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The MATATAG Curriculum Framework: Teachers' Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Opportunities

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Abstract

The present study investigated the challenges, coping mechanisms, and opportunities faced by the Grade 4 teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in Katipunan II District, Division of Zamboanga del Norte from school year 2025–2026. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed in the study, wherein data were gathered through a validated researcher-developed questionnaire administered to 22 teachers using the total enumeration method. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were some of the statistical tools used in the study. Results revealed that Grade 4 teachers faced challenges of moderate degree, especially in terms of workload and policy understanding; however, challenges on resource, assessment, and teaching aspects were of moderate intensity. Nevertheless, Grade 4 teachers had a high degree of coping through mechanisms such as collaboration, personal and professional development, and technological tools integration. Also, there was a high opportunity seen among the Grade 4 teachers, especially regarding instruction improvement, ICT integration, and professional growth. There was no significant difference observed in the issues, coping mechanisms, and opportunities based on demographic variables. Significant associations were observed between the issues and coping mechanisms and also between the issues and opportunities. The study indicates that teachers have resilience and flexibility, changing issues into opportunities for growth.

Keywords: MATATAG Curriculum, teacher challenges, coping mechanisms, opportunities, curriculum implementation

INTRODUCTION

Reforms in education are essential in enhancing instruction and providing learners with competencies that prepare them for the demands of the 21st century. In the Philippines, for instance, there is the MATATAG Curriculum as a reform effort intended to solve the problems experienced by the K–12 system through curriculum congestion, fragmented competencies, and poor foundational learning of the learners. Some studies pointed out that the primary goal of the MATATAG Curriculum was to simplify the learning competencies, enhance literacy and numeracy of the learners, and cater to the learning needs of 21st-century learners (Cabaya et al., 2025; Kilag et al., 2024). Moreover, the scholars pointed out that the focus of the reform effort is on mastery-based learning and foundation skills due to the poor performance of students and excessive instructional content.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a curriculum reform is contingent upon teachers, who act as its primary implementers within the confines of the classroom. As frontline workers of change in education, teachers must conform to new frameworks, incorporate new competencies, and adjust assessments in accordance with these changes. Nonetheless, there are certain impediments, such as added workloads, inadequate training, limited instructional materials, and difficulties in interpreting guidelines.

Earlier research indicated that any change in the curriculum could lead to stress, resistance, and implementation problems if teachers are not sufficiently supported. But teachers are not

mere agents who passively receive reforms. Instead, they react to the problems they encounter through different coping strategies like collaborating, innovating, and developing professionally. Furthermore, challenges may sometimes provide opportunities for growth, allowing teachers to develop skills and improve their teaching techniques.

Though there are a number of researches that have been conducted in the area of implementing the K–12 and MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines, these researches mainly concentrated on issues concerning implementation difficulties, teachers' instructional competencies, and coping strategies in public schools. More so, these papers discussed the implementation difficulties, the competencies of teachers, and the coping strategies adopted by the teachers in dealing with these difficulties.

While there have been many important contributions, very little research has been conducted on the relationship between implementation barriers, coping strategies, and opportunities that emerged in the context of rural public schools, where the nature of educational experiences may be distinctly different from urban areas. In particular, rural schools may experience specific barriers, including poor learning materials, lack of technological facilities, high teaching loads, geographic isolation, and multigrade teaching, which may have a significant effect on curriculum implementation. Moreover, previous literature often focused on problems and coping strategies as separate variables without considering whether coping strategies may lead to opportunities for improving instruction.

Curriculum reforms present not only challenges but also opportunities for professional growth. Teachers develop adaptive teaching strategies, enhance digital literacy, assume leadership roles, and strengthen collaboration. However, existing literature predominantly focused on the challenges and coping strategies, with limited attention to how teachers transform these experiences into opportunities for innovation and empowerment. This gap highlights the need for further research, particularly in resource-constrained and culturally diverse contexts, to better understand how teachers thrive amid curriculum reform.

The unique characteristics of this research paper include the concentration on the experiences of rural public-school teachers who implement the MATATAG Curriculum, the consideration of both the difficulties encountered, and coping mechanisms employed by these teachers, as well as the opportunities available to them as a result of such experiences.

In addition, this paper investigated the relationship between the selected variables using correlation analysis and was guided by the literature on resilience, which explains how teachers cope with curriculum innovation within their contexts. Through these unique characteristics, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the MATATAG Curriculum implementation in rural areas, as well as yield empirical data that can be utilized for future policy formulation and localized educational assistance programs. It attempts to fill this void by looking into the experiences of teachers when implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. More specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the profile of the respondents;
2. To determine the level of difficulties experienced by the teachers;
3. To identify the mechanisms that they used in coping with their difficulties;
4. To determine their perceived opportunities;
5. To examine if significant differences in teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and perceived opportunities in MATATAG curriculum implementation exist when respondents are grouped according to selected profile variables; and

6. To examine the relationship between implementation challenges, coping mechanisms, and emerging opportunities encountered by teachers when implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in rural public schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MATATAG Curriculum: Objectives and Policy. The MATATAG Curriculum, rolled out by DepEd from School Year 2024–2025, can be viewed as a careful restructuring of the Revised K to 12 Curriculum. Its purpose is to simplify the number of learning competencies, enhance basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, and ensure consistency and relevance of the curriculum. This policy initiative seeks to address perceived shortcomings of previous curricula and aligns Filipino basic education with both local and international benchmarks (DepEd, 2023).

K to 12 Curriculum in the Global Context of the Philippines. Curriculum changes across the world have emerged as a reaction to advances in technology, economy, and society. The frameworks like UNESCO's "Futures of Education" focus on learner-centric models, flexibility, and lifelong learning. However, the Philippines introduced its K to 12 model in order to improve the country's global competitiveness, but problems like the curriculum load, learning losses caused by the pandemic, and poor fundamental skills made the country implement the MATATAG Curriculum.

Objective and Guiding Principles of the K to 12 Program. The principles that guide the implementation of the K to 12 Curriculum include learner-centrism, inclusiveness, and contextualization. The guiding principles also involve constructivism and spiraling progression, values formation, and multilingual education based on the mother tongue. The guiding principles will produce holistic learners possessing 21st-century skills and adaptability to various situations (UNESCO, 2021; DepEd, 2023).

Curriculum Implementation Challenges for Teachers. Although such reformations have been made, there exist some challenges that teachers face in implementing a curriculum. Such include lack of professional development, heavy workloads, inadequate institutional support, issues of cultural diversity, and financial considerations. It has been observed that teachers may be inadequately prepared to implement reforms, overworked, and burdened with several duties, which could affect curriculum implementation (Lingard, 2019; Phillips, 2019; Cheung et al., 2019).

Teacher Coping Strategies. In order to handle these pressures, teachers adopt different coping techniques like emotional regulation, cooperation, individual problem solving, and delegation. It has been reported in research studies that coping strategies play a significant role in enhancing well-being, decreasing burnout, and improving teaching effectiveness. This theory of Coping-Competence-Context states that teacher pressure is a result of the interplay among individual qualities, external environments, and coping ability (Herman et al., 2020).

Self-Efficacy for Coping in Teaching Environments. In conjunction with coping, self-efficacy for coping involves teachers' belief in their ability to handle stressful situations and occupational challenges. A positive correlation has been found between higher self-efficacy for coping and lower rates of teacher burnout, enhanced resilience, and better job performance. Nevertheless, little literature exists regarding the examination of self-efficacy for coping among general education teachers (Chesney et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2022).

Teacher Resilience and Professional Sustainability. Resilience is an essential factor in helping teachers cope with difficulties, bounce back from failures, and maintain their dedication to teaching. Although resilience is frequently considered an inherent quality of Filipinos, academic researchers have warned against focusing too much on endurance

without providing sufficient organizational backing. Scientific literature has shown that resilience is significantly correlated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and low burnout rates (Walpita et al., 2020; Polat et al., 2018).

METHODS

Research Design. The descriptive correlational method was adopted for this study to examine the relationships among teachers' problems, coping strategies, and opportunities in the application of the MATATAG Curriculum. The descriptive part enabled the researcher to provide systematic descriptions and analyses of the problems, perceptions, and circumstances that teachers encountered in the process of curriculum implementation. The design included difference determination, examining significant variations in teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and opportunities across profile variables.

The use of such design was deemed proper since the research aim was to investigate the naturally occurring variables within the actual teaching context of rural public schools instead of manipulating the variables. Moreover, the descriptive-correlational design helped the researcher determine patterns, relationships, and trends among variables. As such, the method provided empirical data that contributed towards developing an increased knowledge of MATATAG Curriculum and furnished reliable data for educational planning, policy making, and teachers' assistance programs.

Respondents. The respondents of the study were 22 Grade 4 teachers from public elementary schools under the Katipunan II District, Division of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. These teachers played an active role in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and therefore became the most suitable respondents for studying the problems, coping mechanisms, and possibilities related to the issue of curriculum reform. Since Grade 4 was among the grade levels covered by the first phase of the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, it was believed that these respondents had sufficient capability to provide a truthful account on the actual situation of curriculum change.

Total Enumeration Sampling was used in the study, wherein all Grade 4 teachers from the selected district who met the inclusion criteria were employed as participants. This approach ensured complete representation of the targeted population. Inclusion criteria consisted of instructors assigned to teach Grade 4 classes during MATATAG Curriculum implementation and stationed in public elementary schools within Katipunan II District, Zamboanga del Norte. Although the sample covered the entire population, the relatively small number of 22 respondents limited the statistical power of the study, constraining the sensitivity of inferential tests to detect subtle differences and relationships.

It was important to choose the respondents since public school teachers in the countryside tend to experience some contextual difficulties that are not experienced by teachers in urban areas. Such problems include lack of instructional resources, technology support, among others. They provided firsthand information about how the implementation of MATATAG Curriculum takes place since they are responsible for implementing it.

Research Instrument. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data. It consisted of four parts: demographic profile, challenges in curriculum implementation, coping mechanisms, and perceived opportunities.

Table 1

Rating Scale for Curriculum Implementation Analysis

Weight Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
4.21–5.00	Always	This is a rating given to a particular indicator that is exercised in all instances.
3.41–4.20	Often	This is a rating given to a particular indicator that is exercised in most instances.
2.61–3.40	Sometimes	This is a rating given to a particular indicator that is exercised in a moderate number of instances.
1.81–2.60	Rarely	This is a rating given to a particular indicator that is exercised in a few instances.
1.00–1.80	Never	This is a rating given to a particular indicator that is not exercised.

The Likert scale in Table 1 served as the primary basis for measuring the challenges encountered in curriculum implementation, the coping mechanisms employed by teachers, and the perceived opportunities arising from the MATATAG curriculum. By aligning numerical weight ranges with qualitative descriptors, the instrument provided a structured framework for interpreting the frequency of responses. This methodological approach ensured consistency in data collection, allowed for nuanced analysis of teacher experiences, and facilitated the conversion of subjective perceptions into quantifiable measures that could be systematically examined.

The research instrument had undergone content validation and pilot testing before being administered for the purpose of establishing its validity and reliability. First, experts from the field of education and research validated the questionnaire in terms of its appropriateness, clarity, and relevancy concerning the goals and objectives of the study. After the validation process, the instrument was tested through pilot-testing by teachers who do not form part of the actual respondents but possess similarities with the population under study. Reliability of the instrument was measured using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, resulting in a value of 0.86, indicating high reliability/validity. Given that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding 0.70 is widely regarded as an acceptable threshold in empirical research, the instrument employed in this study is deemed reliable and suitable for eliciting data from participants concerning the challenges, coping mechanisms, and opportunities associated with the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum.

Data Collection. Data gathering was done through the actual administration of the structured questionnaire among selected Grade 4 teachers from public elementary schools located in Katipunan II District, Division of Zamboanga del Norte. Before the collection, a formal letter requesting permission to perform the study was submitted to the appropriate offices within the Schools Division Office and school heads concerned. Once consent had been obtained, the researcher informed the respondents about the objectives and methodology of the study and secured their voluntary cooperation. Ethical protocols were upheld by ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality of responses, and restricting data utilization exclusively for scholarly purposes.

The tool for data gathering was validated and piloted before its actual use to ensure validity and reliability. During the data gathering, enough time was provided to the respondents to answer the questions and they were as well told to choose answers that accurately reflect their experiences with the MATATAG Curriculum implementation. After retrieving the completed survey, the answers were checked, counted, and tabulated.

Data Analysis. All collected data were subjected to analysis and statistical treatment using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2022. The descriptive measures used include frequency and percentage distribution on the profile of the respondents based on age, length of service, and other demographic variables; mean and standard deviation were used to identify the level of teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and opportunities in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

On the other hand, Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure the relationship among teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and opportunities in MATATAG Curriculum. Furthermore, t-test was applied to measure significant differences among teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and opportunities in MATATAG Curriculum implementation based on selected profile variables, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to compare three or more profile variables. Although the dataset represented the entire Grade 4 teacher population, the relatively small number of 22 respondents limited statistical power, reducing sensitivity of inferential tests to subtle effects.

Ethical Considerations. In order to maintain integrity and protect participants' interests and validity of results, the highest level of ethics was maintained throughout the research. Participation in the research on the part of teachers was totally voluntary and had no effect whatsoever on their performance and evaluation. Respondents were assured that they could answer only those questions which they felt comfortable answering and leave the research if they desired. Confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents was strictly ensured, and no identifying information like real name or position of any respondent was included into the final report; only codes were used for identification purposes – Teacher 1, Teacher 2, etc. Information collected was kept safely in password-secured documents on the computer and in locked file cabinets and later was securely destroyed after the retention period of one year passed. Printed copies were shredded, and computer information was permanently deleted.

In addition, the study was evaluated and approved by the JRMSU Research Ethics Committee (REC). Consistent with ethical dissemination of research results, the results of the study were disseminated to teachers, school administrators, and the district office for purposes of implementing curricula and enhancing existing educational support.

RESULTS

Profile of the Respondents. Table 2 provides information on the age of the respondents. More than half of the participants were aged 36 to 45 years old (31.8%) and aged 56 years old and above (27.3%).

Table 2
Profile of the respondents in terms of age

Age	Frequency	Percent
26 - 35 years of age	4	18.2
36 - 45 years of age	7	31.8
46 - 55 years of age	5	22.7
56 years of age & above	6	27.3
Total	**22**	**100.0**

Thus, most of the participants were middle-aged or already mature teachers, thus providing enough experience as teachers. Such results support the assertion made by Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) that experienced teachers take an active part in implementing the curriculum because of their experience.

Table 3
Profile of the respondents in terms of sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	5	22.7
Female	17	77.3
Total	**22**	**100.0**

From Table 3, it is evident that the majority of teachers are female (77.3%) and that only 22.7% of them are male. It reflects the general practice in the country, as per the data published by Cabansag (2014), in that women dominate basic education teaching in the Philippines. Similar tendencies can be noticed overseas as well. According to UNICEF (2019), more than half of the primary school teachers are female.

Also affecting how the results should be interpreted is the gender mix because the perceptions, behaviors, and issues being mentioned here mostly come from female teachers, who form a majority of the public schools' teaching force. Research has shown that the gender of a teacher could affect how she manages her classes and hence affects instructional behaviors (Kwok, 2017; Lim & Meer, 2017).

Table 4
Profile of the respondents in terms of number of years in teaching

Years in Teaching	Frequency	Percent
10 years & below	2	9.1
11 - 15 years of age	8	36.4
16 - 20 years of age	4	18.2
21 - 25 years of age	3	13.6
26 - 30 years of age	3	13.6
31 years of age and above	2	9.1
Total	**22**	**100.0**

As depicted in Table 4, a high number of respondents is between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience (36.4%), suggesting an experienced group of teachers. This is in line with Darling-Hammond's observation (2017) that experience in teaching improves instructional skills and responsiveness to changes.

The findings generally reflect the perspectives of teachers who use the MATATAG Curriculum in actual classroom settings, considering the fact that, as shown in Table 5, most of the respondents (90.9%) were classroom teachers, while only 9.1% were master teachers. This means that the problems and coping strategies discussed by the participants were founded on actual experiences in teaching. The research reflects the perspectives of regular teachers who serve as the implementers of the curriculum, considering that most teachers are classroom teachers, which is consistent with Fullan's (2016) belief that teachers play a crucial role in curriculum implementation.

Table 5
Profile of the respondents in terms of position

Position	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	20	90.9
Master Teacher	2	9.1
Total	**22**	**100.0**

The Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Table 6 shows the degree to which the implementation difficulties are encountered, with a mean score of 3.31 which means that "the difficulty was moderately experienced."

Table 6
Summary of the teachers' implementation challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum

Statements	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Teacher Workload	3.65	0.755	Often	Exercised in most instances
Policy Awareness and Training	3.74	0.878	Often	Exercised in most instances
Assessment Difficulties	3.08	.91087	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
Resource Constraint	2.83	1.067	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
Institutional Issues	3.25	0.886	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
Overall Mean & SD	**3.31**	**0.639**	**Sometimes**	**Exercised moderately**

Of the indicators, "policy awareness" and "training" have the highest score (M = 3.74), then comes "teacher workload" (M = 3.65). "Assessment difficulties," "instructional problems," and "resource limitations" are moderately experienced.

Teachers' workload (Table 7) was another serious issue identified, as teachers were often required to do more work even outside of school hours (M = 3.65). This supports previous research findings by Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) and Brill & McCartney (2008) showing that changes in curricula put additional pressure on teachers.

Table 7
Level of Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Teacher Workload

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I feel overwhelmed by the amount of lesson preparation required under the revised curriculum.	3.50	1.012	Often	Exercised in most instances
2. I spend a significant amount of time completing paperwork and documentation tasks.	3.82	1.053	Often	Exercised in most instances
3. I find it difficult to balance teaching responsibilities with extracurricular duties.	3.32	0.945	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
4. I often work beyond school hours due to curriculum-related demands.	3.95	1.046	Often	Exercised in most instances
Mean & SD	**3.65**	**0.755**	**Often**	**Exercised in most instances**

Table 8
Level of Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Policy Awareness and Training

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I feel adequately informed about the goals and content of the Revised K-12 Curriculum. (reverse coded)	3.95	0.844	Often	Exercised in most instances
2. I receive ongoing training relevant to curriculum implementation. (reverse coded)	3.73	1.120	Often	Exercised in most instances
3. I am confident in interpreting curriculum guidelines and policy updates. (reverse coded)	3.50	0.964	Often	Exercised in most instances
4. I have access to support mechanisms provided by school leaders or supervisors. (reverse coded)	3.77	1.020	Often	Exercised in most instances
Mean & SD	**3.74**	**0.878**	**Often**	**Exercised in most instances**

Awareness and training about policy changes (Table 8) also presented some problems (M = 3.74). Even though there were opportunities for training, teachers faced difficulties applying policies in practice. This reflects Fullan's (2016) opinion about the crucial role of continued training in reform success.

The difficulty in assessment (Table 9) was moderately perceived (M = 3.08), especially in matching the assessment to competencies and HOTS tasks. This is consistent with the findings of Popham (2011), which showed that teachers are usually faced with assessment illiteracy in standards-based learning environments.

Table 9

Level of Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Assessment Difficulties

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I find it difficult to align my assessment strategies with the expected learning competencies.	3.23	1.110	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
2. I find it difficult to develop assessment tools based on higher-order thinking skills.	3.23	0.973	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
3. I experience uncertainty in using formative assessments effectively.	2.95	1.046	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
4. I lack clear benchmarks for evaluating student learning progress under the revised standards.	2.91	0.868	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
Mean & SD	**3.08**	**0.911**	**Sometimes**	**Exercised moderately**

The problem in instruction (Table 10) was also moderately perceived (M = 3.25). Teachers perceived problems in meeting the needs of diverse learners and incorporating 21st-century skills. On the other hand, the availability of resources (Table 10) was perceived as least problematic (M = 2.83).

Table 10

Level of Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Instructional Issues

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I find the curriculum content too broad to teach within the allocated time.	3.36	1.136	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
2. I experience difficulty in addressing the varying needs of my learners.	3.18	0.795	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
3. I find some curriculum competencies vague or open to multiple interpretations.	3.32	0.894	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
4. I find lesson planning challenging due to the integration of 21st-century skills.	3.14	0.990	Sometimes	Exercised moderately
Mean & SD	**3.25**	**0.886**	**Sometimes**	**Exercised moderately**

Coping Strategies Among Teachers. From Table 11, it can be seen that teachers exhibited a large number of coping strategies (M = 3.86), signifying that they often adopt adaptive strategies such as collaboration with their colleagues, engaging in professional development activities, making use of online tools, and being reflective.

Table 11

Extent of Teachers' Coping Mechanisms in Managing the Demands of the MATATAG Curriculum

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I seek advice or assistance from more experienced colleagues.	3.86	0.710	Often	Exercised in most instances
2. I attend webinars, seminars, or workshops related to curriculum implementation.	3.86	0.774	Often	Exercised in most instances
3. I modify my lesson plans based on the updated curriculum guide.	3.91	0.921	Often	Exercised in most instances
4. I collaborate with fellow teachers to share strategies and best practices.	3.91	0.921	Often	Exercised in most instances
5. I utilize online resources and teaching platforms for curriculum adaptation.	3.95	1.046	Often	Exercised in most instances
6. I engage in self-study to better understand new learning competencies.	3.73	0.935	Often	Exercised in most instances
7.I incorporate learner feedback to adjust my teaching methods.	3.91	1.065	Often	Exercised in most instances
8. I practice stress management techniques to maintain my teaching effectiveness.	3.68	1.086	Often	Exercised in most instances
9. I consult with school heads or curriculum implementer when encountering difficulties.	3.91	1.065	Often	Exercised in most instances
10. I allocate time for continuous reflection on my teaching practices.	3.91	1.109	Often	Exercised in most instances
Mean & SD	**3.86**	**0.816**	**Often**	**Exercised in most instances**

These results imply that teachers engage in coping strategies when faced with curriculum issues by means of professional collaboration and self-learning, which is consistent with Vescio et al.'s (2008) and Zimmerman's (2000) findings.

Opportunities in Adopting the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 12

Level of Teachers' Specific Opportunities in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. The curriculum provides a broader scope for student skill development.	3.68	0.839	Often	Exercised in most instances
2. It promotes learner-centered and competency-based teaching.	3.86	0.990	Often	Exercised in most instances
3. I have more freedom to design engaging learning activities.	3.95	0.722	Often	Exercised in most instances
4. It enables me to innovate and integrate ICT in teaching.	3.82	0.958	Often	Exercised in most instances
5. The revised curriculum helps learners become more globally competitive.	3.82	0.958	Often	Exercised in most instances
6. It encourages interdisciplinary and contextualized learning approaches.	3.73	1.077	Often	Exercised in most instances
7. I have increased access to professional development under the new curriculum.	3.68	0.894	Often	Exercised in most instances
8. It strengthens the alignment between education and workforce demands.	3.82	0.795	Often	Exercised in most instances
9. I feel more competent and updated in my field due to curriculum changes.	3.59	0.854	Often	Exercised in most instances
10. The curriculum fosters the holistic development of learners.	3.86	0.990	Often	Exercised in most instances
Mean & SD	**3.78**	**0.803**	**Often**	**Exercised in most instances**

Based on Table 12, the level of perception regarding the presence of opportunities was rated at a high level (M = 3.78). Examples of these opportunities include flexibility in instruction, incorporation of ICT, learner-centered strategies, and development of skills among students. Although there were problems encountered, the teachers acknowledged the benefits of the MATATAG Curriculum in relation to the process of teaching and learning. This is in line with the insights shared by Bernardo (2017) and Trilling & Fadel (2009).

Difference in Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Opportunities. Data in Tables 13 to 15 reveal no statistical differences between the variables in terms of implementation challenges, coping strategies, and opportunities based on age, gender, years of teaching, and position ($p > 0.05$). In effect, there seems to be a sense of similarity in the situations experienced by teachers, despite their demographic backgrounds. This observation implies that the challenges in the implementation of curriculum are not personal, but institutional, as pointed out by Fullan (2016).

Table 13
Test of Difference in Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum

Variables	U-value	H-value	p-value @ 0.05	Interpretation
Age		1.484	0.686	Not Significant
Sex	32.50		0.433	Not Significant
Number of Years in Teaching		5.884	0.316	Not Significant
Position	13.00		0.423	Not Significant

Table 14
Test of Difference in the Extent of Teachers' Coping Mechanisms in Managing the Demands of the MATATAG Curriculum

Variables	U-value	H-value	p-value @ 0.05	Interpretation
Age		6.002	0.112	Not Significant
Sex	39.00		0.784	Not Significant
Number of Years in Teaching		9.239	0.100	Not Significant
Position	9.50		0.230	Not Significant

Table 15
Test of Difference in the Extent of Teachers' Specific Opportunities in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Variables	U-value	H-value	p-value @ 0.05	Interpretation
Age		1.288	0.732	Not Significant
Sex	39.00		0.786	Not Significant
Number of Years in Teaching		5.894	0.317	Not Significant
Position	15.50		0.605	Not Significant

Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Opportunities Relationship. According to Table 14, there is a significant positive correlation between challenges and coping strategies in terms of teacher workload ($r = 0.434$, $p < 0.05$), policy awareness ($r = 0.775$, $p < 0.01$), and instructional challenges ($r = 0.608$, $p < 0.01$). The results suggest that as challenges become more apparent, teachers are more likely to adopt coping strategies.

Table 16
Test of Relationship Between Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum and Their Coping Mechanisms in Managing Curriculum Demands

Variables		Coping Mechanisms
Teacher Workload	Correlation Coefficient	0.434*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.044
	N	22
Policy Awareness and Training	Correlation Coefficient	0.775*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	22
Assessment Difficulties	Correlation Coefficient	-0.227
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.309
	N	22
Resource Constraints	Correlation Coefficient	-0.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.991
	N	22
Instructional Issues	Correlation Coefficient	0.608*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003
	N	22
Overall Teachers' Implementation Challenges	**Correlation Coefficient**	**0.423***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.050**
	N	**22**

However, there is no significant relationship between coping strategies and assessment or resource constraints, as these are systemic issues that cannot be resolved by individuals alone.

This finding is consistent with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2019) recommendation that structural barriers require systemic solutions rather than individual actions.

Table 17 also highlights a significant positive correlation between challenges and opportunities ($r = 0.553$, $p < 0.05$), meaning that even when challenges emerge, teachers still perceive opportunities. This demonstrates resilience and flexibility, consistent with Fullan's (2016) assertion that challenges can stimulate innovation and professional development.

Table 17

Test of Relationship Between Teachers' Implementation Challenges within the MATATAG Curriculum and Their Specific Opportunities in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Variables		Specific Opportunities
Teacher Workload	Correlation Coefficient	0.553*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008
	N	22
Policy Awareness and Training	Correlation Coefficient	0.683*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	22
Assessment Difficulties	Correlation Coefficient	-0.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.975
	N	22
Resource Constraints	Correlation Coefficient	0.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.569
	N	22
Instructional Issues	Correlation Coefficient	0.607*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003
	N	22
Overall Teachers' Implementation Challenges	**Correlation Coefficient**	**0.553***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.008**
	N	**22**

DISCUSSION

From the results of the study, teachers faced moderate levels of challenges in using the MATATAG Curriculum mainly because of workload issues and low awareness about the policies. This result is supported by existing studies on curriculum changes, as these have shown that large educational shifts will impose higher job demands for teachers because of the additional burden imposed on them by administrative tasks, instruction, and policy requirements. Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, these conditions could be seen as job demands, requiring teachers to exert more physical, cognitive, and emotional energy.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the survey revealed that there were many coping strategies employed by the teachers, such as collaboration, professionalism, and use of technology. It is possible to analyze this situation using the concept of teacher resilience, meaning, that teachers are not mere receivers of the reform, but active players who learn from difficulties, overcome them, and develop personally and professionally. The extensive use of such approaches as cooperation with other professionals and professional growth indicates that teachers are able to utilize their own and the institution's resources to cope with curriculum changes. With respect to the JD-R model, coping strategies represent job resources, preventing negative results caused by high demands.

Uniquely, the research results indicate that difficulties serve not only as barriers but can also be a source of professional growth and opportunities. Responding to the issues that arise during implementation has led to better instruction, ICT integration, and teacher professional competency according to teachers. It is possible to agree with the idea in the theories of resilience and adaptive expertise about the possibility of innovation under adverse conditions if there are sufficient coping mechanisms available to a person. Thus, it can be concluded that difficulties have been transforming experiences that stimulated reflection on instructions.

Moreover, the results of the correlations point to a clear association between obstacles, coping mechanisms, and opportunities. The positive correlation between obstacles and coping mechanisms implies that if there is an increase in demands, then there is a tendency for teachers to resort to adaptive coping strategies, consistent with the compensatory process proposed in the JD-R framework. Likewise, the association between obstacles

and opportunities implies that although there are challenges encountered in implementing interventions, these could somehow result in the achievement of professional development outcomes, provided that proper coping mechanisms are employed.

The results from a policy and practices perspective indicate the importance of increasing institutional support networks in the process of curricula reforms. In order to reduce undue burden and increase the readiness of teachers for the new roles, there is a need for intensive training programs, wide circulation of policies, and professional development programs among others. It would be worthwhile to develop learning communities and support for ICT, which can help the teachers adapt and facilitate curriculum transfer.

In terms of global discourse on the reform of curricula, the results of this research are in line with international research results indicating that implementation of reforms in the education sector greatly relies on the role of teachers, institutional backing, and adaptability to context. Nevertheless, this research brings a more localized view because it concentrates on public secondary schools located in rural areas implementing the MATATAG curriculum, which has been largely understudied before.

Even though there have been several accomplishments made, there are some limitations that need to be highlighted. The first one is the fact that the survey focuses on a relatively small number of Grade 4 teachers from a single district. This means that it is not easily applicable to other grades or regions. The second limitation relates to the self-reports, because there is always a risk of response bias. This occurs when respondents either overreport or under-report their experiences. The third limitation involves the cross-sectional design and, therefore, the lack of causation among variables.

In essence, the study highlights the fact that implementation of curricular reform is characterized by a combination of different challenges and developmental processes. Instead of considering challenges only as problematic, the results suggest that provided there are appropriate coping strategies in place, these may act as means of teacher development and instruction innovation.

CONCLUSION. Based on the findings, the following conclusions are presented:

The MATATAG Curriculum is still relatively difficult for the teacher to implement, mainly because of the issues related to workload increase and the inability to comprehend and implement the curriculum policies in the classroom setting. The findings imply that despite the efforts made by the MATATAG Curriculum to enhance education, there are still significant challenges in its implementation which make it quite demanding for the teacher to comply with.

However, the teacher displays a high degree of adaptability and professionalism. It is evident that the teacher uses numerous techniques to cope with the changes in the curriculum. For instance, the teacher works together with other colleagues, takes part in professional development activities, learns independently, consults the administration of the school, and uses innovative and technology-based techniques. Hence, it can be argued that the teacher is an active participant in making changes in the classroom rather than a passive recipient of the changes.

Additionally, despite the challenges that teachers encounter, they still view the MATATAG Curriculum favorably. They are aware that the curriculum provides valuable avenues for the improvement of teaching, especially when it comes to integrating information and communication technology in instruction, implementing learner-centered approaches to teaching, and innovating in classroom teaching. This indicates that teachers are capable of acknowledging both the challenges and the benefits of the curriculum, indicating an unbiased and constructive attitude towards educational reforms.

Moreover, the study finds out that teachers face similar degrees of challenges and utilize the same coping mechanisms irrespective of their age, sex, years of teaching experience, or occupational status. This shows that challenges in implementing the curriculum are systemic in nature, not individualized according to demographic factors. Hence, the experiences of teachers regarding curriculum reforms remain consistent across various teacher demographics.

Lastly, the existence of notable relationships between the variables implies that the higher the degree of challenges perceived by teachers, the more likely they are to undertake coping actions and have heightened awareness about the curricular opportunities available. These results imply that apart from posing obstacles, challenges also inspire adaptive behavior on the part of the teachers. Hence, their response to challenges is geared towards enhancing coping behaviors and positively viewing curriculum implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Department of Education and School Administrators. Strengthen teacher support programs by providing continuous and more targeted professional development, particularly on policy interpretation and assessment design.

Revisit and rationalize teachers' workload to minimize administrative requirements and paperwork and allow teachers to focus more on instructional delivery.

Provide clearer curriculum guidelines and updated resource materials for lesson planning and implementation.

Develop a district wide learning plan that tackles teachers' workload in a methodical manner, promotes policy understanding and training, improves assessment methods, and assures fair access to educational resources. Such a plan should emphasize continuous professional development, collaborative learning opportunities, and targeted support mechanisms to enhance teachers' capacity to effectively implement the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly in resource limited schools.

For Teachers. Maintain and strengthen collaborative practices such as team planning, peer coaching, professional learning communities, and capability-building sessions.

Continue making use of technological tools, online resources, and reflective practices for personal and professional growth.

For Curriculum Planners and Policy Makers. Review policies linked to the MATATAG Curriculum to ensure implementation feasibility at the school level and consider the feedback and needs of teachers.

Enhance access to instructional resources and learning facilities, particularly ICT-related materials.

For Future Researchers. Conduct similar studies using a larger respondent population or mixed methods design for deeper insights on the curriculum implementation.

Explore additional variables such as school leadership, teacher motivation, and student performance to examine their relationship with curriculum implementation.

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