
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Preparations of Grade 7 Social Studies Teachers Towards a Curriculum Reform

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| ABSTRACT

Regular curriculum reviews ensure relevance and allow integration of subjects that meet evolving student and societal needs. In the Philippines, the MATATAG Curriculum redesigns the Social Studies (Araling Panlipunan) program by shifting focus from Asian Studies to the Philippines in Southeast Asia. This shift highlights the need to explore teacher preparation for implementing the new curriculum. This qualitative study used narrative inquiry to examine how five Grade 7 Social Studies teachers prepared for the MATATAG Curriculum. Through purposive sampling, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, allowing participants to share detailed experiences. Thematic analysis revealed six themes in teacher preparation: self-initiated activities, materials preparation, paradigm shift, apprenticeship learning, mandated activities, and empowerment. These efforts enhanced teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, equipping them to handle the revised subject matter effectively. The study recommends that, when rolling out a new curriculum, there should be a close dialogue between curriculum developers and teachers, quality reference materials be made available, teachers receive practical training through seminars and workshops, and forums be established between curriculum developers and teachers. These steps can ensure that classroom realities inform curriculum reform, fostering better implementation and improved learning outcomes.

| KEYWORDS

7 Social Studies Teachers; Curriculum Reform; MATATAG Curriculum redesigns

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Curriculum is a multifaceted concept that can be viewed as a plan for achieving educational goals, a set of learner experiences, a field of study, and a body of subject matter (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). It guides the organization of learning activities to meet objectives (El-Astal, 2023) and emphasizes experiences shaped by interactions, activities, and environments (Vidal, 2023). As a discipline, curriculum is influenced by dominant ideologies (Harvey, 2021), while also representing specific content teachers deliver (McComas, 2024; Glatthorn, 2016). There are different types of curriculum, with recommended, written, and taught curricula directly influencing learning outcomes (Ahyuni et al., 2024). Its development relies on four essential components: objectives, content, strategies, and evaluation, ensuring alignment between learning goals and experiences (Du, 2024; Burns, 2023). A well-structured curriculum enhances student achievement, addresses learning loss, and promotes inclusion and innovation (Steiner, 2017; Adhikari & Kunwar, 2023).

In the Philippines, the K-12 curriculum was introduced to align with 21st-century demands and improve student readiness for higher education or employment (Barrot, 2021; Sarmiento, 2016). Despite this, challenges such as lack of qualified teachers, resource gaps, and curriculum misalignment remain. Influenced by colonial legacies (Campos, 2023; Coloma, 2013), Philippine

curriculum reforms have been overseen by agencies like the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd) (Hagos & Dejarne, 2008). However, recent assessments like the Program for International Student Assessment reveal persistent performance issues (Pornobi, 2024), prompting the Education Commission (EDCOM II) to call out systemic miseducation (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024). In response, the Department of Education introduced a new curriculum that encapsulates the reform's core goals: MA – Make the curriculum relevant to produce job-ready, active, and responsible citizens; TA – Take steps to accelerate the delivery of basic education facilities and services; TA – Take good care of learners by promoting their well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment; and G – Give support to teachers to teach better (MATATAG) for the 2024–2025 school year to address outdated content, improve alignment, and better prepare students for global competitiveness (DepEd, 2023; Estrellado, 2023).

The history of curriculum in the Philippines has been shaped by various colonial influences, including Spanish, American, and Japanese eras (Campos, 2023). The American colonial period notably impacted educational policies, with race playing a significant role in curriculum development. Over time, the Philippine curriculum has evolved to address global challenges and societal changes, with institutions like CHED and DepEd overseeing its improvement (Hagos & Dejarne, 2008). Recent reforms, such as the K-12 curriculum, aim to prepare students for the future, though further refinements are needed in areas like constructive alignment, technology integration, and specificity (Barrot, 2021). Challenges persist in instructional delivery, assessment, and teacher preparation, highlighting the need for continued curriculum enhancement (Barrot, 2021; Campos, 2023).

Republic Act 10533, signed into law in 2013, made the K-12 curriculum a reality (Abulencia, 2025) to address past curriculum shortcomings. Despite this, issues like poor student performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (Pornobi, 2024) and challenges identified by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) persist (EDCOM II, 2024). These include content gaps, misplaced prerequisites, and social inequities. With these challenges, curriculum reform is essential to meet global standards and prepare students for the workforce (Estrellado, 2023). In response, the Department of Education is endorsing the MATATAG curriculum, effective in the 2024-2025 school year (DepEd, 2023).

The Social Studies curriculum aims to help students understand their roles in society by integrating disciplines like history, geography, political science, and other social sciences. It encourages critical thinking, civic responsibility, and engagement with societal issues, fostering informed and active citizens in a democratic setting (Morrow, 1999; Wang, 2011). In the Philippines, *Araling Panlipunan* serves as the local equivalent, focusing on Filipino heritage, values, and civic duties. As part of the *Makabayan* (patriotic) learning area in the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum, it mirrors the interdisciplinary nature of Social Studies while emphasizing the Filipino experience. The subject plays a vital role in building national identity and developing students' understanding of Philippine history, geography, and governance, cultivating patriotism and social awareness (Serafico-Reyes et al., 2019).

The MATATAG Curriculum effectively redesigns the *Araling Panlipunan* Curriculum, replacing the K to 12 *Araling Asyano* (Asian Studies) subject matter with *Pilipinas sa Timog-Silangang Asya* (Southeast Asian Studies) which caters to Philippine Contemporary History highlighting its complex relationship with its Southeast Asian neighbors (DepEd, 2023). In line with this, new preparations and training are needed for our Social Studies teachers in order for them to teach this new curriculum. Teacher preparation for new curricula often highlights a critical gap between initial training and practical implementation. While teachers may attend workshops or initial professional development programs, these sessions are frequently too short or generic to address the specific demands of new educational frameworks adequately. This limitation leaves many teachers feeling underprepared and lacking confidence in applying new approaches and competencies effectively in the classroom (Okeyo & Mokua, 2023). A major contributing factor to this gap is the absence of structured, ongoing support, such as continuous professional development (CPD) programs that reinforce skills over time and provide resources for real-time challenges. Without this sustained support, teachers face barriers in adapting to curriculum changes, which can impact the success of educational reforms and the development of desired student competencies (Kisirkoi & Kamanga, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

This study aims to explore the preparations of Grade 7 Social Studies Teachers teaching the new MATATAG Curriculum. It seeks to answer one general question: What preparations are undertaken by Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teachers teaching the MATATAG curriculum?

1.3 Review of Relevant Literature

MATATAG Curriculum

In pursuit of meaningful changes in basic education, the Department of Education recognized the need to address persistent issues identified through a comprehensive review of the K to 12 Curriculum. The review in the curriculum revealed an overload of competencies, mismatches between prerequisites and student readiness, and insufficient instructional time for teachers to cover all required content (DepEd, 2023); these are the challenges that hindered effective teaching and learning. In response, the MATATAG Curriculum was developed to make a more coherent, relevant, and responsive educational framework.

The education agenda of MATATAG: “*Bansang Makabata, Batang Makabansa*” (Nation of the Youth, Youth of the Nation) sets a new direction for basic education in the Philippines by focusing on four core areas: MAke the curriculum relevant, TAke steps to accelerate delivery of basic education facilities and services, TAke good care of learners, and GIve support to teachers to teach better (DepEd, 2023). This new curriculum is a strategic response to the changing needs of Filipino learners and society. It manifests the commitment of the Department of Education to deliver quality education that prepares learners to become job-ready, responsible, and globally competitive citizens.

Components of Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies)

Social Studies is a multidisciplinary field that draws from various disciplines such as history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and the humanities. It equips students with essential skills like critical thinking, inquiry, collaboration, problem-solving, decision-making, and the ability to evaluate evidence and diverse perspectives. The discipline also fosters attitudes of civic responsibility, cultural sensitivity, and democratic engagement (National Council for Social Studies, 2023). Social Studies promotes knowledge of societal systems, historical developments, human-environment interactions, and civic structures, guided by the 10 themes of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS): Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environments; Individual Development and Identity; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Power, Authority, and Governance; Production, Distribution, and Consumption; Science, Technology, and Society; Global Connections; and Civic Ideals and Practices (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010).

In the Philippine context, *Araling Panlipunan* (AP) serves as the localized and contextualized version of Social Studies. While it maintains the interdisciplinary and integrative nature of global Social Studies, AP emphasizes the Filipino experience, highlighting national history, identity, culture, governance, and civic duties, while still connecting these to global perspectives. Teaching strategies in AP include inquiry-based learning, collaborative and experiential learning, contextual and values-based instruction, and the use of primary sources and local materials to enhance relevance. What sets AP apart is its strong emphasis on Filipino values, patriotism, and social responsibility, ensuring that learners not only gain knowledge and skills but also develop a deep sense of national identity. Through this, students are prepared to become responsible, critically engaged, and culturally grounded citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to both the national and global community.

Grade 7 MATATAG Curriculum Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies)

In the K to 12 Curriculum, Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (AP) centered on Asian Studies, with content organized into four quarters covering the geography of Asia, ancient civilizations up to the 16th century, and the historical developments in South, West, East, and Southeast Asia from the 16th to the 20th century. The subject aimed to build a broad understanding of Asia’s cultural and historical diversity (Department of Education, 2016). In contrast, the MATATAG Curriculum replaces Asian Studies with *Ang Pilipinas sa Timog-Silangang Asya* (The Philippines in Southeast Asia), focusing on the Philippines’ place in Southeast Asia. This new approach highlights how geography shaped early Philippine societies and how national identity is linked to regional developments. The shift narrows the scope to promote a more localized, culturally grounded understanding of Philippine history within a Southeast Asian context (DepEd, 2023).

Teacher Preparations to New Curriculum

Curriculum changes are driven by societal advancements, technological progress, and shifts in values to address challenges like content overload and social inequities. These updates ensure education remains relevant and effective in preparing students for an ever-changing world and shaping the nation’s future (Estrellado, 2023). The curriculum should evolve to reflect advancements in science, technology, and societal changes to effectively develop students’ personalities and behaviors (Mondal et al., 2021).

The MATATAG initiative, launched on August 10, 2023, aims to reshape the Philippine K to 12 Curriculum to better prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Aligned with Republic Act No. 10533, it focuses on humanized education, inclusiveness, technological innovation, and student well-being. A key reform is reducing the K to 10 Curriculum by 70%, allowing for deeper learning in essential areas like language, literacy, mathematics, and values. Building on past reforms, MATATAG seeks to create a more relevant and responsive education system that addresses both local and global needs.

Teacher preparation plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of the K-12 curriculum both in the Philippines and globally. Effective preparation requires strong academic content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and practical classroom experience (Hightower, 2011). In the Philippine context, readiness is influenced by factors such as length of service, eligibility, and teaching assignments (Acosta et al., 2016). Ensuring sustainability also involves addressing staffing policies, workforce planning, and support programs for educators. While demographics like gender, ethnicity, or grade point average (GPA) have limited impact on job readiness, communication and classroom management skills are vital for teaching success (Kim, 2012). Gathering feedback from teacher graduates and their employers is essential for evaluating and enhancing teacher preparation programs.

As new curricula are introduced, teachers play a crucial role in providing feedback and adapting to changes, which is valuable for content development and curriculum improvement (Corbett et al., 2013). Teacher effectiveness is a critical factor in student learning, often outweighing other influences like class size or school facilities (Soriano & Vargas, 2021). Ensuring that teachers are well-prepared is vital for successful curriculum implementation. This requires organized training programs, professional development workshops, and collaborative support networks for teachers (Kim, 2012). By attending these sessions, engaging in lesson planning, and refining their practices, teachers can better adapt to new curricula and ensure positive outcomes for their students (Serafico-Reyes, 2019).

2. METHOD

The study utilized narrative research which is a type of qualitative research that is centered on peoples' stories (Rosairo, 2023). Stories assist in explaining the peoples' viewpoints and provide in-depth insights and meanings to a specific situation. Narrative research seeks to discover significant accounts of people's lives in accordance with their own words (Ntinda, 2019). This signifies that people make sense of their experiences based on their own stories and understanding. Through a narrative approach, stories are developed completely without dividing them into separate variables (Rosairo, 2023).

Participant Sample

The study utilized the responses from Grade seven *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teachers who prepared for the upcoming Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* MATATAG curriculum. The study employed purposive sampling in selecting participants. It is a non-randomized sampling technique that selects respondents based on given criteria (Bisht, 2024). The criteria for selecting the participants were in a single category: participants must be a grade seven *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teacher who prepared for the upcoming MATATAG curriculum. A small sample size of 5 participants was targeted to capture deep, narrative-rich interviews that enabled an in-depth analysis of each participant's stories.

Data Generation

The study employed in-depth semi-structured interviews in gathering data that were constructed using open-ended questions and prompts to allow participants to elaborate on their responses. A semi-structured interview is a flexible conversation between the researcher and participant where follow-up questions, probes, and comments are exercised to have a more in-depth exploration of the participant's thoughts and experiences on a specific topic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interviews were captured through audio-recording (with participant's consent) and transcribed verbatim to fully extract the data needed for the study and to capture the statements in their stories accurately. The benefit of audio recording is that it lets the researchers focus on following up on what the participants say and capture the nuances in speech that can never be captured in taking notes (Courage & Baxter, 2005). The following open-ended guide questions were utilized to direct the conversation:

1. What specific activities had you personally initiated as a teacher to prepare yourself for the new curriculum implementation?
2. What specific activities had your school provided for you in preparation for the new curriculum implementation?
3. Did these activities prepare you well? Were they useful?
4. What was the best activity that you believed prepared you the most?

These questions were constructed using an a priori code, designed to encourage thoughtful, reflective responses, giving participants the freedom to share stories about their preparation and experiences during the implementation of MATATAG curriculum (Landersman et al., 2024). The semi-structured nature of the interview allows for follow-up questions to probe deeper into the participants' views where necessary (DeJonckheeren & Vaughn, 2019).

Data Analysis

The researchers utilized a thematic analysis strategy to examine the data gathered from the narratives of the participants' stories. Thematic analysis is a type of research method that seeks to identify the recurring themes or trends in a data set which often results in yielding new insights and understanding (Naeem et al., 2023). The researchers used the data obtained through the in-depth interviews to establish the narratives of the participants. These are kept in the first-person point of view to maintain the essence and authenticity of their stories. The narratives are centered on the preparations of grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teachers in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum and analyze their reactions and experiences brought by the change in curriculum.

Data Analysis Steps - Clarke and Braun's Six Steps of Data Analysis (2013)

Step 1 - Each of the transcripts gained from the interview will be read and re-read to familiarize the narratives of the participants.

Step 2 - Organize the data by labeling the main thoughts of the narratives to generate codes.

Step 3 - Once the main thoughts of the narratives are identified from each of the transcripts, combine the recurring codes into themes.

Step 4 - Review the identified themes and evaluate whether the codes are deeply connected with the themes.

Step 5 - Determine if the themes are aligned with the research objectives and are significant to the study.

Step 6 - Discuss the notable findings from the transcripts.

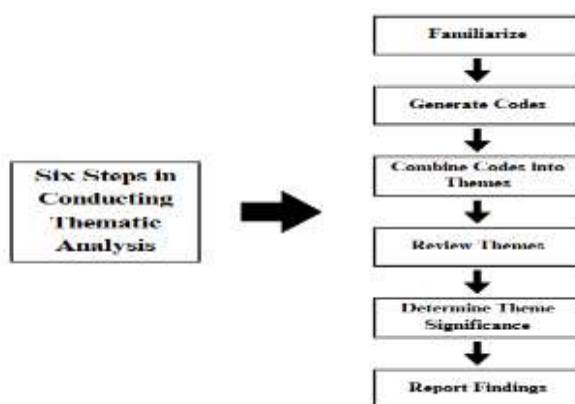


Figure 1: Framework in conducting Thematic Analysis (Clark & Braun, 2013)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Through in-depth semi-structured interviews, stories were extracted from the participants. The following are the presentations of narratives of the participants who are teachers teaching the new Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) subject under the MATATAG Curriculum, featuring their preparations in teaching the new subject.

P1: The Student-Centered

P1's initial reaction was the feeling of nervousness about its effect on students' adjustment to the new MATATAG curriculum as she stated that *"It's okay but I felt nervous on how students will be able to adjust to the implementation of a new curriculum"*. This indicates that P1 is more focused on what the students will undergo as they navigate through the MATATAG curriculum as students might face challenges such as unfamiliar content, new learning methods, and pacing issues.

P1's personally initiated preparation for the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum was through self-study as she mentioned that *"A preparation that I did was to self-study which involved scanning books and taking notes to identify the similarities and differences between the topics that I would have to teach in the current curriculum."* They implied that teachers must have a mastery of the content for them to effectively teach in the new curriculum. P1 also stated that *"I attended seminars such as the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC)"* which helped her to prepare on how she will create curriculum guides and lesson plans. This shows that teachers like P1, are proactive and reflective teachers who value mastery of content.

For how their school provided them with activities, P1 stated that *"Our school did not provide any seminar aside from in-school meetings."* This indicates that there is a lack of school support in the preparation of the MATATAG curriculum in terms of sending them to seminars, which might be because of financial issues for funding or administrative oversight. They simply relied on in-school meetings on how they will prepare for the curricular change. P1 further highlighted that *"We just created a curriculum guide, LXD (learning experience design), and lesson plans."* This showcases their resilience and dedication in embracing the MATATAG curriculum to effectively teach students.

In terms of how these activities prepared them well, P1 stated that *"The activities were very useful because it helps me to prepare well about the education of the students."* This highlights how important their students are and deeply value their education. P1 showcases a strong sense of responsibility as an educator whose ultimate goal is to enhance the learning experiences of students.

P1 stated that the best activity was self-study as they mentioned that *"You have already been prepared and in the process, you've gained knowledge about the MATATAG curriculum. This means that you are the one equipping yourself, both in preparation and in what you will teach."* This self-initiated activity of the teacher is beneficial as it builds confidence and ownership of teaching practices, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. P1 also proves that teaching is not just about delivering content but also expressing who they are, as they stated *"Your teachings will reflect who you are"*.

P2: The Experienced

P2's initial reaction was shocked and curious about the implementation of the new MATATAG Curriculum and her response was: *"What is this? We were not informed of this."* implying that no announcement was made to inform P2 and her companions. According to P2, she did not have any reaction to the curriculum transition as she was not informed about it. P2 stated that the only source of information she had was from television news and social media after its formal implementation.

P2's initial preparation for the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum was to develop a detailed lesson plan integrating the concepts given by the new curriculum as she stated, *"I have to create detailed lesson plans that integrate the skills and values of Social Studies."* She also stated, *"I gather resources like books, textbooks, multimedia materials, and assessment tools, to further prepare myself in teaching using the new curriculum."* As honestly stated by P2, *"We did not join any seminar regarding the new curriculum. Efforts were made but there were technical issues that happened during that time, hindering us from entering the seminar"*, suggesting that P2 has no formal training and knowledge about the MATATAG Curriculum. She also added that one of her preparations to fill the gap is that they did a lot of research about the new curriculum and that there were MATATAG aligned textbooks given to the school that helped her in the process.

For the usefulness of the preparation done, P2 stated that not all of her preparations helped her fully. According to P2: *"It depends on how the students react on what and how you will teach them."* For P2, prior experience in adjusting and teaching helped her in the preparation of the MATATAG Curriculum. P2 stated that *"It is okay for me if it changes, the important thing is that I deliver the topics well."* Overall, P2 emphasized that lesson planning based on her teaching experience was the best preparation.

P3: The Hands-On

P3's initial preparations for the MATATAG Curriculum were driven by personal initiative, acknowledging that teaching a new subject like Grade 7 Araling Panlipunan required extra effort. She shared that she began by *"reading textbooks, preparing materials for Grade 7,"* and also did personal research to understand the subject's unfamiliar content. Recognizing that it was their first time teaching this level, she admitted that *"Writing Grade 7 exemplar was difficult because I really don't have an idea of what to write on it."* Nevertheless, she made an effort to enrich her lessons by *"updating myself with different contemporary issues"* and emphasized

that she had to search for reliable content, stating that *"I still look for authentic materials, instructional materials,"* highlighting her diligence in ensuring the accuracy and relevance of her content.

When it came to the support provided by their school, P3 shared that teachers were mandated to attend various training sessions. *"We were asked to attend different seminars,"* she stated, referring to institutional efforts organized by bodies like the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) and Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP). As a learning area coordinator, P3 was directly involved in the national-level rollout of the curriculum. She proudly said, *"I am a writer of Grade 7, I am also the writer of Grade 9,"* and mentioned that they helped pilot these exemplars in public schools. She and other coordinators also took part in seminars across the country, including in *"Davao, Cebu, La Union, Kalinga and in the Cordillera Administrative Region,"* which offered her opportunities to learn, collaborate, and even act as spokesperson for the MATATAG Curriculum.

Reflecting on whether these activities prepared her well, P3 expressed that they were indeed helpful. *"Yes, they are very useful,"* she affirmed, emphasizing how they helped her understand *"how to embrace this new curriculum."* She explained that the five-day training sessions she attended were intensive and well-structured, but she also noted a flaw in the cascading process. *"For us, the training was for 5 days. For the cascading for the teacher, it took us 2 days,"* she pointed out that the shortened sessions might not be as effective. Despite this, she believed the content she received during the extended sessions equipped her adequately in understanding the curriculum's structure, content hours, and the integration of new topics.

Among all the preparations, P3 found the seminar-workshop to be the most beneficial. *I think the best activity is seminar-workshop,"* She emphasized, particularly appreciating their hands-on nature. These sessions required her to create teaching materials aligned with the curriculum's standards, which she found deeply enriching. These workshops not only clarified the expectations set by the MATATAG framework but also gave her the chance to share and exchange insights with fellow educators. Through these sessions, she was able to internalize the importance of content alignment and teaching standards, expressing how such activities helped her implement the curriculum with more confidence and clarity.

P4: The Optimist

The initial reaction of P4 was that she was happy about the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum because of the decongested competencies, but because of the lack of materials prior to implementation she realized that teachers would find it difficult to teach the new subjects. Additionally, she mentioned that *"Whether we like it or not, it must be implemented, because it is a mandate"* implying that it must go on. Regardless of that, P4 was welcoming of the new curriculum and stated that *"I have to be open-minded that I cannot control change, that eventually, everything will change."* **P4** thinks that the introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum is good, it's just that materials are lacking.

P4's personally initiated preparations were of creating flexible lesson plans that fit students' personalities, capabilities, and learning styles. She implied the importance of knowing your students when teaching a new subject. P4 was also very honest that she did not like the subject and stated that *"I don't like teaching about Southeast Asian countries to be honest, but I have to encourage or I have to pretend that I like teaching it so that the student will also like to learn about it."* This affirms her optimism of encouraging **themselves** to self-study about the new subject so that students will also like the subject. Her means of studying as mentioned by P4 was: *"I have to research what are the interesting themes about the places"* and added *"I have to look for trivias that interests students."* She also ensures that whatever she finds on the internet or artificial intelligence they make sure it is correct. P4 also suggests that teachers must possess *diskarte* or be crafty or to have strategies to cope up with change.

The school in which P4 teaches encourages teachers to suggest activities for preparation that they can do, then, the administrators will have to approve. Such approved means of preparation were seminars. These seminars were about the MATATAG Curriculum and were conducted in schools or via virtual platforms, some invitations were from different provinces in the country. But because it is expensive to send teachers, the administrator would usually go and just disseminate whatever is talked about in the seminar.

For P4, the best activity that prepared them was linking with other teachers during seminars. Through seminars, P4 states that: *"You have to attend seminars so that you will gain insight."* Her final take was that through seminars, you will meet teachers in different schools that you can also learn from. She implied that it is an opportunity to share and exchange experiences in teaching that may work in their respective schools.

P5: Glimpse into Change

With the current curriculum change happening, P5 found himself in the midst of a significant shift. P5 heard about the new curriculum through the news and social media. This sparked curiosity about how the curriculum is to be implemented and why

such change is needed. *"We were curious at the beginning and we were very curious during that time since we don't know the basis of this curriculum. Why do we have - or why do we need to change the current curriculum since it was already implemented."* Their initial reaction of being curious to realization started to become apparent when seminars are being mandated to schools. With a sincere desire to understand, P5 did multiple preparations—not just attending the mandated seminars, but also engaging in personal readings and independent research during vacation. *"I read multiple references while on vacation. I'm just looking at how I'm going to teach, and I'm just looking at what my itinerary will be."* The goal was simple yet crucial: to be fully prepared for the students.

Despite the efforts made by the schools and teachers, concerns are unavoidable. P5 could not help but question the readiness of schools in implementing MATATAG Curriculum as their major concerns come from the availability and authenticity of instructional materials and the school's budget for such. They emphasized that some materials might be outdated, also some materials are difficult for the students to understand and teachers would go to great lengths just to explain the material. P5 also explained that there are times when instructional materials are reviewed but the school cannot financially accommodate such excellent material so they would have to resort to a more affordable one. *"Because before the school purchases the materials, reviewing is essential. But there are times when the budget just can't afford it, so we go with a book that seems to come second in terms of quality"*. Although options may be part of material reviews, this could also impact learning for the students.

Even with such uncertainties, he still fulfilled his duty to be prepared for their students. There was an expectation that fellow educators, just like him, were preparing, attending seminars, adapting their teaching strategies, and embracing the changes with resilience. The belief in the profession and its capacity to evolve was strong. For P5, the journey toward the MATATAG Curriculum wasn't just about compliance. It was about commitment to learning, adapting, and ensuring that every student, regardless of background, receives quality education. And while challenges like material authenticity and budget limitations posed challenges, their dedication to their profession stood unwavering.

Discussion

The goal of this study is to explore the preparations of Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teachers for the MATATAG Curriculum. In the case of the Philippines' MATATAG Curriculum, it was due to poor learning performance, congested curriculum, mismatch of competencies, and a need for a more responsive curriculum (Diquito, 2024). Hence, a curriculum reform like this aims to enhance competencies, knowledge, values, and attitudes (Hussain et al., 2022). Success in reform requires adaptation, with teachers needing significant preparation to improve teaching quality (Landesman et al., 2024) which is why (Maguiate et al., 2024). infers that addressing adaptation through improved training and professional development preparations leads to better educational outcomes. The following are the preparations undertaken by Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teachers for the MATATAG Curriculum.

This study revealed numerous themes regarding instructors' preparations for the curriculum transition and these are:

Self-Initiated Activities

A personally initiated activity that teachers do in order to prepare themselves in the implementation of a new curriculum is through self-studying. According to P1:

A preparation I did was self-study, which involved scanning books and taking notes to identify the similarities and differences between the topics that I would have to teach in the current curriculum.

It is expected that when curriculum reforms are implemented, a distinction of content is observed between the old and new curriculum, as stated by P1, saying that identifying the similar content found in the old curriculum that is present in the new curriculum indicates easier preparation content-wise than that of the new topics introduced in the new curriculum. This is evident in the new Grade 7 Social Studies curriculum, focusing on the studying of the Philippines as part of Southeast Asia which introduces narrower topics as compared to broader topics focused on studying Asia in general in the former curriculum, hence self-studying is crucial (Berry & Kitchen, 2020). P1 states that self-study has important contributions to make in times of radical educational change.

A specific way of self-studying is by reading books and other sources of information to have a grasp of the content of the new subject matter. According to P3:

I read textbooks and prepare materials for grade 7 as well as researching.

Through reading various sources of information, teachers are able to personally acquire the necessary information required for them to teach the new subject. It is important for teachers who will be teaching a new subject to be familiar with the content. The content of the subject under the new curriculum serves as the teachers' source of information that can be used to enhance the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) which they can use in order to effectively facilitate a conducive classroom, choose and execute appropriate teaching strategies and prepare lesson plans, assessments, and reading materials for the students.

Aside from reading books, teachers also intend to update themselves on current events related to the subject. Since the nature of the subject matter that they are teaching is focused on not just the history of the Philippines and Southeast Asia, it also focuses on contemporary issues in their curriculum. This is to ensure relevant events are being talked about and discussed in the classroom to ensure real-world connections. P3 states that *"Being updated with different contemporary issues that are essential in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum is also part of my preparations."* This corroborates with P5 stating that *"Reading is one of my main preparations since vacation because old books are not enough so I have to read books that are up to date to increase my knowledge for my students."*

Teachers emphasized the necessity of having a solid grasp of content knowledge and generally reported confidence in their subject matter expertise (Doran, 2020). Pedagogical content for Khan, Mumtaz and Batool (2023) is crucial in fostering teaching effectiveness of instructional strategies. Mastering the content of a subject in a new curriculum is just one way of preparing teachers content-wise, to further deepen their pedagogical content knowledge for a curriculum reform.

Materials Preparations

Content preparation goes with materials preparation, and is seen as a necessity. A specific material preparation derived from the findings was the development of a lesson plan. According to P2:

To prepare myself, the first thing that I did was lesson planning.

Lesson planning is an essential tool that provides structure, enhances teacher preparedness, and supports the achievement of educational goals. It not only improves instructional effectiveness but also ensures that all key components of the teaching-learning process are addressed systematically (Farhang et al., 2023). Lesson planning is a critical component of curriculum implementation, yet challenges arise due to teachers' reliance on copied plans, inconsistencies in application, and the absence of standardized content, processes, and evaluations, leading to varied instructional effectiveness (Karakus, 2021). With this concern, P2 further elaborates that *"I need to create a detailed lesson plan and integrate core concepts, skills and the values that we can get from the Social Studies subject."* P2 implies that in lesson planning, personal touches are crucial because the teacher could modify the procedures, content, and evaluation components based on what they feel appropriate, rather than solely copying prepared lesson plans.

Included in lesson plans are the resource materials and assessment tools needed to effectively execute the lesson. Another material preparation lifted from the findings is the gathering of resources and assessment tools gathering. After preparing a detailed lesson plan, P2 mentions that *"I gathered resources like books, reference books, textbooks, multimedia, and assessment tools"* which compliments a statement from P5 saying that *"In creating a lesson plan, the references should be timely so I had to search for multiple resources."* These statements indicate that one crucial practice in lesson preparation for a new curriculum is gathering your resources to be able to create lesson plans and construct assessments. Multiple resources are always a good practice as they induce flexibility which is essential in addressing diverse learning needs (Erkir & Alkhaldi, 2025). P5 adds that *"We have to read each and every textbook to know which one is best for the students"* which emphasizes the important role teachers hold as textbook evaluators which suit the findings of Ahmadi and Derakhshan (2016) that teachers help determine the best textbooks appropriate for the students, and how their feedback can help in revision and modification for textbook improvement.

Paradigm Shift

Curriculum reform changes perceptions of teachers. Their reactions are indeed characterized by being optimistic or pessimistic. According to P4:

I had an open mind because they have new teaching strategies. I welcomed the MATATAG curriculum and I think it is good.

This attitude of P4 reflects a paradigm shift or a change of mind that is to welcome change. Being open minded to curricular reforms, because knowing that new teaching strategies are being introduced, characterizes optimism. A study by Soriano and Vargas (2021) concludes that an adaptive response towards curriculum changes is for teachers to support the new curriculum and

appreciate what it can offer. Further, teachers demonstrated sufficient psychological readiness for the new curriculum, as they showed interest and motivation, although they still had much to learn (Jamilah et al., 2023).

Mandated Activities

A specific preparation that schools provide for teachers to prepare themselves in the implementation of for the new grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) MATATAG curriculum is through mandated activities. Social Studies teachers were mandated to attend seminars to learn the new curriculum and to re-echo the concepts they had learned to each of their own schools.

Mandated activities are school-led initiatives that teachers ought to attend. As the new curricular change affects teaching, schools should assist teachers in making sure that they have the appropriate knowledge to teach the latest curriculum. Mandated activities can enable social studies teachers to widen their grasp of the MATATAG curriculum framework and travel to different places. P4 stated that *"I specifically attended the inset and seminars about creating a curriculum map but I was unable to attend a seminar hosted by Saint Louis University. We went outside of Baguio City when the MATATAG curriculum was not yet implemented."* Through these seminars where social studies teachers develop new ideas and strategies, they were able to present activities that help strengthen the teaching-learning process. P4 mentioned that *"For the preparation of the MATATAG curriculum, we presented activities for administrators to approve."* Mandated activities can aid social studies teachers to prepare themselves on how they will teach the subject.

An example of mandated activities that social studies teachers attended in preparing for the new MATATAG curriculum were seminars. According to P3:

"We were sent to seminars in preparation for the grade 7 MATATAG curriculum. We were also tasked to prepare learning materials for the upcoming curriculum change." P4 supports this as they highlighted that *"We attended seminars where our school and others attended."* Furthermore, P5 stated that *"We attended seminars later for the preparation of the MATATAG curriculum."*

Seminars are a great way for teachers to have an in-depth knowledge on how they can navigate the new curricular change. With a new curriculum, there are new learning materials in which teachers have to create. Through attending these seminars, they can acquire necessary ideas and approaches on how they can effectively teach students, empower their teaching, and thrive in the new curriculum.

Mandated activities such as seminars must be sponsored financially by the school. Schools should invest in their teachers' professional development by sending them to seminars. P5 stated that *"The registration fees of these seminars were paid by our school."* Through schools financially supporting teachers, they can solely focus on their knowledge development.

Schools should offer mandated professional development activities for teachers to prepare them for the new curriculum. In-service professional development activities such as seminars have the ability to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers by equipping them with pedagogical and content expertise and help them boost their instructional delivery and performance (Gumus, 2013).

Apprenticeship Learning

Interacting with teachers from different schools is beneficial because seminars often group participants with unfamiliar colleagues. This setup encourages the exchange of ideas and insights, allowing educators to learn from each other's experiences. By engaging in these discussions, teachers gain valuable strategies and best practices that they can implement in their own schools.

According to P4:

Talking to teachers from other schools is valuable because, during seminars, you're usually not grouped with people you know. They typically mix you with teachers from other schools. While you're in these groups, you exchange ideas and insights, and you learn about the effective practices from others that you can apply when you return to your own school.

Engaging with teachers from different schools during seminars offers valuable opportunities for professional growth by facilitating the exchange of ideas and teaching experiences. Educators come from diverse backgrounds, each contributing unique instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and student engagement methods. By sharing these insights, teachers gain exposure to innovative approaches that have been successful in various school settings. This exchange encourages them to reflect on their own teaching practices, helping them identify areas for improvement or adaptation to better serve their students.

Beyond just knowledge sharing, these interactions also cultivate a sense of collaboration and community among educators, continuous learning and mutual support. Teachers can openly discuss the challenges they encounter in their classrooms and receive fresh perspectives on how to overcome them. By learning from both the successes and setbacks of others, they can

refine their teaching methods and stay informed about evolving educational trends. This collective learning experience elevates the quality of education, ensuring that students benefit from well-rounded and dynamic teaching approaches.

Empowerment

The self-initiated and school provided activities which aimed to prepare teachers for the MATATAG curriculum played a crucial role in empowering teachers by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge they must possess in order to successfully implement the new curriculum.

In this study, all of the participants agreed that the activities were empowering them, however they differ in the degree of usefulness and reasons. For P1, P2, and P5, these activities were invaluable to all of the faculty. For P4, these activities were useful and P3 felt that these were just right.

P5 saw its usefulness not just for himself but for all the faculty. According to him, the activities are invaluable because teachers need to prepare before teaching. To make the seminars meaningful, teachers should be ready for the MATATAG curriculum. This highlights the idea that these activities serve as an empowering tool for overall faculty preparedness, reinforcing the notion that proper preparation is key to ensuring successful delivery of the curriculum. On the same note, P1 highlighted that the activities were very useful because it helped her prepare herself about the education of the students. This suggests that these activities helped teachers understand the changes required in the teaching methods, content delivery and student engagement. And for P2, the activities were very useful because it prepared her on how to embrace the new curriculum. P2 specifically mentions adjustments from the number of hours needed, number of days and the different changes and integration. This implies that these activities also helped teachers understand the logistical adjustments required in the shift to the new curriculum. On the other hand, according to P4, the activities were useful because it helped the teacher manage her expectations in the changes. This suggests that these activities provided emotional and psychological support which helped teachers prepare for the unexpected challenges in the future. Lastly, P3 stated that the activities were just right because as a teacher, she already has 22 years of experience, so she already knows what to do. This shows that teachers who have already possessed a wealth of knowledge and experience still see the importance of these self-initiated and school provided activities as a refresher.

They might have expressed different reasons and levels of usefulness for these activities, all of them gained expertise in teaching the new curriculum, specifically *Araling Panlipunan*. According to Akhyar (2023) this empowers teachers to deliver accurate and engaging instruction, foster critical thinking skills, and motivate students to develop a deeper appreciation for the subject. Subject matter expertise significantly contributes to the success of both teachers and students, ultimately enhancing the quality of education as a whole.

4. CONCLUSION

Self-initiated teacher preparation activities, like self-studying and staying updated on contemporary issues, enhance content knowledge. Lesson planning improves pedagogical skills, while flexible plans help meet diverse student needs and adapt to new curricula. A positive attitude towards curriculum change is also essential for effective teaching.

School-mandated activities, such as seminars and workshops, equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and tools for curriculum implementation. Interacting with educators from other institutions fosters professional growth, exchanges successful teaching methods, and builds a sense of community. Both self-initiated and school-provided activities were effective in empowering teachers for the MATATAG curriculum, with participants finding them helpful to varying degrees. All teachers gained subject matter expertise, especially in *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Curriculum changes should be communicated in ways that inspire teachers. Dialogues between curriculum planners and teachers can help align the curriculum with actual classroom needs. Schools should offer more skills development opportunities through hands-on workshops, enabling teachers to prepare for practical teaching scenarios.

To effectively introduce a new curriculum, quality teaching materials, such as textbooks and e-learning resources, should be provided in advance, ensuring teachers can prepare content efficiently. Teachers should also be invited to advanced lesson

planning workshops to develop skills in flexible instruction, aligning objectives with assessments, and creating high-quality evaluations.

Collaboration in seminars allows teachers to share successful strategies and techniques. To cater to diverse needs, the Department of Education should offer differentiated training, such as intensive sessions for new teachers and refresher courses for experienced educators.

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