

| RESEARCH ARTICLE**Exploring The Effectiveness of the Matatag Curriculum in Enhancing Early Childhood Education Outcomes****Karen Rose Inoc¹, Margie Fulgencio², Dennis Plando³, Kaitlin Marie Opingo⁴**¹*Department of Education*^{2,3,4}*Cebu Technological University***Corresponding Author:** Karen Rose Inoc, **E-mail:** karenroseinoc@gmail.com**| ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the implementation and outcomes of the MATATAG curriculum in early childhood education, with a particular focus on its influence on teaching practices and student development from the identified schools at Cebu City during the school year 2024-2025. The MATATAG curriculum is designed to strengthen foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, and values formation among young learners. Utilizing a quantitative- descriptive correlational design, the research involved 39 participants, including kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers. Data was collected through structured questionnaires. The questionnaires assessed teachers' experiences with the curriculum, perceived student progress, and challenges encountered during implementation. Results revealed that most educators observed improvements in student engagement and foundational skills. However, issues such as lack of teaching materials and need for further training were also identified. The findings suggest that while the MATATAG curriculum shows positive early outcomes, its full potential relies heavily on adequate support for educators. This study highlights the value of structured questionnaires in capturing frontline insights and offers recommendations for more effective curriculum support and monitoring.

| KEYWORDS

MATATAG Curriculum, Early Childhood Education, Curriculum Implementation, Foundational Learning

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The MATATAG Curriculum is a major reform effort in the Philippine education system, aiming to address deep-rooted issues in early childhood education (ECE) by emphasizing foundational skills and learner-centered instruction (Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025). Globally, ECE is recognized as a crucial period in child development that impacts later academic success and personal growth (Solang et al., 2024; OECD, 2021). In the Philippine setting, concerns over low literacy and numeracy levels among early learners have intensified calls for more targeted, skill-based curricula (Nietschke et al., 2024). In response, the Department of Education introduced the MATATAG Curriculum in 2023, streamlining content, enhancing mother tongue-based instruction, and strengthening teacher training (DepEd, 2023). These adjustments align with global education trends that emphasize curriculum coherence, inclusive pedagogy, and developmental appropriateness (UNESCO, 2022; Kilag et al., 2024). The MATATAG initiative highlights the importance of early learning experiences that support cognitive, social, and emotional development in young children. With its goal of promoting equitable and holistic education, the curriculum also aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and quality education (UNICEF, 2022). As such, the MATATAG Curriculum represents not only a policy response to local challenges but also a strategic alignment with international best practices in early childhood education.

The shift to the MATATAG Curriculum is designed to overcome persistent problems in Philippine education, such as overcrowded content, weak emphasis on core competencies, and outdated teaching approaches (Cabay et al., 2025). Prior research on the K to 12 system revealed that its extensive content load hindered students' mastery of essential skills, especially in early grades (David et al., 2021; Oracion, 2022). Studies have shown that the breadth of the K to 12 curriculum often came at the expense of depth, particularly in literacy and numeracy development, which are critical during early childhood (Dictado & Dagdag, 2025). The MATATAG Curriculum, led by the Department of Education and Vice President Sara Duterte, responds by narrowing the focus to foundational domains like socio-emotional learning, language, and mathematics (DepEd, 2023). This mirrors international education reforms promoting developmental appropriateness and equity in early learning (OECD, 2021; UNICEF, 2019). However, the success of these reforms hinges on systematic evaluation of their classroom-level implementation, teacher preparedness, and the quality of instructional delivery, all of which play pivotal roles in translating policy into impact (Villaver et al., 2024).

The MATATAG Curriculum aims to reduce content overload, strengthen literacy and numeracy, and address ineffective pedagogical strategies prevalent in the previous system. While the curriculum promises significant improvements, its success depends heavily on consistent and effective implementation at the school level (Demate et al., 2025). Assessing whether these policy changes truly enhance the quality of early childhood education involves evaluating their direct effects on teaching and learning (Kilag et al., 2024). As emphasized by UNESCO (2022), monitoring the fidelity of implementation is crucial to ensuring that education reforms meet their intended goals. Furthermore, the MATATAG Curriculum was introduced amid growing concerns about declining academic performance among Filipino students, as revealed in national and international assessments (Tarraya, 2023). Excessive workloads, insufficient instructional time, and misaligned content have all contributed to poor foundational skills (David et al., 2021). This situation has amplified demands for reform that prioritizes competency-based learning and inclusive instruction (Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025). By narrowing down learning objectives and focusing on core developmental skills, MATATAG represents a strategic intervention aimed at addressing learning poverty and building the foundations of lifelong learning, especially during the formative years of education (UNICEF, 2022).

By restructuring competencies and reinforcing essential learning areas, the MATATAG Curriculum intends to equip students with strong reading, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, necessary for success in a rapidly evolving society (DepEd, 2023). The reform initiative also supports mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), aiming to make learning more relatable and effective during early grades (UNESCO, 2022). According to a systematic review by Villaver et al. (2024), early implementation has been hindered by issues such as limited teacher readiness, resource shortages, and lack of inclusive strategies. These challenges underscore the urgent need for comprehensive teacher development programs and robust institutional support systems (Kilag et al., 2024). Moreover, establishing reliable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is vital to ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to learners' needs. Understanding how the MATATAG Curriculum affects children's developmental domains, including cognitive, emotional, and social growth, is central to evaluating its effectiveness and relevance in real classroom settings (Solang et al., 2024).

Evaluating the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is essential to ensure that it meets its intended objectives, supports students effectively, and optimizes resources. This involves analyzing how the curriculum is delivered, how well it addresses student needs, and whether it promotes best teaching practices (Demate et al., 2025). Regular evaluation not only ensures accountability but also helps identify areas for refinement in policy and practice. In the Philippine context, issues such as under-resourced schools, high teacher workloads, and inconsistent training have long impeded education reforms (Tarraya, 2023; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2021). Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in early childhood education settings, focusing on its effectiveness, implementation barriers, and influence on the teaching-learning process. The ultimate aim is to contribute to improving early childhood education outcomes under the MATATAG framework, ensuring young Filipino learners receive a strong and equitable foundation during their most critical learning years (UNICEF, 2022; Villaver et al., 2024).

Literature Review

The introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum signifies a major transformation in Philippine basic education, particularly within Early Childhood Education (ECE), where the development of foundational competencies is critical for long-term academic success. As noted by Cabaya et al. (2025), the curriculum aims to address learning poverty by reducing curriculum overload, enhancing literacy and numeracy instruction, and integrating socio-emotional learning. These reforms are particularly important during the early years, as cognitive and behavioral foundations are formed during this stage (Solang et al., 2024). In line with this, Abenes and Esperancilla (2025) argue that MATATAG promotes an educational philosophy centered on the child's growth and well-being, aligning pedagogy with developmental appropriateness. Moreover, research shows that overemphasis on academic content in early grades without considering learner diversity contributes to widening learning gaps (Nietschke et al., 2024). International perspectives echo these concerns, as global frameworks emphasize the need for simplified, competency-based curricula that

prioritize developmental readiness and inclusive learning environments (UNICEF, 2022; Spink et al., 2023). These shifts are necessary to ensure equitable and quality early learning outcomes for Filipino children.

Despite the MATATAG Curriculum's promising framework, its successful implementation in classroom settings remains a pressing concern. According to Demate et al. (2025), many early-grade teachers face challenges in adapting to new methodologies due to insufficient training in student-centered instruction and formative assessment. This lack of preparedness is compounded by limited access to developmentally appropriate materials and instructional tools, particularly in resource-constrained schools (Kilag et al., 2024). Furthermore, although the curriculum supports the use of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), there are still major gaps in localized teaching resources and linguistic support (Jalotjot & Dantes, 2020). These barriers suggest that reform efforts must be accompanied by stronger teacher support systems, professional development programs, and robust evaluation mechanisms. As emphasized by international studies, sustained curricular success depends on well-coordinated policies, institutional commitment, and continuous feedback loops from the ground level (UNESCO, 2022; OECD, 2021). Without these, the MATATAG Curriculum may struggle to realize its full potential in fostering holistic early childhood development.

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to evaluate both the implementation and effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The quantitative approach enabled the researcher to examine measurable outcomes while also gaining insight into the contextual dynamics of curriculum delivery in selected public schools. The descriptive aspect allowed for the organized collection and presentation of data concerning the respondents' demographic profiles, levels of curriculum implementation, and perceived benefits and challenges. Meanwhile, the correlational component investigated potential relationships between variables such as teaching experience, resource availability, and observed developmental outcomes among learners. The research was conducted in three public elementary schools in Cebu City that were identified for their active use of the MATATAG Curriculum in Kindergarten and Grade 1. The primary participants were Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, who serve as the frontline implementers of the curriculum and offer valuable perspectives on its effectiveness. Data were gathered through a structured survey instrument, which underwent expert validation for content and reliability testing. Necessary revisions were made following pilot testing to ensure clarity and accuracy. Collected data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis techniques.

Results

Table 1. Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
The MATATAG curriculum is fully implemented in my institution.	4.15	0.99	A
Teaching strategies such as play-based learning and storytelling are effectively applied.	4.23	0.78	SA
Adequate resources and materials are available to support curriculum delivery.	3.59	0.97	A
Teachers are well-trained to implement the MATATAG curriculum.	4.03	0.81	A
Clear learning objectives are set for each lesson.	4.15	0.74	A
Activities are aligned with the developmental needs of students.	4.21	0.70	A
Parents are involved in supporting curriculum activities.	3.92	0.84	A
The school administration provides adequate guidance for curriculum implementation.	3.87	0.89	A
Teachers effectively integrate technology into the curriculum.	4.26	0.64	SA
Student progress is regularly assessed and monitored.	4.41	0.64	SA
Grand Mean	4.08	0.80	A

Table 1 shows that the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is generally effective, with a grand mean of 4.08 interpreted as "Agree." Teachers strongly agreed that student progress is regularly assessed ($M = 4.41$) and technology is effectively integrated ($M = 4.26$). High ratings were also given to play-based strategies and developmentally aligned activities. However, the lowest mean was recorded for the availability of adequate resources ($M = 3.59$), indicating a need for improvement in instructional support. Overall, responses suggest positive implementation, though further enhancement in materials and administrative support is necessary to ensure consistent curriculum delivery.

Table 2. Perceived Benefits

Perceived Benefits	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum improves language and literacy skills.	4.18	0.72	A
The curriculum enhances social interaction and teamwork.	4.26	0.68	SA
Students show increased cultural awareness and identity.	4.10	0.68	A
The curriculum fosters creativity and self-expression.	4.13	0.73	A
Students demonstrate improved emotional regulation.	4.05	0.79	A
The curriculum promotes independence and responsibility.	4.05	0.72	A
Students demonstrate improved problem-solving skills.	4.13	0.80	A
The curriculum encourages respect for diversity and inclusion.	4.31	0.57	SA
Students demonstrate better listening and communication skills.	4.26	0.59	SA
The curriculum supports healthy habits and routines.	4.26	0.59	SA
Grand Mean	4.17	0.69	A

Table 2 shows that respondents generally agree on the positive impact of the MATATAG Curriculum, with a grand mean of 4.17 and a verbal interpretation of "Agree." Teachers strongly agreed that the curriculum enhances social interaction, communication skills, respect for diversity, and healthy routines, all receiving mean scores of 4.26 or higher. Other highly rated benefits include improvements in language, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The lowest-rated items, though still positive, were related to emotional regulation and independence ($M = 4.05$). Overall, the results affirm that the curriculum supports students' holistic growth in both academic and socio-emotional domains.

Table 3. Challenges in Implementation

Challenges in Implementation	Mean	SD	VD
There is a lack of teaching materials and resources.	3.74	1.12	A
Teachers require more training to effectively implement the curriculum.	4.05	0.92	A
Classroom space and facilities are insufficient for curriculum activities.	3.97	0.87	A
Time constraints hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum.	4.10	0.72	A
The number of students in the classroom is too high.	4.03	1.01	A
There is limited support from parents or guardians.	3.82	1.00	A
There are challenges in accessing digital resources.	3.90	0.88	A
Teachers face difficulty adapting to new curriculum methods.	3.62	0.85	A
The budget allocated for curriculum implementation is insufficient.	3.95	0.69	A
Additional staff support is required for effective implementation.	4.21	0.80	A
Grand Mean	3.94	0.89	A

Table 3 reveals that teachers generally agree on the presence of implementation challenges in the MATATAG Curriculum, with a grand mean of 3.94. The most significant concern is the need for additional staff support ($M = 4.21$), followed by time constraints ($M = 4.10$) and lack of teacher training ($M = 4.05$). Other issues include overcrowded classrooms, insufficient facilities, and budget limitations. The lowest-rated but still notable challenge is difficulty adapting to new methods ($M = 3.62$). Overall, findings highlight the importance of improving teacher preparation, resource allocation, and school infrastructure to support the curriculum's successful implementation.

Table 4. Learning Process and Development

Learning Process and Development	Mean	SD	VD
The curriculum positively influences literacy development.	4.18	0.60	A
The curriculum improves numeracy skills.	4.23	0.63	SA
The curriculum enhances social development.	4.13	0.61	A
Students demonstrate improved fine motor skills.	4.13	0.57	A
The curriculum helps improve critical thinking skills.	4.13	0.66	A
The curriculum encourages collaboration and group learning.	4.13	0.77	A
Students show improved listening and speaking skills.	4.08	0.70	A
The curriculum helps students develop emotional intelligence.	4.03	0.74	A
The curriculum promotes curiosity and inquiry-based learning.	4.13	0.77	A
Students demonstrate improved self-confidence.	4.10	0.72	A
Grand Mean	4.13	0.68	A

Table 4 indicates that respondents agree the MATATAG Curriculum positively influences the learning process and development of young learners, with a grand mean of 4.13. The highest-rated indicator is improved numeracy skills ($M = 4.23$), followed by literacy development ($M = 4.18$), reflecting strong support for foundational academic growth. Other well-rated areas include social development, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-confidence, all scoring above 4.10. The lowest, yet still favorable, rating was for emotional intelligence ($M = 4.03$). These results suggest that the curriculum supports holistic development, addressing both cognitive and socio-emotional domains essential in early childhood education.

Table 5. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Curriculum Implementation and Perceived Benefits

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.859	10.213	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 presents a significant positive relationship between the level of curriculum implementation and the perceived benefits of the MATATAG Curriculum, with an r-value of 0.859 and a t-value of 10.213. The p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the result is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This strong correlation suggests that as the level of implementation improves, the perceived benefits such as literacy gains, socio-emotional development, and learner engagement increase accordingly. These findings reinforce the importance of effective and consistent curriculum application to maximize the impact of educational reforms in early childhood settings.

Table 6. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Curriculum Implementation and Learning Process and Development

r-value	t-value	P value	Remarks	Decision
0.751	6.923	0.000	Significant	Reject Hypothesis

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 6 indicates a significant positive correlation between the level of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and students' learning process and development, with an r-value of 0.751 and a t-value of 6.923. The p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) confirms the result is statistically significant, warranting the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that higher levels of curriculum implementation are strongly associated with enhanced learner outcomes in areas such as literacy, numeracy, social skills, and emotional growth. The findings highlight the crucial role of consistent and high-quality implementation in promoting holistic development among early childhood learners.

Discussion

The findings reveal a strong and statistically significant relationship between the level of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and its perceived benefits, as indicated by an r-value of 0.859 and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests that when the curriculum is implemented with fidelity meaning clear learning objectives, adequate teacher training, aligned activities, and regular assessment teachers are more likely to perceive it as effective in enhancing student outcomes. These perceived benefits include improvements in language and literacy, social interaction, emotional regulation, and values such as respect and independence. The high correlation emphasizes the importance of providing sufficient institutional support, training, and resources to ensure that implementation translates into meaningful learning experiences for young learners. Similarly, a significant positive relationship was found between curriculum implementation and students' learning process and development, with an r-value of 0.751 and a p-value of 0.000. This implies that better implementation is associated with stronger developmental outcomes in literacy, numeracy, collaboration, critical thinking, and self-confidence. These findings align with global research, which underscores the need for well-structured, developmentally appropriate curricula in early childhood education. Ultimately, these results affirm that the quality of curriculum delivery directly affects both teacher perceptions and learner outcomes, reinforcing the call for continuous professional development, adequate learning materials, and ongoing monitoring to strengthen the MATATAG Curriculum's impact in foundational education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the MATATAG curriculum is effectively implemented by the participating teachers, resulting in a wide range of positive student outcomes. The curriculum has proven beneficial in enhancing students' language, literacy, numeracy, social interaction, creativity, and emotional development. Teachers generally perceive the implementation to be successful, especially when appropriate strategies such as play-based learning, storytelling, and the

integration of technology are applied. However, the presence of challenges such as lack of teaching resources, limited classroom space, large class sizes, time constraints, and the need for additional training suggests that there are areas that still require significant support. The strong positive relationships found between curriculum implementation and both perceived benefits and student development indicate that the better the curriculum is implemented, the more likely it is to result in improved student learning experiences and outcomes. Therefore, continued support for teachers and schools is essential to sustain and further enhance the success of the MATATAG curriculum.

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