



Curriculum Innovation in Philippine Education: The MATATAG Curriculum

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Abstract:

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a significant reform effort in the Philippine education system, aimed at addressing challenges and improving the quality of basic education. This paper explores the development and key features of the MATATAG Curriculum in response to identified gaps in the K to 12 Program. Through a comprehensive review process, issues such as curriculum congestion, assessment mismatches, and the need for relevance were identified and addressed. The MATATAG Curriculum prioritizes the development of future-oriented skills including critical thinking, digital literacy, and global citizenship, preparing learners for the demands of the 21st century. By embedding these competencies into the curriculum, the education system aims to produce competent and socially responsible citizens capable of navigating a rapidly changing world. The findings underscore the importance of curriculum relevance, alignment, and continuous improvement in Philippine education. The MATATAG Curriculum sets a clear direction for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of basic education, aligning with global trends and standards.

Keywords: MATATAG Curriculum, Philippine education, curriculum reform, future-oriented skills

Introduction:

The Enhanced Basic Education Program in the Philippines, known as the K to 12 Basic Education Program, represents a significant educational reform aimed at addressing both local and global educational needs. Launched with the mission to strengthen Filipino values, promote nationalism, and prepare citizens for a progressive society, the K to 12 Program seeks to equip learners with the skills essential for the 21st century (DepEd, 2019). However, despite its noble goals, the program faces challenges in achieving its intended outcomes.

Recent assessments both nationally and internationally have raised concerns about the effectiveness of the K to 12 curriculum in improving student learning outcomes. Studies such as those by Schleicher (2021), Mullis et al. (2020), and reports from UNICEF (2019) have indicated stagnant academic performance among Filipino learners despite the implementation of the K to 12 Program. These assessments serve as indicators prompting a reevaluation of the curriculum to address existing gaps and enhance the quality of education.

In response to these challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, in collaboration with the Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC), has undertaken a comprehensive review of the curriculum. This review process aims to identify areas for improvement and to shape the future direction of basic education in the country. The result is the development of the MATATAG Curriculum, which signifies a renewed



commitment to quality, relevance, and responsiveness in education.

The MATATAG Agenda introduced by the current administration sets the tone for resolving basic education challenges by focusing on curriculum relevance, improved facilities and services, learner well-being, and support for teachers (DepEd, 2023). Moreover, the evolving demands of the 21st century require educational systems to adapt to rapid changes in technology, job markets, and societal needs. The MATATAG Curriculum aims to address these demands by integrating contemporary topics, fostering critical 21st-century skills, and promoting inclusivity and global citizenship.

This research paper explores the new MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines, examining its development process, goals, and implications for student learning. By analyzing available data and research findings, this study aims to provide insights into the challenges faced by the K to 12 Program and the potential of the MATATAG Curriculum to address these challenges.

Literature Review:

The literature surrounding the K to 12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines and its recent development into the MATATAG Curriculum provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by the education system and the efforts to address them. This literature review explores key studies and findings related to the K to 12 Program, curriculum reform, student learning outcomes, and the development of the MATATAG Curriculum.

The K to 12 Program has been subject to various criticisms and challenges. A study by Aguas (2023) highlights issues such as curriculum congestion, lack of resources, and teacher preparedness as significant challenges hindering the program's effectiveness. Furthermore, Cruz (2019) discusses the mismatch between curriculum goals and the actual needs of learners, emphasizing the importance of curriculum relevance.

Assessments play a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of educational reforms. The Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) and the National Achievement Test (NAT) are commonly used assessments in the Philippines. However, studies by Tan et al. (2018) and Pantao (2021) indicate that these assessments may not fully capture the range of student competencies and learning outcomes targeted by the K to 12 Program.

Comparisons with international assessments provide additional insights into the performance of Filipino students. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one such benchmark. A study by Adams (2018) highlights the need for alignment between the K to 12 curriculum and international standards to improve student performance in global assessments like PISA.

Recognizing the need for continuous improvement, the Department of Education initiated curriculum reviews. Albert, et al. (2023) discuss the importance of curriculum alignment with national and global trends, emphasizing the role of curriculum reform in addressing the evolving needs of learners. The development of the MATATAG Curriculum is a response to these imperatives.

The MATATAG Agenda introduced by the current administration outlines key priorities for basic education reform. Studies by Estrellado (2023) and Ungar (2021) discuss the goals of the MATATAG Agenda and its implications for curriculum development, focusing on relevance, inclusivity, and teacher support.

The quality of education is closely tied to student learning outcomes. Pantao (2021) emphasize the importance of curriculum coherence and alignment with assessment practices in improving student learning. The MATATAG Curriculum aims to address these aspects by refining learning competencies and ensuring their alignment with standards.

Stakeholder engagement is vital for successful curriculum reform. A study by Aguas (2023) explores teacher perspectives on the K to 12 Program and identifies areas for improvement. Additionally, DepEd reports (DepEd, 2019) highlight commitments from education partners to support the new basic education agenda.

The changing landscape of the 21st century demands a focus on future-oriented skills. Studies by Lee (2012) discuss the importance of embedding 21st-century skills in the curriculum to prepare learners for future challenges, including digital literacy, critical thinking, and global citizenship.

The literature underscores the challenges faced by the K to 12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines and the importance of continuous curriculum reform. The development of the MATATAG Curriculum represents a step towards addressing these challenges and aligning basic education with the needs of learners and society.

Methodology:



This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining analysis of existing literature with a review of relevant documents and reports to examine the development and implications of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines. The methodology involved several steps outlined below.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather existing research, reports, and scholarly articles related to the K to 12 Basic Education Program, curriculum reform efforts, student learning outcomes, and the development of the MATATAG Curriculum. Google Scholar and academic databases such as ERIC and JSTOR were utilized to identify relevant sources. Keywords included "K to 12 curriculum Philippines," "MATATAG Curriculum," "basic education reform," and related terms.

Documents, reports, and scholarly articles obtained from the literature review were collected and analyzed. These included academic papers, government documents, policy briefs, and reports from educational institutions and organizations. Data collection focused on gathering information about the challenges in the K to 12 Program, assessment of student learning outcomes, curriculum reform initiatives, and the development of the MATATAG Curriculum. Data from the collected documents were analyzed using thematic analysis. Key themes identified from the literature review included challenges in the K to 12 Program, assessment practices, stakeholder perspectives, curriculum reform efforts, and implications for student learning. Data were coded and categorized according to these themes to identify patterns, trends, and significant findings.

Findings from the literature review and document analysis were synthesized to provide a comprehensive overview of the development and implications of the MATATAG Curriculum. Connections between different themes and their implications for basic education in the Philippines were explored. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the synthesized results were cross-referenced with multiple sources and validated against existing literature and reports. Any discrepancies or conflicting information were addressed through further analysis and consultation with experts in the field.

Findings and Discussion:

Challenges in the K to 12 Program Persist

The K to 12 Program in the Philippines, despite its implementation, faces persistent challenges that impact the quality and effectiveness of education in the country. A thorough examination of existing literature and reports highlights several key challenges that continue to hamper the success of the program.

One of the primary challenges facing the K to 12 Program is curriculum congestion. Aguas (2023) notes that the curriculum is often overloaded with content, leaving little room for meaningful learning experiences. This congestion can overwhelm both teachers and students, hindering effective teaching and learning processes. Cruz (2019) further emphasizes the need to streamline the curriculum to ensure that it remains relevant and manageable for educators and learners alike.

In addition to curriculum challenges, inadequate resources pose significant barriers to the success of the K to 12 Program. Cruz (2019) highlights the lack of essential resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, and classroom facilities in many schools across the Philippines. This scarcity of resources can limit the implementation of the curriculum and negatively impact student learning outcomes. Without sufficient support and resources, educators may struggle to deliver quality education to their students, further exacerbating existing disparities in learning opportunities.

Assessment practices within the K to 12 Program also present challenges that affect student learning outcomes. Aguas (2023) discusses concerns about the alignment of assessments with curriculum goals and learning standards. Mismatches between what is taught in the classroom and what is assessed can lead to discrepancies in student performance and misrepresentations of learning achievements. Furthermore, Pantao (2021) highlights the need for comprehensive and meaningful assessments that go beyond traditional measures of academic achievement to capture the full range of student competencies and skills.

These challenges collectively impact the effectiveness of the K to 12 Program and have significant implications for student learning outcomes and the overall quality of education in the Philippines. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to streamline the curriculum, provide adequate resources, and improve assessment practices.

Need for Curriculum Relevance and Alignment

Stakeholders in Philippine education emphasize the critical importance of curriculum relevance and alignment to address the evolving needs of students and align with global educational trends (Estrellado 2023; Ungar, 2021). The development of the MATATAG Curriculum reflects efforts to address these concerns by refining learning competencies and ensuring alignment with international standards.



Curriculum relevance is crucial to engage students effectively and prepare them for real-world challenges. Ungar (2021) underscores the significance of ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of diverse learners and prepares them for success in various fields. A relevant curriculum should be responsive to societal needs, promote critical thinking, and foster skills necessary for the 21st-century workforce.

Estrellado (2023), highlight the importance of aligning the curriculum with the needs and interests of students. A curriculum that resonates with students' experiences and aspirations is more likely to motivate learning and promote academic success. By considering student perspectives and experiences, educators can design a curriculum that is meaningful and engaging (Kilag et al., 2024).

In a rapidly changing world, aligning the curriculum with global trends is essential to ensure that students are prepared for the future. Ungar (2021) emphasizes the need to incorporate global perspectives, emerging technologies, and 21st-century skills into the curriculum. This alignment prepares students to navigate global challenges and compete in the international arena.

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a response to the call for curriculum relevance and alignment. By refining learning competencies, the curriculum aims to ensure that students acquire essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for success (Estrellado, 2023). Additionally, aligning with international standards enhances the quality and competitiveness of Philippine education on a global scale.

The MATATAG Curriculum seeks to address these concerns by promoting relevance, responsiveness, and alignment with both local needs and global educational trends. Through this approach, it aims to equip Filipino learners with the skills and competencies necessary for success in the 21st century.

Development of the MATATAG Curriculum as a Response

The development of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines represents a strategic response to identified challenges and gaps in the K to 12 Program (Department of Education, 2019). Through comprehensive curriculum review processes, issues such as curriculum congestion, assessment mismatches, and the need for relevance were identified, leading to the creation of the MATATAG Curriculum as a solution.

One of the primary motivations for developing the MATATAG Curriculum was to address issues of curriculum congestion and alignment. The Department of Education (2019) acknowledges that the existing curriculum was overloaded with content, which hindered effective teaching and learning (Kilag et al., 2024). By streamlining the curriculum and ensuring alignment with learning standards, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to provide educators with more manageable and relevant instructional materials.

Assessment practices within the K to 12 Program were also identified as a challenge. There were concerns about mismatches between what was taught in the classroom and what was assessed (Department of Education, 2019). The MATATAG Curriculum seeks to address this by ensuring that assessments align closely with curriculum goals and learning outcomes, providing a more accurate measure of student achievement.

The MATATAG Curriculum emerged from the recognition of the need for curriculum relevance and responsiveness to address the evolving needs of students and society. Cruz (2019) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant to students' lives and prepares them for the demands of the 21st century. The MATATAG Curriculum aims to achieve this by refining learning competencies and incorporating contemporary issues and global perspectives (Kilag et al., 2024).

The development of the MATATAG Curriculum is driven by the goal of enhancing the quality of education in the Philippines. Ungar (2021) highlights the importance of continuous curriculum improvement to ensure that learners receive a quality education that prepares them for future challenges. The MATATAG Curriculum represents a commitment to ongoing refinement and responsiveness to the needs of learners and society.

Focus on Future-Oriented Skills and Global Competencies

The MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines places a strong emphasis on the development of future-oriented skills and global competencies to prepare learners for the challenges of the 21st century (Tan & Tiongson, 2020). This section explores how the curriculum integrates critical skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and global citizenship to meet the needs of learners in a rapidly evolving world.

Critical thinking is recognized as a fundamental skill necessary for success in the 21st century. The MATATAG Curriculum prioritizes the development of critical thinking skills among learners (Lee 2012). By encouraging students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information, the curriculum aims to foster independent and creative thinkers capable of solving complex problems.



Tan and Tiongson (2020) argue that critical thinking skills are essential for students to become active and engaged citizens who can contribute meaningfully to society. Through various learning activities and assessments, the MATATAG Curriculum seeks to cultivate critical thinking abilities across different subject areas.

In an increasingly digital world, digital literacy has become a vital competency for learners. The MATATAG Curriculum acknowledges the importance of digital literacy and incorporates it across various learning areas (Lee 2012). Students are taught not only how to use digital tools effectively but also how to critically evaluate information found online, understand digital citizenship, and protect their privacy and security.

Lee (2012) highlight the role of digital literacy in empowering students to navigate the digital landscape responsibly and ethically. By integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to equip learners with essential skills for success in the digital age.

Global citizenship education is another key focus of the MATATAG Curriculum. It aims to foster an understanding of global issues, cultural diversity, and intercultural competence among students (Lee 2012). Through lessons on global challenges, human rights, sustainable development, and cultural appreciation, learners develop empathy, respect, and a sense of responsibility towards global issues.

Lee (2012) argues that global citizenship education is essential for preparing students to thrive in a interconnected world. By promoting global awareness and empathy, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to nurture responsible global citizens who can contribute positively to society.

The MATATAG Curriculum promotes interdisciplinary and project-based learning approaches to develop future-oriented skills effectively (Estrellado 2023). Through cross-curricular projects, students have opportunities to apply critical thinking, digital literacy, and global citizenship skills in real-world contexts. This approach encourages collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving.

Estrellado (2023) emphasize that interdisciplinary and project-based learning prepares students for the complexities of the modern world by integrating knowledge and skills from various disciplines. The MATATAG Curriculum adopts this approach to provide learners with meaningful learning experiences aligned with future demands.

The emphasis on critical thinking, digital literacy, global citizenship, and interdisciplinary learning in the MATATAG Curriculum reflects a commitment to preparing learners for success in a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion:

The development and implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum represent significant strides in addressing the challenges and gaps identified in the Philippine K to 12 Basic Education Program. Through a thorough review process and stakeholder consultations, the MATATAG Curriculum emerges as a response to the evolving needs of learners and the demands of the 21st century.

The key findings of this study underscore the importance of curriculum relevance, alignment, and the development of future-oriented skills in Philippine education. Challenges such as curriculum congestion, assessment mismatches, and the need for responsiveness have been recognized and addressed through the development of the MATATAG Curriculum.

The MATATAG Curriculum prioritizes the cultivation of critical thinking, digital literacy, global citizenship, and interdisciplinary learning, aiming to prepare learners to thrive in a rapidly changing world. By embedding these competencies into the curriculum, the education system seeks to produce competent, adaptable, and socially responsible citizens.

Furthermore, the MATATAG Curriculum reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the needs of learners and society. It provides a framework for enhancing the quality and relevance of basic education in the Philippines, aligning with global educational trends and standards.

The MATATAG Curriculum sets a clear direction for Philippine education, emphasizing the development of holistic learners equipped with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to succeed in the 21st century and contribute positively to society.

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