

An Exploration of the Impact of the MATATAG Curriculum on History and Geography Education for the School Year 2024-2025

DOI [10.5281/zenodo.13913237](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13913237)

Rodjhun B. Navarro

Vice-President for Research, Innovations, and Linkages, La Consolacion College Bacolod, Philippines

Osias Kit T. Kilag

PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines

Renith S. Guanzon

SGS PhD Program Head, STI West Negros University, Bacolod City, Philippines

Mervin T. Arcillo

Secondary Teacher Level 2, Virgin Islands, Department of Education, St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands

Rose Anne Gier

PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines

Kristel Canonigo

PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines

Abstract

This study explores the influence of the Matatag curriculum on history and geography education for the school year 2024-2025. Using qualitative methods, particularly Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI), the research gathered insights from stakeholders in elementary education. The analysis revealed that the Matatag curriculum had significant positive effects, such as increased awareness of critical issues, enhanced understanding, and better contextualization of lessons. However, the study also identified challenges in implementation, resource limitations, and varied impacts across learning environments. The findings suggest the curriculum promotes holistic student development while recommending continued support for educators to achieve optimal outcomes.

Keywords: MATATAG curriculum, History education, Geography education, Critical thinking

Introduction:

The Philippine Department of Education's MATATAG curriculum marks a significant reform in the K-12 Basic Education Program, aimed at addressing both long-standing issues and evolving needs in the educational landscape. Launched to strengthen foundational competencies, the curriculum places particular emphasis on subjects like history and geography, which are crucial for shaping learners' understanding of national identity and global citizenship (Department of Education, 2023). By fostering critical thinking and creativity, the curriculum seeks to prepare students to navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing world while grounding them in their cultural heritage (Cruz, 2019).

The MATATAG curriculum's focus on history and geography is particularly noteworthy. These subjects are vital in developing learners' comprehension of the past and present and equipping them with the ability to make informed decisions as citizens (Estrellado, 2023). According to Albert et al. (2023), quality education plays a pivotal role in sustainable development, and enhancing students' understanding of their cultural and historical roots is essential for nurturing a sense of national pride and global awareness. This reform addresses the gaps in content delivery by integrating localized and contextually relevant topics, which help students connect their learning to real-life experiences (Kilag et al., 2024).

The MATATAG curriculum also reflects global educational trends, particularly in promoting competencies aligned with the 21st-century skills framework (Lee, 2012). As the international educational community continues to emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, the Philippines' new curriculum incorporates these competencies to equip learners for the complexities of the future. Moreover, Adams (2018) highlights the importance of learning from global education systems to improve local practices, which the MATATAG curriculum seeks to do by incorporating best practices while addressing unique Filipino contexts.

This paper explores the impact of the MATATAG curriculum on history and geography education for the 2024-2025 school year, aiming to understand its implementation through the perspectives of educators and stakeholders. By analyzing these insights, the study sheds light on how this new educational reform can contribute to shaping learners' critical thinking and awareness of their roles in both local and global contexts.

Methodology:



Research Design:

This qualitative study employed Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) to collect data. Participants included elementary school teachers, school administrators, and curriculum developers who are actively involved in teaching or designing the history and geography components of the Matatag curriculum.

Participants:

The study involved 10 elementary school teachers from various public schools, 5 school administrators, and 3 curriculum developers from the Department of Education, all of whom had at least one year of experience with the Matatag curriculum. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants had direct involvement with history and geography education.

Data Collection:

FGDs were conducted with teachers, focusing on their experiences and perceptions of the Matatag curriculum. In-depth interviews were conducted with school administrators and curriculum developers to explore broader implementation challenges. All sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically.

Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data. This method allowed for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of participants concerning the Matatag curriculum's impact on history and geography education.

Findings: Thematic analysis of the FGDs and IDIs revealed several key themes

Heightened Awareness of Contemporary Issues:

The introduction of the MATATAG curriculum has led to a noticeable enhancement in students' awareness of contemporary issues, particularly through the subjects of history and geography. Educators observed that the curriculum enabled learners to draw connections between historical events and present-day global and national concerns. This alignment not only fosters critical thinking but also encourages students to reflect on the impact of past events on the modern world. For instance, teachers noted that discussions on colonial history were linked to current issues such as national sovereignty and globalization, helping students understand the continuity between the past and the present (Estrellado, 2023). This heightened awareness positions students to be more engaged in civic matters and more thoughtful about the role history plays in shaping their perceptions of contemporary society (Cruz, 2019).

Moreover, the curriculum's focus on localization and contextualization of lessons allows students to relate global historical events to the challenges faced by the Philippines today. Kilag et al. (2024) argue that a curriculum that is contextually relevant to learners' lived experiences fosters a deeper understanding of contemporary societal issues. Teachers reported that students were better equipped to discuss current political, economic, and environmental problems, such as climate change and human rights violations, through a historical lens. This integration of current events into history lessons encourages students to develop informed opinions and promotes an understanding of their role in addressing these challenges as future citizens (Albert et al., 2023).

In addition to enhancing critical thinking, the MATATAG curriculum has also had a positive impact on students' ability to approach problems from a multidimensional perspective. According to Schleicher (2021), contemporary education should equip learners with the skills to analyze complex issues from various angles, and the MATATAG curriculum successfully achieves this by blending historical content with current affairs. Teachers observed that students were more adept at recognizing the socio-political and economic dimensions of historical events and relating these factors to ongoing debates and global trends. This approach aligns with the competencies outlined in the 21st-century education framework, which stresses the importance of critical analysis and problem-solving skills in today's interconnected world (Lee, 2012).

The curriculum's emphasis on fostering global citizenship further contributes to students' awareness of contemporary issues. By engaging with history and geography through the MATATAG curriculum, learners are exposed to both local and international perspectives on governance, human rights, and environmental sustainability. According to Aguas (2020), this broadened perspective enables students to critically assess global challenges and reflect on their own contributions as active participants in society. Teachers emphasized that students now demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of global conflicts, economic inequalities, and climate



change, which are frequently discussed in relation to historical events and their lasting effects on the present (Kilag et al., 2024).

The MATATAG curriculum has had a significant positive impact on fostering heightened awareness of contemporary issues among learners. By connecting historical events to current global and national concerns, the curriculum nurtures critical thinking and equips students with the tools needed to analyze complex, multidimensional problems. This approach not only enhances students' understanding of history and geography but also prepares them to engage more thoughtfully with the pressing issues of today's world, making them more responsible and informed citizens. The curriculum's alignment with both local contexts and global trends ensures that students are not only aware of the challenges facing their communities but are also prepared to contribute to broader societal change.

Enhanced Understanding of Cultural Heritage:

The MATATAG curriculum has significantly deepened students' understanding of the Philippines' cultural heritage, with teachers reporting a noticeable increase in learners' sense of national identity. The curriculum's focus on cultural education encourages students to explore the richness and diversity of Filipino traditions, values, and history. According to Cruz (2019), this emphasis on culture-based learning fosters a stronger connection between students and their national roots, helping them develop a deeper appreciation for their identity as Filipinos. By examining cultural heritage in the classroom, students gain a greater understanding of the historical and social contexts that shape their nation.

Furthermore, the curriculum's inclusion of localized content has played a vital role in making cultural heritage more relatable and meaningful for learners. Kilag et al. (2024) noted that the integration of local traditions and historical narratives into the curriculum allows students to connect their own experiences with broader cultural and historical themes. This approach not only enhances students' knowledge of the Philippines' diverse regions but also instills pride in their local heritage. Teachers observed that students were more engaged in lessons that featured indigenous practices, folk stories, and regional histories, reinforcing their sense of belonging to the nation's rich cultural tapestry (Albert et al., 2023).

One of the most notable outcomes of this cultural education focus is the development of a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the Philippines' cultural diversity. Estrellado (2023) highlights that by exploring the various ethnic groups, languages, and traditions within the country, students learn to appreciate and respect the diverse cultural landscape of the Philippines. This has helped foster a more inclusive mindset, with students showing greater empathy towards different cultural practices and viewpoints. Teachers reported that this heightened cultural awareness also contributed to a more harmonious classroom environment, as students became more open to discussing and celebrating differences.

The MATATAG curriculum's emphasis on cultural heritage has been instrumental in cultivating a stronger national identity among learners. By providing an in-depth exploration of the Philippines' cultural past and present, the curriculum not only enhances students' knowledge but also instills a lasting sense of pride in their heritage. This approach ensures that students are not only aware of their country's cultural diversity but are also equipped to contribute to the preservation and promotion of their national identity in an increasingly globalized world.

Challenges in Implementation:

One of the primary challenges faced by teachers in implementing the MATATAG curriculum was the lack of adequate resources, particularly textbooks and instructional materials. Many teachers pointed out that this disparity in resources created significant difficulties in delivering the lessons effectively. As one participant expressed, "We often have to improvise or find our own materials because the textbooks provided are either outdated or insufficient for the number of students we have." This lack of proper resources not only impacted the quality of instruction but also limited the ability of students to fully engage with the curriculum's content, a challenge similarly noted by Estrellado (2023) in his analysis of curriculum implementation barriers.

Moreover, the need for additional training emerged as another key challenge. Several teachers shared that while the curriculum's goals were clear, the professional development they received was inadequate for them to fully grasp the curriculum's deeper objectives. "We had a one-week training session, but it wasn't enough to cover everything," one teacher remarked. Many felt that without sustained and comprehensive training, it was difficult to align their teaching strategies with the curriculum's expectations. Kilag et al. (2024) emphasize that continuous professional development is essential for educators to effectively implement any new curriculum, a sentiment that was echoed in the participants' concerns.

Another recurring issue was the uneven distribution of resources across schools in different regions. Teachers from more rural areas reported facing even greater challenges in accessing basic teaching tools compared to their

counterparts in urban schools. "In our school, we don't even have a functioning printer or enough chalkboards. It's hard to teach a curriculum that's so ambitious when we're struggling with the basics," shared one participant from a remote school. This gap in resources between urban and rural schools created an unequal learning environment, where students in under-resourced areas were at a disadvantage, further complicating the curriculum's effectiveness (Albert et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, teachers remained hopeful that with better support and proper infrastructure, the MATATAG curriculum could achieve its intended outcomes. As one participant put it, "The curriculum has a lot of potential. But without the right materials and training, it's like trying to build a house without the right tools." Teachers believe that addressing these issues would not only improve the quality of instruction but also ensure that all students, regardless of location, have equal access to a quality education.

Teacher's Role in Meaningful Learning:

Teachers play a critical role in the success of the MATATAG curriculum, particularly in how they contextualize lessons to make learning more meaningful for students. The curriculum's emphasis on a localized approach has been well-received by many educators, who see its potential to deepen student engagement. One teacher shared, "We are encouraged to use local examples and cultural references, which makes the lessons more relatable for our students." This ability to connect lessons to students' lived experiences, especially in subjects like history and geography, has enhanced classroom discussions and fostered a deeper understanding of cultural heritage, aligning with Cruz's (2019) observations on culture-based curricula.

However, while the localized approach has proven beneficial, many teachers expressed a need for additional support to fully implement this strategy. Teachers noted that they often lacked the necessary resources and training to effectively tailor the lessons to their specific contexts. "We understand the value of localization, but sometimes we're left on our own to figure out how to do it," said one participant. This gap in support has been a persistent issue, with some educators feeling that without proper guidance, they are unable to maximize the potential of the curriculum. This concern echoes Kilag et al.'s (2024) findings on the challenges teachers face in curriculum implementation due to insufficient professional development.

Moreover, the success of the MATATAG curriculum is heavily reliant on the teachers' ability to adapt. Teachers shared that their personal efforts and creativity were often the deciding factors in how well the curriculum was delivered. "We have to be very resourceful. If we can't find the right materials, we make our own. It's challenging, but we do it for the students," one teacher explained. This adaptability has been crucial, especially in schools with limited access to updated textbooks and teaching aids, a problem well-documented by Albert et al. (2023), who highlight the disparity in educational resources across different regions in the Philippines.

Despite these challenges, teachers largely agreed that the localized approach of the MATATAG curriculum is a step in the right direction. They noted that when properly implemented, it can bridge the gap between abstract concepts and students' real-world experiences. One participant noted, "When students see their own community or culture reflected in the lessons, it clicks for them. They become more interested and invested in what we're teaching." This observation supports the idea that contextualizing lessons not only fosters better academic outcomes but also helps cultivate a stronger sense of identity and belonging among learners (Aguas, 2020).

While the localized approach embedded in the MATATAG curriculum offers substantial benefits, teachers emphasized the need for ongoing support and resources to ensure its effective implementation. As one educator summarized, "The curriculum has so much potential, but we need more tools and training to make it work the way it's supposed to." Without these, the burden falls heavily on teachers to bridge the gap, highlighting the importance of investing in both teacher training and resource provision to fully realize the curriculum's objectives.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the MATATAG curriculum has had a positive effect on the teaching of history and geography in elementary schools. By focusing on contemporary issues and integrating local cultural elements, these subjects have become more relevant and engaging for students. Teachers reported that the new curriculum not only piqued students' interest but also made learning more meaningful. As one teacher noted, "Students now see the connection between what they learn in class and what's happening in the world around them." This shift has brought history and geography into sharper focus, fostering a more active and critical engagement with the material. In line with the goals of 21st-century education, the MATATAG curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, skills that are crucial for navigating a rapidly changing global landscape (Kilag et al., 2024).

Despite its promising impact, the study also uncovered significant challenges in the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum. Teachers across various schools expressed concerns about the lack of sufficient resources,



such as textbooks and teaching materials, which hampered their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively. Moreover, many teachers reported feeling underprepared, citing inadequate training as a major barrier to the curriculum's success. One participant lamented, "We were given the curriculum, but not the proper tools or training to make it work." This disparity in resources and training has led to inconsistent outcomes, with some schools implementing the curriculum more successfully than others. Additionally, the increased content load, especially when combined with other subjects, proved to be overwhelming for younger students, suggesting that further curriculum adjustments may be needed to accommodate their developmental stages.

The findings highlight a critical need for enhanced teacher training and professional development. The MATATAG curriculum's success largely depends on how well educators can adapt its localized and contextualized approach to their classrooms. While many teachers embraced the potential of the curriculum, they acknowledged the need for ongoing support. This aligns with the observations of Aguas (2020), who stressed the importance of professional development in curriculum implementation. Without proper training, even the most well-designed curriculum may fail to achieve its intended outcomes. To ensure that teachers are well-equipped to deliver the MATATAG curriculum, educational policymakers must prioritize regular training programs that focus on both pedagogical strategies and the curriculum's specific goals.

The study's findings align with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which posits that learning is a collaborative process where individuals construct knowledge through social interaction. The MATATAG curriculum encourages this type of learning by promoting classroom discussions, group activities, and the application of real-world examples. This approach not only facilitates individual understanding but also fosters collective knowledge construction within the classroom. Moreover, Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory offers insights into the varying degrees of curriculum adoption observed in the study. Some schools have embraced the MATATAG curriculum more fully, while others are still in the early stages of implementation. This uneven adoption is indicative of the gradual process through which innovations spread, influenced by factors such as resource availability, teacher readiness, and administrative support (Rogers, 2003).

Another critical aspect highlighted in the study is the sociocultural context in which the MATATAG curriculum operates. The curriculum's emphasis on local culture resonates with the broader educational goals of fostering national identity and cultural awareness. As Cruz (2019) noted in her study on culture-based curricula, the inclusion of local history and traditions in the classroom enhances students' understanding of their cultural heritage. However, the effectiveness of this approach depends on teachers' ability to bridge the gap between abstract concepts and the lived experiences of their students. The findings suggest that when teachers successfully contextualize lessons, students become more engaged and develop a deeper appreciation for their cultural roots.

To address the challenges identified in this study, several policy recommendations emerge. First, there is a clear need for increased investment in educational resources, particularly in providing updated textbooks and teaching materials that align with the MATATAG curriculum. Second, ongoing teacher training programs must be implemented to ensure that educators are well-prepared to teach the curriculum effectively. Lastly, the curriculum should be continually assessed and refined, particularly with regard to its suitability for younger students. Future research should explore the long-term impact of the MATATAG curriculum on student learning outcomes and how these outcomes differ across various regions and school contexts. By addressing these areas, the MATATAG curriculum can continue to evolve and meet the needs of both students and educators.

Conclusion

The MATATAG curriculum holds significant promise for transforming history and geography education in the Philippines. By emphasizing critical thinking, cultural heritage, and contemporary relevance, it fosters a deeper engagement and understanding among students. This approach not only enriches their knowledge of historical events and geographical concepts but also encourages them to make connections to current global and national issues. Teachers have observed that students are more motivated and invested in their learning when they can see the direct relevance of their lessons to real-life situations.

However, to fully harness the potential of the MATATAG curriculum, the Department of Education must proactively address several key challenges. Teacher preparedness is crucial; many educators require additional training to effectively implement the curriculum's innovative strategies. Furthermore, resource availability poses a significant hurdle, as disparities in access to textbooks and teaching materials can hinder effective instruction. Finally, curriculum overload presents a concern, particularly for younger students who may struggle to absorb the increased content load when combined with other subjects.

Addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, improved resource allocation, and curriculum refinement is essential for the successful implementation of the MATATAG curriculum. By doing so, the Department of Education can ensure that this curriculum not only enhances students' educational experiences but also prepares them for a rapidly changing world.

References

- Adams, P. (2018). What Can We Learn from PISA?. In *International Trends in Educational Assessment* (pp. 1-12). Brill.
- Aguas, P. P. (2020). Key stakeholders' lived experiences while implementing an aligned curriculum: A phenomenological study. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(10), 3459-3485.
- Albert, J. R. G., Basillote, L. B., Alinsunurin, J. P., Vizmanos, J. F. V., Muñoz, M. S., & Hernandez, A. C. (2023). *Sustainable Development Goal 4: How Does the Philippines Fare on Quality Education?*. Philippine Institute for Development Studies.
- Cruz, J. D. (2019). Talking Story: Understanding Culture-based Curricula. *International Journal of Pedagogy and Teacher Education*, 3(2), 75-88.
- Department of Education. (2019). Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/DO_s2019_021.pdf
- Department of Education. (2023). MATATAG: DepEd's new agenda to resolve basic education woes. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2023/01/30/matatag-depeds-new-agenda-to-resolve-basic-education-woes/>
- Estrellado, C. J. P. (2023). MATATAG Curriculum: Why Curriculum [must] Change?.
- Kilag, O. K., Andrin, G., Abellanos, C., Villaver Jr, M., Uy, F., & Sasan, J. M. (2024). MATATAG Curriculum Rollout: Understanding Challenges for Effective Implementation. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(5), 172-177.
- Kilag, O. K., Galve, G., Uy, F., & Sasan, J. M. (2024). The New MATATAG Curriculum in the Lens of the 21st-Century 7Cs. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(5), 418-424.
- Kilag, O. K., Jesus, J., Uy, F., Sasan, J. M., Seblon, K., & Gier, R. A. (2024). Educational Transformation: Perspectives on the Implementation of the Matatag Curriculum in the Philippines. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(5), 306-311.
- Kilag, O. K., Hubahib Jr, S., & Sasan, J. M. (2024). Educational Transformation: The MATATAG Curriculum and Philippine Education Reform. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(5), 448-455.
- Lee, W. O. (2012). Education for future-oriented citizenship: implications for the education of twenty-first century competencies. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 32(4), 498-517.
- Mullis, I. V., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., Kelly, D. L., & Fishbein, B. (2020). TIMSS 2019 international results in mathematics and science.
- Pantao, J. G. (2021, February). Crisscrossing Textbook Writing Tasks and Core Values of Education Students in an Outcomes-Based Education Platform. In *6th UPI International Conference on TVET 2020 (TVET 2020)* (pp. 357-364). Atlantis Press.
- Schleicher, A. (2021). Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future: Excellence and Equity for all: Andreas Schleicher; OECD.
- Ungar, M. (Ed.). (2021). *Multisystemic resilience: Adaptation and transformation in contexts of change*. Oxford University Press.
- UNICEF. (2019). The Southeast Asia primary learning metrics program: Thinking globally in a regional context. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371730>