and professional lives (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Additionally, exploring the use of technology and digital platforms in values education can provide new opportunities for engagement and learning (Calleja, 2022).

Policy recommendations include increasing support for teacher training programs, enhancing community involvement, and ensuring adequate resources for implementing values education. By fostering a collaborative effort among educators, parents, and the community, the MATATAG Curriculum can achieve its goal of producing well-rounded individuals equipped with the values and skills necessary for the 21st century.

### **Methodology:**

This study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing document analysis and literature review to examine the integration and impact of values education in the New MATATAG Curriculum. The research aimed to gather comprehensive insights into how values education is embedded within the curriculum, its implementation strategies, and its perceived effectiveness in fostering holistic development among students.

Key documents related to the MATATAG Curriculum were analyzed. These included official curriculum guides, policy documents, and DepEd memoranda, particularly the MATATAG Curriculum Guides for Kindergarten, Grades 1, 4, and 7, as well as DepEd Memorandum No. 54, s. 2023. These documents provided detailed information on the curriculum structure, content, and specific strategies for integrating values education.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to contextualize the findings from the document analysis within the broader academic discourse on values education. Academic articles, books, and reports were sourced from Google Scholar and other academic databases. The literature review focused on various aspects of values education, including its conceptual framework, implementation strategies, impact on students, and comparative perspectives from other educational systems.

The content of the curriculum guides and policy documents was systematically examined to identify specific references to values education. Key themes, strategies, and examples of values integration were extracted and categorized. This analysis provided a detailed understanding of how values education is embedded in the MATATAG Curriculum and the intended outcomes for students.

The literature review was conducted by synthesizing information from various academic sources. Relevant studies were selected based on their focus on values education, holistic development, and educational practices. The synthesis involved identifying common themes, trends, and findings across the selected literature, which were then compared with the insights gained from the document analysis.

The findings from the document analysis were compared with the synthesized literature to identify similarities and differences in the approaches to values education. This comparative analysis helped to contextualize the MATATAG Curriculum within global educational practices and highlight unique aspects of its implementation in the Philippines.

The use of multiple data sources (document analysis and literature review) allowed for triangulation, enhancing the credibility of the findings. By cross-referencing information from different sources, the study ensured a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the subject. The research process and findings were subjected to peer review by experts in the field of education. Feedback from peers helped to refine the analysis and interpretation of the data, ensuring the study's rigor and validity. A systematic approach was employed in both



data collection and analysis. For the document analysis, a consistent coding framework was used to categorize and interpret the data. Similarly, the literature review followed a structured process of selection, synthesis, and comparison to ensure coherence and relevance.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Since the study primarily involved the analysis of publicly available documents and academic literature, there were no direct ethical concerns related to participant consent or confidentiality. However, proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources were maintained to respect intellectual property rights and academic integrity.

The methodology employed in this study provided a robust framework for analyzing the integration and impact of values education in the New MATATAG Curriculum. Through document analysis and literature review, the research offered comprehensive insights into how values education is embedded within the curriculum and its potential to foster holistic development among Filipino students.

## **Findings and Discussion:**

### **Systematic Integration of Values Education**

The New MATATAG Curriculum exemplifies a systematic integration of values education across all grade levels and subjects, marking a significant shift in the approach to holistic development in Philippine education. Through analysis, it is evident that values education goes beyond explicit lessons and is deeply embedded within the content and activities of various subjects (DepEd, 2023).

The curriculum ensures that values such as informed decision-making, adaptive leadership, and resilience are not taught in isolation but are integrated throughout different subjects and learning experiences. This holistic approach aims to foster both competence and character in students, aligning with the principles of holistic education advocated by educational scholars (Lovat & Toomey, 2009).

In the New MATATAG Curriculum, values education is seamlessly integrated into subjects beyond a dedicated values education class. For instance, in Mathematics, students may explore ethical decision-making in financial planning; in Science, they may discuss environmental stewardship and ethical implications of scientific advancements. This integration ensures that students encounter values in various contexts, making learning more meaningful and relevant (DepEd, 2023).

The curriculum emphasizes the development of life and career skills alongside academic knowledge. Skills such as informed decision-making, adaptive leadership, and resilience are not only crucial for academic success but also for success in life beyond school. By integrating these skills into the curriculum, students are better prepared to navigate challenges and contribute positively to society (DepEd, 2023).

The systematic integration of values education in the MATATAG Curriculum aligns with global educational trends that emphasize the importance of holistic development. Countries worldwide recognize the need to go beyond academic achievement and prioritize the development of socio-emotional skills and values to prepare students for the complexities of the modern world (Belarmino, et al. 2024).

Research suggests that holistic education approaches, which integrate values education into the curriculum, have numerous benefits for students. They contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals with strong ethical foundations, better social skills, and increased resilience (Benninga et al., 2006). Moreover, such approaches are associated with positive academic outcomes and improved overall well-being.

The systematic integration of values education in the New MATATAG Curriculum represents a significant step towards fostering holistic development among Filipino students. By embedding values across all subjects and grade levels, the curriculum aims to cultivate not only academic excellence but also strong character and essential life skills. This approach aligns with global educational trends and has the potential to prepare students to become responsible citizens capable of contributing positively to society.

### **Emphasis on Interactive and Experiential Learning**

The New MATATAG Curriculum places a strong emphasis on interactive and experiential learning methods as a means to enhance the effectiveness of values education. By incorporating activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and community service projects, the curriculum aims to help students internalize values through practical application and real-life experiences (Hernez-Broome, 2012).

Interactive and experiential learning methods are aligned with educational theories that emphasize the importance of active learning in facilitating deeper understanding and retention of values (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Rather than passively receiving information, students are actively engaged in the learning process, which enhances their ability to grasp abstract concepts and apply them in various contexts. For example, through role-playing scenarios, students can explore different perspectives and consequences of their actions, fostering critical thinking and empathy.



One of the key strengths of the MATATAG Curriculum is its focus on practical application of values in real-life situations. Students are encouraged to apply values such as respect, responsibility, empathy, and resilience in their interactions with others and in community service projects. This hands-on approach allows students to see the relevance of values in their daily lives and reinforces their learning process (Hernez-Broome, 2012).

Teachers play a crucial role in creating opportunities for students to practice values in real-life situations. By facilitating group discussions, guiding role-playing activities, and organizing community service projects, teachers provide students with platforms to apply and reflect on values in action. This active involvement not only reinforces the learning process but also helps in internalizing values as part of students' belief systems (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Research suggests that interactive and experiential learning methods are effective in promoting values education. Studies have shown that such methods lead to greater engagement, deeper understanding, and long-term retention of values among students (Benninga et al., 2006). Furthermore, experiential learning has been associated with positive outcomes such as improved problem-solving skills, increased empathy, and greater social responsibility (Belarmino, et al. 2024).

The emphasis on interactive and experiential learning in the MATATAG Curriculum also addresses diverse learning styles among students. Not all students learn best through traditional lecture-style teaching; some thrive in hands-on, experiential learning environments. By incorporating a variety of interactive activities, the curriculum caters to different learning preferences, ensuring that all students have opportunities to engage meaningfully with values education.

The emphasis on interactive and experiential learning methods in the MATATAG Curriculum represents a progressive approach to values education. By actively involving students in the learning process and providing opportunities for practical application of values, the curriculum fosters deeper understanding, engagement, and retention of values. Research supports the effectiveness of such methods in promoting holistic development among students, making them better equipped to navigate real-life situations with integrity and empathy.

### **Positive Impact on Student Behavior and Academic Performance**

The pilot implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum has yielded preliminary findings indicating a positive impact on both student behavior and academic performance. Teachers' observations and initial assessments have provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of integrating values education within the curriculum.

Teachers reported notable improvements in students' behavior, particularly in areas such as respect, responsibility, and empathy towards others. These are key outcomes of values education and essential for fostering a positive school environment (Benninga et al., 2006). Students exhibited greater respect for their peers and teachers, took more responsibility for their actions, and showed increased empathy towards others' perspectives and feelings.

One of the significant observations from the pilot implementation was the observed increase in student engagement and motivation. Students appeared more interested and invested in their learning, actively participating in class activities and discussions. This heightened engagement is crucial for academic success as it leads to better retention of knowledge and deeper understanding of concepts (Belarmino, et al. 2024).

Alongside improvements in behavior and engagement, there was evidence suggesting enhanced academic performance among students. Teachers noted that students participating in the MATATAG Curriculum demonstrated better academic outcomes compared to previous years. This improvement could be attributed to the holistic approach of the curriculum, which not only focuses on academic knowledge but also on the development of essential life skills and values.

Research supports the notion that values education contributes to positive student outcomes. Studies have shown that when students receive values education alongside academic instruction, they tend to exhibit better social skills, higher levels of empathy, and improved behavior (Benninga et al., 2006). Furthermore, integrating values education into the curriculum has been associated with increased academic achievement and overall well-being.

While the pilot findings are promising, it's essential to consider the long-term benefits of values education integrated into the curriculum. Beyond immediate improvements, values education equips students with lifelong skills and attitudes that are invaluable for their personal and professional development. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility.

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges in the implementation of values education remain. These may include resistance from stakeholders, the need for teacher training, and ensuring the sustainability of the approach. Addressing these challenges requires continuous support from policymakers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the community.



The preliminary findings from the pilot implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum highlight the positive impact of integrating values education within the curriculum (Kilag, et al., 2024). Improved student behavior, increased engagement, and enhanced academic performance indicate the effectiveness of this approach. With continued support and refinement, integrating values education has the potential to not only shape students' character but also to improve their overall academic outcomes and prepare them for success in life.

### **Challenges in Implementation and Strategies for Improvement**

While the integration of values education in the MATATAG Curriculum has shown promising results, several challenges in implementation have been identified. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of values education in schools.

One significant challenge is the varying levels of support from teachers, parents, and the community. Not all stakeholders may fully understand the importance of values education or may have different priorities. Some teachers may feel overwhelmed by additional responsibilities, while some parents may prioritize academic achievement over values development (Lovat & Toomey, 2009).

Resistance to changes in teaching methods and curriculum content is another obstacle. Implementing a values-based approach may require a shift in pedagogical practices and content delivery methods. Some teachers may be resistant to change, especially if they are accustomed to traditional teaching methods. Additionally, resistance from conservative factions in society may pose challenges to the inclusion of certain values in the curriculum (Kilag, et al., 2024).

To address these challenges, the MATATAG Curriculum emphasizes a Whole School Approach. This involves all stakeholders—teachers, school administrators, students, parents, and the community—in co-curricular and extra-curricular programs related to values formation (DepEd, 2023). By involving the entire school community, a supportive environment for values education can be fostered.

Continuous professional development for teachers is essential to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate values education into their teaching practice. Training programs should focus on pedagogical approaches, classroom strategies, and ways to address values-related issues. Teachers need support in creating engaging and meaningful learning experiences that promote values development (Calleja, 2022).

Active engagement with parents and the community is equally important. Schools should involve parents in discussions about the importance of values education and encourage their support at home. Community partnerships can provide additional resources and support for values education initiatives, making it a collective effort beyond the school walls (Kilag, et al., 2024).

Implementing research-based strategies is crucial for overcoming implementation challenges. Schools can learn from successful models of values education implementation worldwide and adapt them to their context. Research suggests that strategies such as character education programs, service-learning projects, and mentoring programs can effectively promote values development (Benninga et al., 2006).

Establishing evaluation and feedback mechanisms is essential to monitor the effectiveness of values education initiatives and make necessary adjustments. Regular assessment of student outcomes, teacher practices, and stakeholder feedback can provide insights into what works well and what needs improvement.

Advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the importance of values education and its impact on student well-being should be ongoing (Kilag, et al., 2024). Clear communication of goals, strategies, and benefits of values education to all stakeholders can garner support and commitment towards its successful implementation.

While integrating values education into the curriculum brings numerous benefits, overcoming implementation challenges is crucial for its success. By adopting a Whole School Approach, providing continuous professional development for teachers, actively engaging with parents and the community, and implementing research-based strategies, schools can create a supportive environment for values education. With concerted efforts and collaboration, values education can become an integral part of the educational journey, shaping students into responsible and ethical individuals.

### **Conclusion:**

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum marks a significant step towards holistic education in the Philippines, with a strong emphasis on values education. Through systematic integration across all grade levels and subjects, the curriculum aims to foster not only academic excellence but also the development of character, resilience, and essential life skills among students.



Moving forward, continuous evaluation and refinement of values education initiatives are essential. Schools need to monitor the effectiveness of their programs, solicit feedback from stakeholders, and adapt strategies accordingly. Advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the importance of values education should continue, emphasizing its role in shaping responsible citizens and contributing to societal well-being.

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a significant paradigm shift towards values-based education. By nurturing both competence and character, it aims to empower students to become responsible, ethical, and compassionate individuals. With continued commitment, collaboration, and adaptation, values education can play a pivotal role in shaping a brighter future for the Filipino youth and society as a whole.

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