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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

K To 3 Matatag Curriculum Implementation Through the Lens of Early Childhood Teachers: Insights and Implications for Literacy Instructional Practice

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| ABSTRACT

This research assessed the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum through the lens of early childhood teachers their insights and implications for literacy instruction practice. This study utilized a descriptive correlational design. It utilized an adopted survey questionnaire. Thirty purposively selected K to 3 teachers participated, providing their insights on the extent of curriculum implementation in three areas: alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy, and integration of child-centered literacy instruction. Findings, revealed that literacy competencies were generally aligned with learners' developmental readiness across grade levels. However, while instructional materials for early literacy deemed "Frequently Implemented," the results also indicated a need for further improvement in material availability and integration to fully support literacy development. In terms of child-centered literacy instruction, teachers reported effectively using learner-focused strategies that actively engage students and place them at the center of the learning process. Overall, the study found a significant relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and perceived early literacy outcomes. This suggests that consistent and effective application of MATATAG-aligned practices, such as explicit reading and writing instruction; positively influences learners' acquisition of foundational literacy skills. Therefore, sustaining and enhancing the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum may further strengthen early literacy outcomes in the foundational years.

| KEYWORDS

MATATAG Curriculum, early literacy instruction, curriculum implementation, child-centered learning, developmental readiness

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

Early literacy is critical to language development, academic achievement, and social success (Li et al., 2024). It is inclusive of the foundational skills, as oral language, reading comprehension, and written expression, which are all necessary for sustained learning and cognitive development (Olasunkanmi et al., 2025). Strength in early literacy development has an important role in helping ready children succeed in all academic areas, as indicated by Snow (2020). This perspective is further supported by newer research indicating that students who attained early foundational literacy are more competent to succeed academically and socially in school (Piasta, Justice, & O'Connell, 2020; Wasik & Hindman, 2020). Over the years, there has been an ongoing problem in early literacy in the Philippine education system, especially in the public schools. National assessments and international benchmarking studies, including the SEA-PLM (2019) and the PISA (2018), have demonstrated that many Filipino learners have not achieved proficiency in reading and understanding, and there is a need to address the literacy needs of our learners. These disturbing numbers have spurred fresh efforts to overhaul early education.

In lieu of this, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in 2023 aimed to improve early learning outcomes: developmentally appropriate, learner-centered, and tailored competencies and innovative child-friendly

teaching and learning strategies. A significant aspect of the reform is to address the overcrowded curriculum by focusing on enhancing the output in learning through a concentration on curriculum, and by enriching the fund of skills in the basic education (DepEd, 2023). In light of these concerns, in 2023, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) implemented an enhanced version of the K to 3 Curriculum under the MATATAG reform program. The MATATAG Curriculum was created to remedy the shortcomings in the current curriculum that were previously noted, including content overload during the early years. Its main objectives are the simplification of learning competences, the guarantee of age relevance, and the adoption of learner-centered pedagogies. The reform emphasizes literacy as the key foundation for early education, seeking to strengthen basic skills through focused and developmentally appropriate instruction (DepEd, 2023).

This highlights the promise of the MATATAG Curriculum as a change in policy direction, where the actual success of policy depends on successful translation into day-to-day classroom practice. The answer lies in teachers, especially those focusing on early years. Their understanding, attitudes, and use of curriculum may have a direct influence on how the curriculum is taught and learned. However, the paucity of empirical information on how teachers view the MATATAG Curriculum, specifically its literacy aspects, and what specific obstacles they face when attempting to implement the curriculum in their actual classroom environments persists. This study seeks to address this void by exploring the perceptions and experiences of early childhood educators who are implementing the MATATAG Curriculum particularly in the phase of literacy instruction.

It is vital to be informed on these issues to gauge the operational effectiveness of the MATATAG reforms and to focus on those aspects requiring further support or adjustments. There will be useful lessons for policy-makers, curriculum-writers and school leaders in learning the real experiences of teachers as they attempt to put new educational standards into practice. Furthermore, by centering on the experiences of teachers in Bohol, this study contributes a localizing dimension that can support the development of region-specific improvement strategies and professional development schemes. Finally, through sharing experiences, struggles, and perceptions of teachers, the research can help inform our understanding of how effective current literacy investments are – or in what ways literacy curriculum delivery, teacher training and learning resources could be enhanced. These results facilitate the development of evidence-based policy and guide targeted interventions to promote foundational literacy skills in young readers. Lastly, the study is an important contribution to the development of early literacy reform efforts that meet the practical needs and realities in classroom instruction in the Philippines.

Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design guided by the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model to examine early childhood educators' perceptions of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum implementation and its perceived effects on early literacy instruction in selected public elementary schools in Bohol (SY 2025–2026), including Cataban Integrated School. The descriptive component documented the current status of implementation in terms of curriculum alignment with learners' developmental readiness, appropriateness of literacy instructional materials, and the integration of child-centered literacy approaches, while the correlational component determined the relationship between the extent of implementation and perceived early literacy outcomes in oral communication, reading, and writing skills. Participants were Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers from the selected schools, and complete enumeration was applied to include all eligible teachers to ensure comprehensive representation of classroom experiences. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire with three parts: (1) implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum, (2) MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction outcomes, and (3) challenges encountered by teachers in implementing early literacy instruction under the new curriculum. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale (5–Extensively Implemented to 1–Not Implemented). Prior to administration, the instrument underwent content validation by experts and reliability testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha). Data collection followed approved school protocols and informed consent procedures, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) summarized responses, while Pearson's r tested the significant relationships between implementation indicators and perceived literacy outcomes at an appropriate level of significance.

Results

Table 1. The Extent of the Implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in terms of Alignment of Literacy Competencies with Learners' Developmental Readiness

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Literacy tasks are developmentally appropriate for learners' age and abilities.	4.30	Extensively Implemented
2	Activities align with expected literacy milestones (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary).	4.33	Extensively Implemented

3	Lessons build on learners' prior knowledge and readiness.	4.43	Extensively Implemented
4	Reading and writing tasks are progressively structured	4.33	Extensively Implemented
5	Teachers adapt literacy instruction to suit diverse developmental needs.	4.47	Extensively Implemented
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.37	Extensively
	Standard Deviation	0.07	Implemented

Table 1 indicates that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is extensively implemented in terms of aligning literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness. Teachers consistently apply practices that match learners' age, abilities, and prior knowledge in literacy instruction. The highest emphasis is placed on adapting instruction to diverse developmental needs, followed by building lessons based on learners' readiness and prior experiences. These results suggest that teachers are mindful of developmental differences when planning literacy activities. Overall, the findings reflect strong and consistent implementation of developmentally appropriate literacy instruction in early grade classrooms.

Table 2. The Extent of the Implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in terms of Appropriateness of Instructional Materials for Early Literacy

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Instructional materials support early reading and writing skills.	4.17	Frequently Implemented
2	Learning resources are culturally relevant and language-appropriate.	4.20	Frequently Implemented
3	Supplementary literacy tools (e.g., big books, flashcards) are available.	3.97	Frequently Implemented
4	Materials reflect the use of Mother Tongue in literacy instruction.	4.00	Frequently Implemented
5	Print-rich materials are accessible and used regularly.	4.10	Frequently Implemented
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.09	Frequently
	Standard Deviation	0.10	Implemented

Table 2 indicates that the appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is frequently implemented (AWM = 4.09). Teachers generally agree that materials support early reading and writing (WM = 4.17) and that resources are culturally relevant and language-appropriate (WM = 4.20), which received the highest rating. However, the availability of supplementary tools such as big books and flashcards obtained the lowest mean (WM = 3.97). Materials reflecting Mother Tongue use (WM = 4.00) and access to print-rich resources (WM = 4.10) were also frequently implemented. The low SD (0.10) shows consistent perceptions among respondents.

Table 3. The Extent of the Implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in terms of Integration of Child-Centered Literacy Instruction

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Learners engage in play-based literacy activities.	4.43	Extensively Implemented
2	Literacy tasks encourage learner autonomy and expression.	4.20	Frequently Implemented
3	Storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading are used in instruction.	4.43	Extensively Implemented
4	The classroom environment supports exploration and creativity in literacy.	4.37	Extensively Implemented

5	Children are given choices in their literacy tasks.	4.37	Extensively Implemented
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.36	Extensively Implemented
	Standard Deviation	0.10	

Table 3 shows that the integration of child-centered literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is extensively implemented (AWM = 4.36). Teachers reported strong use of play-based literacy activities (WM = 4.43) and storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading (WM = 4.43), indicating that interactive and developmentally responsive strategies are commonly practiced. The classroom environment was also perceived to support exploration and creativity (WM = 4.37), and children are frequently given choices in literacy tasks (WM = 4.37), reinforcing learner agency. While still positive, encouraging learner autonomy and expression obtained the lowest rating (WM = 4.20), interpreted as frequently implemented, suggesting room to further strengthen student voice. The low SD (0.10) reflects consistent perceptions among respondents.

Table 4. The Extent of Impact of the MATATAG-aligned Early Literacy Instruction on Learners in Terms of Developing in terms of Oral Communication Skills

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Learners can express ideas clearly using age-appropriate vocabulary.	4.33	Strongly Agree
2	Learners participate actively in classroom discussions and storytelling.	4.30	Strongly Agree
3	Learners demonstrate improved listening and turn-taking skills.	4.17	Agree
4	Learners show confidence in speaking in front of peers.	4.00	Agree
5	Learners respond appropriately to questions and verbal prompts.	3.97	Agree
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.15	Agree
	Standard Deviation	0.17	

Table 4 indicates that MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction has a positive impact on learners' oral communication skills, with an aggregate weighted mean of 4.15 (Agree). The highest ratings show that learners can express ideas clearly using age-appropriate vocabulary (WM = 4.33) and participate actively in discussions and storytelling (WM = 4.30), both interpreted as Strongly Agree. Indicators on listening and turn-taking (WM = 4.17). The lowest mean was for learners responding appropriately to questions and verbal prompts (WM = 3.97), still within Agree, which may suggest varying levels of comprehension and responsiveness. The standard deviation of 0.17 reflects generally consistent perceptions among teachers, though with slightly more variability compared to earlier tables.

Table 5. The Extent of Impact of the MATATAG-aligned Early Literacy Instruction on Learners in Terms of Developing in terms of Writing Skills

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Learners can write letters and words legibly.	3.83	Agree
2	Learners can compose simple sentences related to personal experiences.	3.57	Agree
3	Learners use punctuation and capitalization correctly at their level.	3.53	Agree
4	Learners show creativity in drawing and labeling their work	3.77	Agree
5	Learners can copy and write dictated sentences with minimal assistance.	3.30	Neutral
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.60	Agree
	Standard Deviation	0.21	

Table 5 indicates that teachers agree that MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction contributes to the development of learners' writing skills, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.60 (Agree). The highest rating was for learners' ability to write letters and words legibly (WM = 3.83), followed by showing creativity in drawing and labeling their work (WM = 3.77), suggesting that foundational writing mechanics and expressive tasks are more evident. Learners' ability to compose simple sentences (WM = 3.57). However, copying and writing dictated sentences with minimal assistance received the lowest rating and was interpreted as Neutral (WM = 3.30). The standard deviation of 0.21 suggests some variation in teacher perceptions, reflecting differences in learner readiness, classroom support, or instructional resources.

Table 6. The Extent of Impact of the MATATAG-aligned Early Literacy Instruction on Learners in Terms of Developing in terms of Reading Skills

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Learners recognize and name letters of the alphabet.	4.00	Agree
2	Learners can read simple words and short sentences.	3.70	Agree
3	Learners demonstrate comprehension of read-aloud texts.	3.47	Agree
4	Learners can match pictures with printed words.	3.87	Agree
5	Learners can retell stories using their own words.	3.83	Agree
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.77	Agree
	Standard Deviation	0.20	

Table 6 shows that teachers agree that MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction positively supports learners' reading skills (AWM = 3.77). The strongest area is letter recognition and naming (WM = 4.00), indicating that foundational alphabet knowledge is evident among learners. Matching pictures with printed words (WM = 3.87) and retelling stories using their own words (WM = 3.83) were also rated Agree, suggesting developing word–meaning connection. The lowest mean was for comprehension of read-aloud texts (WM = 3.47), still under Agree, but it signals that understanding text meaning may require additional support and enriched comprehension activities. The SD of 0.20 indicates generally consistent perceptions, with some variability across classrooms.

Table 7. The Level of the Challenges Encountered by Early Childhood Teachers in Implementing Early Literacy Instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Lack of developmentally appropriate learning materials	3.27	Neutral
2	Inadequate training or professional development related to MATATAG early literacy strategies.	3.37	Neutral
3	Insufficient time to focus on individualized literacy instruction.	3.37	Neutral
4	Limited parental involvement and support in literacy development	3.47	Agree
5	Difficulty addressing diverse literacy levels within one class.	3.27	Neutral
6	Challenges in implementing MTB-MLE due to learners' varied language backgrounds.	3.23	Neutral
7	Lack of access to technology and literacy-enhancing resources.	3.23	Neutral
8	Difficulty in assessing literacy progress due to limited tools.	3.30	Neutral
9	Large class sizes affecting literacy instruction effectiveness.	3.70	Agree
10	Lack of administrative or supervisory support for literacy-focused instruction.	3.10	Neutral
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.33	Neutral
	Standard Deviation	0.16	

Table 7 shows that early childhood teachers generally perceived the challenges in implementing early literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum as Neutral overall (AWM = 3.33), suggesting that difficulties are present but not consistently experienced at a high level. Most indicators fell within the Neutral range, including concerns on the lack of developmentally appropriate materials (WM = 3.27), inadequate training on MATATAG literacy strategies (WM = 3.37), limited time for individualized instruction (WM = 3.37), managing diverse literacy levels in one class (WM = 3.27), MTB-MLE implementation issues due to varied language backgrounds (WM = 3.23), limited access to technology and literacy resources (WM = 3.23), and difficulty assessing literacy progress because of limited tools (WM = 3.30). However, two areas emerged as more evident challenges: large class sizes (WM = 3.70) and limited parental involvement and support (WM = 3.47), both interpreted as Agree, indicating these are more frequently encountered barriers that may directly affect the effectiveness of literacy instruction. The low SD (0.16) suggests fairly consistent perceptions among respondents across the selected schools.

Table 8. Test of relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and the perceived impact on early literacy outcomes among learners

Variable	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks

MATATAG Curriculum and Early Literacy Outcomes	0.644	Strong Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed)

Table 8 displayed the "Test of relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and the perceived impact on early literacy outcomes among learners." As shown in the table, the computed correlation coefficient, r-value of 0.644 signifies a strong positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that the MATATAG curriculum implementation benefits to the improvement of early literacy of the learners. Furthermore, the p-value result of 0.000 which is less that the significant level of 0.05, leads to the decision of rejecting the null hypothesis (Ho). Since the null hypothesis has been rejected, the result shows that there is a significant relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and the perceived impact on early literacy outcomes among learners. This result aligns with prior research which indicates that early skills is associated to later literacy acquisition. Reading to children, teaching them phonological awareness, incorporating parents in their kids' education, implementing literacy curricula in preschools and kindergartens, and teaching spoken language skills all led to learning (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010). These relates to the study since early literacy outcomes among learners are strongly impacted by the efficient and regular implementation of MATATAG-aligned practices, such as providing explicit reading and writing instruction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the continuous implementation of MATATAG Curriculum will lead the learners to learn basic literacy skills such as reading and writing in an early stage of being a student.

Table 9. Test of relationship between the perceived impact on early literacy outcomes and the level of challenges encountered

Variable	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Level of Challenges and Oral Skills	-.125	Weak Negative	.548	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Level of Challenges and Writing Skills	-.001	Negligible Negative	.996	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Level of Challenges and Reading Skills	.114	Weak Positive	.601	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed)

Table 9 presented the "Test of relationship between the perceived impact of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum on early literacy outcomes and the level of challenges encountered" by early childhood education teachers. The results revealed that there were no statistically significant relationships between the level of challenges and oral skills ($r = -0.125$, $p = 0.548$), writing skills ($r = -0.001$, $p = 0.996$), and reading skills ($r = 0.114$, $p = 0.601$). Since every p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected in every instance. According to these data, teachers do not believe that different implementation challenges have a major impact on the results of early literacy education. These results are supported by Pianta, La Paro, and Hamre's (2005) study, which showed that effective teacher-student interactions are essential for promoting learning outcomes and frequently outweigh the challenges imposed by curriculum or policy modifications. Considering the pedagogical or operational difficulties presented by the new MATATAG Curriculum, teachers may be using their professional expertise, creativity, and adaptive teaching techniques to continue providing successful early literacy training. Overall, the findings suggested that there is no statistically significant correlation between the level of challenges encountered and the perceived early literacy outcomes in reading, writing, or oral skills. Even while there are some weak tendencies, they are not enough to draw the conclusion that difficulties have a direct influence on literacy development in the context of this study. This result aligns with more extensive research on early literacy development, which emphasizes the value of early intervention, literacy-rich contexts, and high-quality instruction over contextual or structural challenges.

Discussion

The results show that early childhood teachers viewed the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum as being implemented well, especially in ensuring that literacy lessons match learners' developmental readiness and in using child-centered approaches. Teachers commonly reported that activities are age-appropriate, build on prior knowledge, and use interactive strategies such as play-based tasks, storytelling, and role-play. In comparison, the use of instructional materials was seen as less consistent, mainly due to

limitations in the availability of supplementary resources and print-rich materials. Overall, teachers believed that MATATAG-aligned instruction supports early literacy, with oral communication showing more noticeable improvements than writing and reading, which often require longer practice and more structured guidance. The relationship analysis further suggests that stronger curriculum implementation is linked with better perceived early literacy outcomes among learners. This implies that when teachers apply the curriculum more consistently and effectively, learners tend to show better progress in foundational literacy skills. Although teachers reported experiencing challenges, these difficulties were not strongly associated with learners' literacy outcomes. This may mean that teachers are able to manage obstacles through adaptive teaching strategies, professional experience, and classroom routines that sustain learning progress. However, concerns such as large class sizes and limited parental involvement remain important issues, as these can affect the overall quality and sustainability of literacy instruction.

Conclusion

This study concludes that early childhood teachers generally perceived the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum as being implemented effectively in early literacy classrooms, particularly in ensuring developmentally appropriate instruction and integrating child-centered literacy strategies. Teachers observed that MATATAG-aligned practices support learners' foundational literacy development, with more evident progress in oral communication compared to reading and writing skills, which require sustained practice and stronger scaffolding. The findings further show that better implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is significantly associated with better perceived early literacy outcomes, emphasizing the importance of consistent and faithful curriculum application. Although teachers reported challenges such as large class sizes, limited parental involvement, and resource constraints, these were not found to have a significant relationship with perceived literacy outcomes, suggesting that teachers' adaptive strategies may help minimize the effects of implementation barriers. Overall, the study highlights the value of strengthening curriculum implementation and providing continued support to teachers and schools to sustain and enhance early literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

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