

Navigating Curriculum Transition in Elementary Education: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400163>

Received: 05 April 2026; Accepted: 10 April 2026; Published: 30 April 2026

ABSTRACT

The study utilized qualitative research particularly phenomenology aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of the public elementary school teachers in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, in navigating curriculum transition from K–12 to MATATAG, particularly during its initial stages of implementation. It examined their experiences including the challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms they employed, and the insights they offered to strengthen school system, and community support. The study employed phenomenological design which involved focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed qualitatively using Colaizzi's method to derive the most emergent theme per research question. This study revealed that the lived experiences of teachers during the curriculum transition were marked by limited pedagogical knowledge, increased workload, and resource constraints. To address these challenges, the findings showed that teachers adopted a growth mindset and used collaborative strategies. Furthermore, the insights shared by participants for the academe and the wider community highlighted the importance of proactive adaptation to curriculum changes and stronger administrative support in schools.

Keywords: Elementary education, curriculum transition implementation, public elementary school, teachers, phenomenology, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The MATATAG Curriculum is a current educational reform implemented in the Philippines, which aimed to enhance learning outcomes, pedagogy, and curriculum design (Department of Education, 2023). Teachers feel hesitant to adopt new curriculum changes because they believe that these reforms create additional work duties that they must manage (Aytaç, 2023). Since teachers are responsible for implementing these changes, their thoughts and feelings play an important role in the success of this curriculum reform (Loza, 2024).

Internationally, curriculum implementation seems to be a problem in other schools in Finland, their 2016 curriculum reforms draw on resistance from teachers (Sahlberg, 2018). Supporting this, a study by Chimbunde and Moreeng (2024) in Zimbabwe stresses demanding role from the teachers in curriculum changes, arguing that their involvement ensures rigor and bridges the gap between policymakers and practitioners. Also, a study by Mustofa et al. (2023) noted that major educational curriculum changes in Indonesia have not been fully achieved despite ongoing efforts. Added on, in South Africa, many teachers lack the qualifications and skills needed for effective implementation that results to difficulty in navigating curriculum changes, making their participation challenging. There is a need for significant improvements in teacher development to ensure teachers can address societal needs throughout the curriculum process (Alsubaie, 2016).

In the Philippine education system, Jaca and Baroman (2021) stated that the opinions of the stakeholders on the new implementation of the curriculum were diverse. Their study examined the difficulties faced by teachers in public elementary schools in the Cebu City division, as well as the degree of preparedness for the kindergarten curriculum. According to Wabingga and Tobakin (2025), elementary teachers in selected schools in Digos City encounter several challenges in implementing the MATATAG curriculum. Among the most significant issues are

limitations in resources and instructional materials, increased curriculum demands, and the need for enhanced professional development and institutional support. Added on, Ainin, et al. (2025) stated that teachers in some schools in Davao City and Davao de Oro have restricted chances to fulfill leadership positions and participate in collaborative work, which hinders their ability to drive educational changes in curriculum implementation.

The current study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in navigating curriculum transition from the K–12 curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, particularly during its initial stages of implementation. This study held social value by aiming to improve the quality of education, as based from UNSDG # 4 – Quality Education, the readiness for curriculum transitions, which directly affected student learning outcomes. When curricula changed, teachers had to adapt their teaching methods, which would often be challenging without proper support. By exploring the experiences of teachers who navigated these changes, the study may be a source of more effective professional development and support programs. This helped teachers feel more confident and prepared, ultimately leading to a more effective and responsive education system. Additionally, the findings could guide policy and training initiatives that support teacher development, benefiting both educators and students in the long run. Likewise, the findings of this study will be able to help administrators and teachers in navigating curriculum transitions.

From the readings I accessed, a study is concerned on incorporating its requirements into 21st-century teaching methodologies (Mondal & Das, 2021). Another study involved school administrators who would be adaptable, provide sufficient support, and promote effective communication to help their teachers thrive in the new curriculum (Bentayao et al., 2024). Also, a study by Estrello (2023) stressed that curriculum implementation involves societal needs and advancements, having this new educational landscape in preparing the students effectively, in another study by Angeles and Rabago et al. (2025) contextualized Matatag Curriculum among the Araling Panlipunan teachers. Likewise, some local studies utilized research designs such as descriptive qualitative (Abaiz et al., 2024), and systematic review design (Cabaya et al., 2025.) This current study utilized qualitative research particularly phenomenological inquiry aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in navigating curriculum transition from the K–12 Curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum in Mawab District, Davao de Oro.

While several studies have explored teacher experiences during curriculum reforms, there remains limited research specifically on how elementary teachers navigate the transition to a new curriculum, particularly in competency-based frameworks. Existing literature has highlighted challenges such as increased workload, insufficient training, and resource constraints (Apsari, 2018; Barrot, 2018; Abragan et al., 2022), yet few studies examine the combined effects of these challenges on instructional practices, teacher collaboration, and emotional resilience in elementary settings. Moreover, there is a gap in understanding how teachers leverage professional development, peer support, and reflective practices to adapt to curriculum changes effectively. This indicates a need for research that investigates not only the practical and emotional experiences of elementary teachers during curriculum transitions but also the strategies they employ to sustain instructional quality and student engagement amid systemic and resource limitations.

Upon the completion of the study, I will present the findings during the INSET (In-Service Training) in Mawab District, Division of Davao de Oro. Further, I will present my study in the national and even in the international research forum. I also intended to have the study published in a peer-reviewed journal for a wider dissemination.

Research Objectives

This qualitative study utilized specifically phenomenology aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in navigating curriculum transition from the K–12 curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, particularly during its initial stages of implementation, employing Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guided by validated interview guide questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers as regards the transition curriculum implementation?

2. How do the participants cope with the challenges encountered as regards the transition curriculum implementation?
3. What insights can be shared to the academe and society?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically, a phenomenological design. Qualitative research, as described by Pathak et al. (2013) and Hennink et al. (2020), was a technique for comprehending and analyzing experiences. From the viewpoint of Creswell (2018), qualitative research was framed in terms of using words, open-ended questions and responses, and data collection instruments to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem.

Likewise, Hennink et al. (2020) mentioned that qualitative research employed words to communicate what the researcher had discovered about a topic, in contrast to quantitative research, which used numerical data. Specifically, this study used a phenomenological research approach because this design served as an effective way of obtaining comprehensive data on the lived experiences of teachers in navigating curriculum transition implementation in the Mawab District, delving into their individual experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions to acquire in-depth insights from their perspectives.

Added on, according to Neubauer et al. (2018), by developing a deeper comprehension of the nature of phenomenology and ensuring alignment between the particular research issue and the researcher's underlying philosophy, phenomenology was considered a potent research technique ideally suited for investigating complex challenges. Also, Creswell and Poth (2018) also elaborated that this design offered an interpretive perspective on human situations and experiences. The collected data are then analyzed to identify recurring themes that capture the fundamental essence of the experiences of the participants.

Additionally, phenomenological research is appropriate to my study since it aims to understand the common lived experiences of individuals related to a specific phenomenon. It seeks to uncover the meaning and essence of these experiences by collecting detailed accounts from participants who have firsthand involvement with the phenomenon. This approach typically involves in-depth interviews, allowing researchers to examine both what the participants experienced and how they experienced it.

The study involved 17 public elementary school teachers from Mawab District, Davao de Oro, Philippines. Of these, 10 participated in IDIs and 7 in an FGD, selected through purposive sampling to ensure they were knowledgeable about the study's focus.

Participants were teachers with at least 3 years of experience, had undergone the transition from the K-12 to the MATATAG curriculum, and attended relevant national training. Newly hired or less-experienced teachers and those without training were excluded. Participation was voluntary.

A validated interview guide with three main questions was used to explore teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies during the K-12 to MATATAG curriculum transition. It was reviewed by education experts to ensure clarity and relevance.

Data were collected through IDIs and FGDs, recorded, and transcribed to maintain accuracy. Confidentiality was ensured following the Data Privacy Act of 2012, with secure storage and anonymized data. Member checking was also conducted to verify the accuracy and credibility of participants' responses.

RESULTS

Lived Experiences of Teachers as regards the Transition Curriculum Implementation

Shown in Table 1 are the lived experiences of the participants regarding the transition curriculum implementation. Thematic analysis generated three essential themes: insufficient pedagogical knowledge, increased workload, and experiencing resource constraints. These themes capture the challenges teachers faced

as they navigated confusion over new competencies, carried heavier instructional and administrative demands, and dealt with limited or outdated learning materials. Collectively, these experiences reflect the complex adjustments required of teachers as they responded to the demands and intricacies of implementing the new curriculum.

Table 1. Lived Experiences of Teachers as regards the Transition Curriculum Implementation

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Insufficient Pedagogical Knowledge	Experienced a great deal of confusion regarding new competencies set by the MATATAG curriculum due to a lack of information.
	Uncertain to provide effective and appropriate learning opportunities to students due to lack of supervisory guidance.
	Difficulty in the implementation due to a limited understanding of the new curriculum requirements.
	Expressing concern over readiness to implement new instructional approaches, particularly due to gaps in pedagogical knowledge.
Increased Workload	Teachers felt the burden due to many paperwork requirements.
	Struggling with lots of lesson preparations in the new curriculum.
	Placing all the heavy workloads on the shoulders of teachers.
	Curriculum transition preparations are additional tasks for teachers.
Experiencing Resource Constraints	Teachers are the ones searching for instructional materials due to a shortage of teaching materials.
	Limited access to curriculum-aligned instructional supports.
	Existing learning materials are no longer aligned with the new curriculum.

Coping Mechanisms of the Teachers as regards the Transition Curriculum Implementation

Shown in Table 2 are the findings indicating that participants employed various coping mechanisms to manage the challenges encountered during the curriculum transition. The study identified two essential themes on coping mechanisms with the MATATAG Curriculum: *maintaining a growth mindset* and the *utilization of collaborative measures*. Through these coping approaches, teachers experienced meaningful professional growth as they adapted to new expectations and instructional requirements during transition curriculum implementation.

Table 2. Coping Mechanisms of the Teachers as regards the Transition Curriculum Implementation

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Maintaining a Growth Mindset	Thinking positively about the implementation of the new curriculum.
	Being adaptive to the new curriculum.
	Being open to changes and willing to learn about the new curriculum through training
	Embracing the curriculum transition and placing trust in the new process.
	Keeping in mind the benefits brought by the new curriculum.
Utilization of Collaborative Measures	Participating in regular Learning Action Cells Sessions (LACS) to share ideas with colleagues.
	Communicating regularly and learning from co-teachers.
	Engaging in positive feedback and mentoring from school heads.
	Sharing among teachers the appropriate approaches and resources.
	Connecting and helping frequently with colleagues.

Insights Shared to the Academe and to the Society

Shown in Table 3 are the insights of the participants regarding their insights in navigating the curriculum transition. The participants shared common views on strategies that could strengthen curriculum implementation and enhance teacher readiness. Based on the analysis, two essential themes were generated: the relevance of innovative practices and the importance of holistic support from the school administration. These themes illustrate how teachers implemented practical and sustainable strategies, highlighted the need for strong system- and school-level support structures, and focused on improving classroom practices in coordination with broader school and community initiatives to ensure a smoother and more effective curriculum transition.

Table 3: Insights Shared of the Participants to the Academe and to the Society

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Proactive Adaptation to Curriculum Innovations	Looking for ways and means to be well-informed of the new curriculum and its implementation.
	Overcoming challenges through self-adjustments or self-learning.
	Taking initiatives to stay updated on the implementation of the curriculum, utilizing the latest trends in technology.
	Engaging in self-directed research, including the use of AI, in aligning previous lessons, approaches, and other learning resources with the new curriculum.
Strengthened School Administrative Support	Provision of training, workshops, and seminars for teachers.
	School heads demonstrating genuine support and motivating practices.
	Making provisions in the allocation of the budget for resources and other learning materials.
	Assessing instructional practices of teachers through monitoring, assessment, and positive feedback.

DISCUSSIONS

Lived Experiences of Teachers as regards the Transition Curriculum Implementation

The results showed that the experiences of the teachers during the curriculum transition reflected insufficient pedagogical knowledge, increased workload, and experienced resource constraints. Teachers were often confused about new competencies, uncertain about how to provide effective learning, and concerned about adjusting their teaching approaches. They also faced heavy workloads, including lesson preparations, paperwork, and additional transition tasks. Limited or misaligned resources further complicated implementation, requiring teachers to seek, adapt, or create materials. Despite these challenges, they demonstrated professional growth through reflection, peer collaboration, and adaptive strategies, while maintaining focus on student engagement, innovative activities, and shared planning to ensure smoother classroom transitions.

Insufficient Pedagogical Knowledge. The public elementary school teachers described considerable difficulty in making sense of the new curriculum during its early implementation. Many experienced confusions when encountering unfamiliar terminologies, processes, and expectations that required immediate comprehension and adjustment. Teachers reported a noticeable gap between initial assumptions and the actual demands of the transition believing at first that the shift would be manageable, but later realizing it was far more challenging than anticipated. Their accounts revealed mixed reactions, ranging from excitement about the reforms to growing anxiety and disappointment due to unclear instructions and limited guidance. The absence of a clear transition plan further deepened their sense of uncertainty, leaving many feeling unprepared during the initial stages of implementation.

These navigational challenges reflect broader layers of adjustment involving emotional readiness, instructional demands, and the need for professional support. Unclear guidelines, shifting expectations, and increased workloads created stress and uncertainty, echoing findings by Abragan et al. (2022) and Dizon et al. (2019), who highlighted persistent gaps in Philippine curriculum implementation.

Participants also emphasized the critical role of school leadership in guiding them through the transition. Administrative support, consistent communication, and flexibility were considered key to easing the demands of implementation, reinforcing Bentayao et al. (2024), who observed the influence of school heads in the MATATAG curriculum rollout. These insights are consistent with Ahmad et al. (2022), who noted that supportive work environments help manage stress and workplace adjustments during periods of change. Furthermore, the teachers' narratives demonstrate that effective curriculum transition requires clear direction, adaptive instructional strategies, and an enabling school environment. This perspective aligns with the national curriculum analyses of Estrellado (2023) and Palatino (2023), who argue that meaningful reform depends on system responsiveness and teacher readiness.

Increased Workload. The findings indicated that teachers faced substantial instructional and workload challenges during the implementation of the new curriculum. Many struggled to adjust their instructional strategies, particularly with competency-based teaching, which required redesigning lessons, aligning objectives with learner outcomes, and ensuring that activities matched prescribed competencies. Teachers reported that this shift demanded more preparation time and a deeper understanding of curriculum standards, which was difficult given limited training and insufficient retooling opportunities. Additionally, workload increased significantly due to extensive paperwork, daily outputs, monitoring forms, and progress tracking required under the new system. These challenges were intensified by the diverse learning paces of students and required additional support to meet basic competencies. The lack of adequate materials and support systems further left teachers feeling overwhelmed as they balanced instructional and administrative demands. Teachers reported shortages in essential resources such as updated textbooks, teaching guides, learning modules, and digital tools, as well as limited access to technology. Additionally, insufficient training, minimal professional development, and lack of administrative support contributed to their difficulties, increasing their workload during curriculum transition.

These experiences are consistent with the findings of Apsari (2018) and Barrot (2018), which noted that instructional adaptation as a major challenge during curriculum reforms due to misalignment between teacher preparation and classroom realities. The misalignment between teacher preparation and classroom realities is seen in the gap between training and actual classroom conditions. Teachers are often taught theoretical approaches that do not fully address challenges such as large class sizes, diverse learners, limited resources, and time constraints, making it difficult to apply what they have learned. Similarly, Abragan et al. (2022) and Dizon et al. (2019) highlighted that gaps in resources and preparation often worsen the workload of teachers, particularly in competency-based frameworks where limited materials and insufficient training force them to spend extra time creating resources and adapting lessons. As a result, their workload increases significantly, making it more challenging to effectively implement the curriculum. The stress reported by teachers also aligns with Ahmad, Gul, and Kashif (2022) observed that increased responsibilities without adequate support contribute to heightened work pressure and burnout. Similarly, Bongco and David (2020) highlighted that Filipino teachers often carry the bulk of curriculum implementation despite limited systemic support. In this study, teachers felt the burden due to many paperwork requirements, struggled with extensive lesson preparation under the new curriculum, and experienced heavy workloads placed on their shoulders. Additionally, curriculum transition preparations served as extra tasks for teachers. These findings emphasize the need for clearer guidance, accessible training, and stronger support systems to help teachers manage both instructional and administrative responsibilities effectively.

Experiencing Resource Constraints. Teachers highlighted that the curriculum transition, despite its challenges, required them to take on additional responsibilities related to sourcing and developing instructional materials. Many reported that due to insufficient resources for the new curriculum, they had to independently look for or create materials that align with competency-based expectations. Existing learning materials were often no longer aligned with the updated curriculum, making them less useful for current instructional needs. As a result, teachers were compelled to invest extra time and effort in identifying appropriate resources, modifying outdated

materials, and ensuring that their lessons meet the required competencies. These experiences reflect the findings of Apsari (2018) and Barrot (2018), who noted that curriculum reforms often expose gaps in resource availability and alignment. This situation underscores the need for adequate, accessible, and curriculum-aligned instructional materials to support teachers and reduce the additional burden placed on them during curriculum transitions.

The need for continuous training and professional development was evident, particularly in the context of resource constraints experienced by teachers during curriculum transition. Consistent with Abragan et al. (2022) and Dizon et al. (2019), sustained capacity-building is necessary for teachers to fully comprehend and implement curriculum standards, especially when available instructional materials are insufficient or misaligned. In the absence of adequate resources, teachers are often required to rely on their own skills and initiative to develop or adapt materials, making professional development even more critical. This process also promoted self-awareness, as teachers reflected on their instructional strengths, limitations, and decision-making while navigating limited resources, aligning with Creswell and Poht (2018), who view reflective practice as integral to professional learning. Moreover, participants' experiences demonstrated that curriculum transitions, though demanding and constrained by limited resources, can cultivate resilience, competence, and renewed commitment to teaching. This finding reinforces Estrellado (2023) and Palatino (2023), who argue that meaningful educational reform depends not only on systemic improvements but also on teachers' ability to grow professionally despite challenging conditions.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers As Regards Transition Curriculum Implementation

The analysis of findings indicated that participants responded to the curriculum transition challenges through personal and professional strategies. Teachers maintained a growth mindset by thinking positively, adapting their teaching, and trusting the process, while also utilizing collaborative measures through Learning Action Cells, peer support, and feedback from school heads. These strategies helped them strengthen instructional adjustments, manage increased workloads, exercise flexibility and creativity in lesson delivery, and sustain collaborative systems, ultimately supporting more effective and resilient curriculum implementation.

Maintaining a Growth Mindset. The research found that teachers responded to the demands of the curriculum transition by combining personal resilience with professional adjustments. Teachers reported that the rapid changes required them to modify their mindsets, practice patience, and maintain emotional control while navigating unfamiliar curriculum standards and heightened expectations. These personal strategies were complemented by professional efforts, including participating in training, adjusting pedagogical approaches, and developing new skills, such as integrating digital tools to meet curriculum requirements. Balancing these personal and professional strategies was considered essential to prevent burnout and sustain instructional performance. Collaboration with colleagues through shared discussions, peer support, and team planning also proved instrumental in managing workloads and interpreting new standards.

These findings are consistent with Day and Qing (2009), who highlighted that teacher resilience is strengthened through a combination of internal coping strategies and professional commitment. Similarly, Richards et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of supportive peer networks and self-care practices in reducing burnout during demanding educational reforms. In the Philippine context, Abragan et al. (2022) and Dizon et al. (2019) underscored that curriculum transitions require both personal adaptability and institutional support for teachers to maintain performance amid evolving expectations.

The participants' efforts to refine their competence and instructional readiness also align with Alsubaie (2016) and De Los Arcos et al. (2016), who argued that meaningful curriculum implementation results from active teacher initiative, skill development, and reflective practice. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that successfully navigating the curriculum transition necessitated leveraging both personal strengths and professional capacities. By integrating emotional resilience with continuous learning, pedagogical adjustments, and collaborative support, teachers were able to uphold instructional quality, maintain a stable learning environment, and sustain student engagement. Teachers demonstrated thinking positively about the implementation of the new curriculum, being adaptive to the new curriculum, and being open to changes and

willing to learn about the new curriculum through training. They also showed embracing the curriculum transition and placing trust in the new process while keeping in mind the benefits brought by the new curriculum.

Utilization of Collaborative Measures. The research indicates that teachers employed a range of adaptive strategies to manage the pressures and uncertainties of the curriculum transition. Central to these strategies was reflective practice: teachers regularly engaged in self-evaluation to monitor their instructional effectiveness, adjust teaching approaches, and maintain clarity amid evolving expectations. This practice aligns with Day and Qing (2009), who emphasize that teacher resilience is reinforced through continuous self-awareness and deliberate mindset adjustments.

Further, teachers also relied on collegial support, consulting co-teachers, sharing lesson strategies, and participating in collaborative problem-solving. Such interactions fostered a sense of collective efficacy and reduced stress, consistent with Bongco and David (2020), who highlighted teacher collaboration as a stabilizing factor during educational reforms. In addition, self-directed learning emerged as a key adaptive measure. Teachers actively participated in regular Learning Action Cells (LACS) sessions to share ideas and strategies with colleagues, while also communicating regularly and learning from co-teachers. They engaged in positive feedback and mentoring from school heads and shared appropriate approaches and resources among themselves, frequently connecting and helping one another. These collaborative practices enabled teachers to enhance their skills and align their instruction with new curriculum requirements, reflecting the findings of Alsubaie (2016) and De Los Arcos (2016), who emphasize the role of teacher initiative, peer learning, and continuous professional development in navigating curriculum change. Despite these pressures, teachers emphasized the importance of collaboration through shared planning, lesson exemplars, and resource exchange, aligning with Bongco and David (2020), who underscored collective teacher agency as essential in navigating curriculum reforms. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that teachers' adaptive coping strategies combined reflective thinking, collaborative engagement and proactive skill development. Collectively, these strategies enabled teachers not only to manage the immediate challenges of curriculum transition but also to strengthen their resilience, maintain instructional quality, and remain responsive in a dynamic educational environment.

Insights Shared to the Academe and to the Society

Through the insights and coping strategies of the participants in navigating the curriculum transition, they developed clearer understandings of how to address the challenges they encountered, particularly the importance of adopting practical and sustainable strategies, strengthening system and school-level support, and optimizing classroom practices to ensure more effective and responsive implementation.

Proactive Adaptation to Curriculum Innovations. The research revealed that teachers employed practical and sustainable strategies to navigate the curriculum transition despite limited institutional resources. They made extensive use of low-cost, readily available materials, such as indigenous items, recycled objects, simple visual aids, and local resources, to deliver lessons effectively. This resourcefulness demonstrates adaptability of teachers in responding to material shortages. Instructional preparation was further streamlined through the updating of old lesson plans, sharing of ready-made lesson exemplars, and collaborative tools like shared Google Drive folders. These practices reduced duplication of effort, ensured consistency in pacing, and allowed teachers to concentrate on competency-based adjustments rather than producing materials from scratch. Peer coaching, team teaching, and group planning further distributed workload and strengthened instructional consistency across grade levels.

Sustainability extended beyond materials to continuous professional capacity-building. Teachers highlighted the importance of regular training, skill development, and retooling in lesson design, assessment, and competency unpacking, which proved more valuable than mere resource provision. These findings align with Abragan et al. (2022), who stressed context-responsive strategies during curriculum shifts, and Apsari (2018), who noted that instructional challenges are best addressed when coupled with collaborative support and professional learning. De Los Arcos (2016) similarly emphasized that teacher modification, localization, and sharing of instructional materials enhance curriculum implementation, while Bentayao et al. (2024) identified teacher-led innovations as key to the success of the MATATAG curriculum in resource-constrained settings.

The results also emphasized the role of institutional structures in supporting teacher initiative. Teacher involvement in curriculum development fosters ownership and long-term effectiveness (Alsubaie, 2016), while Dvorak (2023) argued that practical reforms must reflect classroom realities. The teachers in this study demonstrated that when systems provide guidance yet allow flexible implementation, curriculum transitions become more manageable—consistent with DepEd’s call for contextualized approaches in the MATATAG Curriculum (DepEd, 2023; 2024). Thus, the findings show that practical and sustainable strategies emerge from the combination of accessible resources, collaborative practices, and continuous professional development, enabling teachers to navigate curriculum transitions effectively while maintaining instructional quality despite systemic constraints.

Strengthened School Administrative Support. The study revealed that teachers consistently emphasized the importance of strong system-wide and school-level support to effectively navigate the curriculum transition. While DepEd provided initial orientations and broad frameworks, these were often perceived as unclear, overly theoretical, or delivered too close to implementation, leaving teachers uncertain about expectations and instructional adjustments. Participants suggested that a phased rollout, clearer guidelines, and consistent communication from both the division and school leadership could have significantly reduced confusion during the early stages. They highlighted that hands-on workshops, practical demonstrations, mentoring, and regular monitoring—rather than lectures or template-based orientations were essential to understanding competency mapping, lesson pacing, and assessment requirements. Adequate teaching materials, preparation time, and reliable feedback mechanisms were also identified as critical to ensure that real challenges were recognized and addressed promptly.

These findings align with Abragan et al. (2022) and Dizon et al. (2019), who noted systemic gaps between curriculum policy and classroom implementation when teachers receive insufficient operational guidance. Similarly, Bentayao et al. (2024) emphasized that successful MATATAG implementation depends on strong administrative leadership, clear communication, and school-level support structures. The participants’ call for ongoing capacity-building reflects the observations of Apsari (2018) and De Los Arcos (2016), which underscored the importance of continuous teacher training, mentoring, and collaborative interpretation of new standards. Moreover, Alsubaie (2016) and Dvorak (2023) argued that institutional responsiveness and shared decision-making are essential for making curriculum reforms both meaningful and manageable.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that strengthening the system and school support is crucial for easing the pressures of curriculum change. Clearer orientations, structured professional development, sufficient resources, and responsive leadership enable teachers to navigate new expectations confidently and effectively. When institutional systems provide consistent guidance and support, curriculum transitions become more coherent, sustainable, and aligned with classroom realities.

Implications for Educational Practice

The experiences of teachers demonstrate that navigating curriculum transitions requires a coordinated and balanced effort across individual educators, schools, and the broader education system. Managing new competencies, shifting expectations, and increased workloads can be both professionally enriching and emotionally challenging. Challenges such as unclear guidelines, misaligned expectations, instructional adjustments, and diverse learner readiness highlight the need for systematic support that extends beyond individual teacher resilience. These findings underscore the importance of establishing structured mechanisms that enable teachers to implement the curriculum effectively while maintaining instructional quality and learner engagement.

Teachers employed a combination of personal and professional strategies to cope with these demands. Maintaining a growth mindset, they demonstrated patience, flexibility, adaptability, and reflective practice, with instructional responsibilities. They complemented these efforts with collaborative approaches, including peer coaching, shared lesson planning, Learning Action Cells (LACs), and collegial problem-solving, which promoted professional competence, teamwork, and instructional consistency. The adoption of innovative and practical strategies, such as using local or recycled materials, updating old lesson plans, and leveraging shared

digital resources, enabled teachers to navigate material constraints while sustaining learner engagement and competency-based instruction.

The findings indicate that curriculum transition processes should not rely solely on teacher initiative or resilience. Schools and education systems must provide holistic, institution-wide frameworks that include structured professional development, clear communication channels, and responsive leadership support. This entails hands-on workshops, collaborative planning opportunities, adequate preparation time, accessible instructional resources, and ongoing monitoring and feedback mechanisms. Strengthening partnerships with parents and communities through orientations, feedback systems, and transparent communication further supports alignment, reduces confusion, and promotes shared responsibility in education. By integrating personal resilience, collegial collaboration, innovative instructional practices, and strong systemic support, educational institutions can facilitate smoother curriculum transitions, improve instructional delivery, and create learning environments that support both teacher effectiveness and the holistic development of learners.

Recommendations for Future Research

To strengthen the capacity of teachers to implement the curriculum effectively, schools may develop structured support programs, including curriculum orientations, hands-on training workshops, mentoring sessions, and teacher support groups. Teachers themselves need to uphold professionalism, set clear boundaries, and demonstrate flexibility, creativity, and adaptability as they navigate new standards, instructional shifts, and diverse learner needs. School-based support systems, such as collaborative planning, peer coaching, and administrative guidance, may be integrated to enable the sharing of strategies, distribute workloads, and reduce stress, ensuring both instructional quality and teacher well-being during the transition.

Communities, local governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders may provide complementary support, such as additional learning resources, psychosocial services, community-based learning initiatives, and funding for school programs. Teacher education institutions could incorporate extensive training on curriculum adaptation, change management, differentiated instruction, and inclusive classroom practices into both pre-service and in-service programs. Recognizing curriculum transition as a shared responsibility, schools, communities, and policymakers may collaborate through coordinated resources, continuous communication, and a collective commitment to learner-centered and equitable education.

Future research may explore on the readiness, stress levels, and instructional performance of teachers during curriculum transitions, identify systemic barriers such as resource constraints and workload challenges, and examine the impact of school leadership practices on transition outcomes. Further studies may investigate the psychological effects of curriculum changes on teacher motivation and resilience, as well as conduct longitudinal analyses to determine the sustained impact of transition-related support on student learning outcomes. Collectively, these measures underscore the importance of a holistic, multi-level approach that integrates educational institutions, community contexts, and policy directions to ensure smooth, responsive, and sustainable curriculum implementation.

CONCLUSION

In reflecting on this study, it becomes evident that teachers carry a dual responsibility: navigating the technical demands of curriculum transition while simultaneously managing the relational and emotional complexities that accompany their role. Although the focus of this research centered on the lived experiences of teachers during a major educational shift, the accounts of the participants reminded me of how deeply interconnected curriculum implementation is with the broader ecosystem of support, expectations, and daily challenges within the school environment. Their stories echoed realities I have also encountered, moments when limited guidance, unclear directives, or shifting expectations placed strain on teachers, yet also moments when collaboration, creativity, and collective resilience made change possible.

As a researcher, I found it necessary to confront the emotional effort of teachers embedded in teaching. The reflections of the participants on confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety paired with patience, professionalism, and

adaptability revealed that curriculum transition is not merely a technical undertaking; it is also an emotional journey. Teachers must regulate their responses, maintain composure, and continue supporting learners despite demanding circumstances. This realization underscored the importance of acknowledging teacher well-being as integral to effective curriculum reform. It also reinforced that schools must prioritize not only instructional training but also emotional and relational support structures for teachers.

Ultimately, this study allowed me to appreciate the depth of commitment that teachers bring to their work. Their experiences show that meaningful implementation of curriculum changes relies on strong school systems, consistent leadership support, and collaborative professional cultures. At the same time, these narratives highlight the need for responsive policies, capacity-building programs, and sustained communication across all levels of the educational community. As both educator and researcher, I am inspired to advocate for practices that strengthen teacher wellness, empower professional growth, and create environments where instructional excellence and emotional support go hand in hand. Only through such collective efforts would ensure that children are not only academically prepared but also nurtured within a supportive and holistic learning environment.

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