NAVIGATING THE SHIFT: SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' EARLY EXPERIENCES IN TRANSITIONING FROM K-12 TO MATATAG CURRICULUM
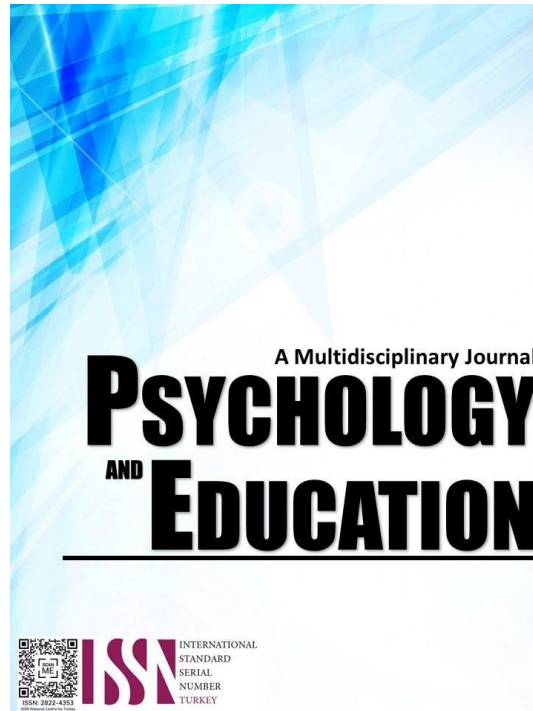
Navigating The Shift: Social Studies Teachers' Early Experiences In Transitioning From K-12 To Matatag Curriculum

Janette M. Demalata,* Nancy B. Espacio
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines marks a significant shift from the K–12 Curriculum, necessitating adjustments from educators, particularly Social Studies teachers. This study explores the lived experiences of Grade 7 Social Studies teachers in both public and private schools in Banga, South Cotabato, Philippines, as they navigate this curriculum shift. Using phenomenological research design, the study examines the challenges encountered, adaptation strategies employed, and the overall impact of the curriculum shift on teaching practices. Data were gathered through in depth interviews with seven teachers and analyzed thematically. Findings reveal four major themes regarding teachers lived experiences: (1) Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty, (2) Adjustments in Teaching Preparations & Time, (3) Comparison to K–12 and Gains, and (4) Effects on Student Interactions & Engagement. Additionally, five key challenges emerged: (1) Major Challenges with Implementation, (2) Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines, (3) Impact on Workload & Access to Materials, (4) Support & Collaboration, and (5) Observations of Others' Challenges. Teachers employed various adaptation strategies, including the use of external resources, collaborative learning, and digital tools to address instructional demands. The study underscores the need for enhanced support systems, adequate training, and resource availability to facilitate a smoother transition to the new curriculum. The findings contribute to policy recommendations that can inform educational leaders, curriculum developers, and policymakers in strengthening support mechanisms for teachers in future curriculum reforms.

Keywords: *curriculum transition, MATATAG curriculum, social studies teachers*

Introduction

Education is a key foundation of society and an essential tool for personal and community growth. Around the world, educational systems aim to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a complex and connected world. Education not only teaches academic subjects but also encourages critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility. As countries work to improve their education systems, many have made important changes to meet the changing needs of the workforce and society.

The Philippine educational system is undergoing significant reforms and changes with the shift from the K-12 curriculum to the MATATAG curriculum (Lagbao, 2024; Estrellado, 2024). While these changes aim to enhance educational quality and better prepare students for global competitiveness, they also present substantial challenges, particularly for teachers in resource-constrained environments like public and private schools in Banga, South Cotabato.

The MATATAG curriculum is designed to address the limitations of the K12 program, refining educational content and emphasizing the development of critical 21st-century skills (Lagbao, 2024). However, the practical implementation of this curriculum reveals a landscape fraught with challenges (Estrellado, 2024). Resource limitations are a major issue, with many public and private schools lacking the necessary facilities, instructional materials, and technological support needed for effective curriculum delivery. This challenge is exemplified by the inadequate support for mother-tongue instruction in mathematics education during the K-12 shift, as noted by Verzosa and Vistro-Yu (2019).

In addition to resource constraints, the MATATAG curriculum adds to the academic burden on students, which has been a point of concern since the implementation of the K-12 curriculum. Gurobat and Lumbu-an (2022) highlight how students have perceived the extended years of schooling as overwhelming, which affects their engagement and learning outcomes. Teachers who are responsible for delivering this more rigorous curriculum must find ways to balance these demands while maintaining student motivation and well-being.

Societal inequities further complicate the transition to the MATATAG curriculum. Disparities in household income and access to quality education are longstanding issues in the Philippine educational system, and these inequities often worsen both in public and private schools. Teachers must navigate these challenges while ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed under the new curriculum. Additionally, there is often a disconnect between curriculum design and classroom realities. Estrellado (2024) points out that this disconnect can lead to implementation gaps, where the curriculum's intended outcomes are not fully realized in practice.

Despite these challenges, there is a notable lack of research focused on the early experiences of teachers during the transition from K12 to the MATATAG curriculum. Most existing studies have concentrated on the implementation of the K-12 Curriculum or have focused on teachers teaching English, Mathematics, and Science, or at the elementary level, and even perspectives from the principals leaving

a gap in understanding how Social Studies teachers, both in public and private schools, perceive and manage this transition. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a phenomenological exploration of Social Studies teachers lived experiences in Banga, South Cotabato.

This research is significant for several reasons. It amplifies the voices of Social Studies teachers—a group often underrepresented in discussions about curriculum reform (Vilches, 2018; Lagbao, 2024). The findings can inform policymakers and educational leaders about the specific needs and support mechanisms required for a smoother transition to the MATATAG curriculum. Furthermore, by offering evidence- and experience-based recommendations, this study contributes to bridging the gap between curriculum development and classroom implementation. Ultimately, the goal is to foster a more equitable and effective educational system that meets the needs of all Filipino students.

Research Questions

This study described the social studies teachers' experiences during the transition from the K-12 Curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum. With that aim, it answered the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Social Studies teachers in Banga, South Cotabato, as they transition from the K-12 to the MATATAG curriculum?
2. What challenges do Social Studies teachers encounter in the early stages of transitioning from the K-12 to the MATATAG curriculum?
3. How do Social Studies teachers adapt to the initial challenges of the curriculum shift from K-12 to the Matatag Curriculum?

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, the qualitative method employing phenomenological research design was used. Qualitative research is a method that immerses the observer in the real world, using interpretive practices like field notes, interviews, and recordings to make sense of phenomena. Researchers examine subjects in their natural settings, interpreting the meanings individuals or groups assign to their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013). The process begins with assumptions and is guided by interpretive and theoretical frameworks to explore social or human issues. Data collection is done sensitively in natural settings, and analysis is both inductive and deductive, identifying patterns or themes. The final report includes participants' voices, researcher reflexivity, and detailed interpretations, contributing to knowledge or advocating for change. Ultimately, qualitative research seeks to deeply understand individuals' experiences and perspectives within their specific contexts, using methods such as interviews, focus groups, and narrative analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Spencer et al., 2003; Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research was well-suited for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of Grade 7 Social Studies teachers transitioning from the K-12 to the MATATAG curriculum. By using a phenomenological approach, the study can capture the complex perceptions, challenges, and adaptations of teachers within their natural setting. This method was ideal for understanding the complexities and meanings that teachers assign to their experiences, providing rich, detailed insights that quantitative approaches might overlook. The flexibility of qualitative research also enables the study to respond sensitively to the unique context and dynamics of the schools in Banga, South Cotabato, Philippines.

Participants

This study was conducted at public and private schools in Banga, South Cotabato, Philippines, focusing on Grade 7 Social Studies teachers. The choice of these specific schools was influenced by the researcher's intent to explore the early experiences of teachers transitioning from the K-12 to the MATATAG curriculum within a localized setting, considering that based on anecdotal records, problems, and challenges arise during the transition (LAC Session, 2024).

The selection of these schools was based on a strategically justified decision. The schools' unique educational context provides an ideal environment to investigate teachers' challenges and adaptations during this curriculum shift. The schools' setting offers a comprehensive backdrop for understanding how the new MATATAG curriculum impacts teaching practices and professional roles, given its alignment with the phenomenological approach to capture the depth of teachers lived experiences.

Furthermore, the study's focus on Grade 7 teachers within these schools allows for a detailed exploration of how curriculum changes affect instructional practices, resource use, and student engagement. This localized approach aims to provide valuable insights that can inform broader educational reforms and support mechanisms for teachers navigating significant curriculum shifts.

To justify the selection of participants for the study, it is essential to consider both the methodological standards and the specific needs of the research. In this study, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with at least seven teachers from Grade 7, all of whom are involved in implementing the MATATAG curriculum. This number aligns with qualitative research norms, which often focus on a smaller sample size to allow for in-depth exploration of phenomena (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Qualitative research values the richness and depth of data over the number of participants, with the aim of achieving a comprehensive

understanding of the participants' experiences. While recommendations for sample size vary, many sources suggest a range between 5 to 50 participants as adequate for capturing diverse perspectives and ensuring robust analysis (Dworkin, 2012). Given this guidance, the researcher's decision to include at least 7 participants ensures sufficient coverage of the relevant experience while allowing for detailed, meaningful data collection.

The inclusion criteria that the researcher strictly followed are as follows: The participant must be a Social Studies teacher with a permanent position and have served the Department of Education for at least three years prior to the transition to the MATATAG Curriculum. This ensures that the participant has sufficient experience with the K-12 Curriculum and can provide valuable insights into the ongoing curriculum shift based on their prior knowledge and experience with K-12.

To maintain participants' anonymity and protect their privacy, the researcher used coded references, such as "IDI" (in-depth interview) followed by a sequential number. This approach safeguards participants' identities and facilitates organized data analysis. This sample size and coding method are designed to balance the need for detailed, individual insights with the practical considerations of data management and participant confidentiality.

Sampling Technique

During this research, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select participants specifically from both public and private schools in Banga, South Cotabato, Philippines. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method where participants are chosen based on their specific characteristics and relevance to research questions. This study selected participants based on their role as Grade 7 Social Studies teachers at a school implementing the MATATAG curriculum. This targeted approach, also known as judgmental or selective sampling (Crossman, 2020), ensures that the sample directly aligns with the study's focus on understanding the teachers' experiences and adaptations during the curriculum transition.

Research Instrument

Patton (2015) suggests that qualitative surveys are effective for collecting detailed and nuanced data from participants, which helps in gaining a deeper insight into their experiences and viewpoints. According to Patton, these questionnaires are valuable for obtaining rich narrative information that explores participants' experiences, perceptions, and beliefs in detail.

In this study, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews to gather data. Semi-structured interviews provided a flexible yet systematic approach, allowing the researcher to explore various perspectives while consistently addressing key topics relevant to the research objectives (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The interview questions were developed by the researcher and validated through content validity checks. Initially drafted by the researcher, the questions were reviewed by the research adviser and then validated by a panel consisting of two master teachers and three doctorate degree holders. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio recorded. The researcher ensured that these recordings remain confidential and are used solely for verification and transcription purposes.

Additionally, the researcher used several instruments, including a questionnaire validation tool, interview protocols, an informed consent form, and a transcription writing guide to support the data collection process.

Procedure

Before starting the research, the researcher followed a formal communication process to obtain all necessary approvals from relevant officials. This began with seeking permission from the Graduate School Dean to conduct the study. Once granted, the researcher sent a letter to the Schools' Division Superintendent of South Cotabato, outlining the research aims and requesting permission to conduct the study in the district. After receiving approval, the researcher sent letters to the School District Supervisor and the School Principals of the selected public and private schools in Banga, South Cotabato, seeking their consent to involve the teachers in the study. Finally, the researcher coordinated with the Grade 7 Social Studies teachers, informing them about the research and seeking their voluntary participation through an informed consent process. All communication was conducted professionally, and the researcher followed up on approval through official channels to ensure the smooth commencement of the research. Adherence to ethical guidelines was crucial throughout the study. Participants, specifically Grade 7 Social Studies teachers, provided informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality of the information collected. Once the School Principal and prospective participants granted permission, the researcher scheduled semi-structured interviews, observing health protocols during this process. The researcher also ensured that no classes were affected by the conduct of the interview. After the interviews, the researcher translated the teachers' responses as necessary and then transcribed, coded, and analyzed the data to gain insights into their experiences with the MATATAG curriculum transition.

Data Analysis

In conducting data analysis for this study, the researcher employed thematic analysis. This approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), focuses on identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the data.

It involves organizing and describing the data in detail. The thematic analysis consists of six key steps:

Familiarizing with the Data: After completing the in-depth interviews (IDIs) with Grade 7 Social Studies teachers, the researcher carefully read and re-read the transcripts to become deeply acquainted with their content. This process included reviewing notes taken

during interviews to identify recurring patterns, initial impressions, and any emerging insights related to the teachers' experiences with the MATATAG curriculum shift.

Generating Initial Codes and Themes: The researcher systematically analyzed the data and coding responses related to the teachers' challenges, adaptations, and strategies in transitioning from the K-12 to the MATATAG curriculum. Initial codes were created by labeling significant portions of the data, such as specific challenges related to instructional changes or support systems in place. Data reduction then occurred, with codes being grouped into categories that reflect the major aspects of their experiences. This step involved inferring the meaning behind the teachers' experiences with the curriculum shift.

Searching for Themes: The researcher clustered these initial codes into broader, more abstract themes that represent key elements of the teachers' experiences. At this stage, the researcher examined whether these themes capture the essence of the transition and whether they align with the study's focus on adaptation strategies.

Reviewing Themes: The researcher reviewed the themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data from the IDIs. This involves re-reading the transcripts and checking whether the themes are consistent with the responses given by teachers from both public and private schools. The researcher also cross-checked the themes with the theoretical framework guiding the study, ensuring that they align with the research's goals. If any gaps or inconsistencies are identified, the researcher returned to the data for further analysis.

Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined and named based on the specific aspects of the curriculum transition that it captures. The researcher ensured that each theme represents a significant aspect of the teachers lived experiences and explains how it relates to their adaptation to the MATATAG curriculum.

Producing the Report: The final step involved writing a comprehensive report detailing the findings. The report emphasized themes that provide a deep understanding of how Social Studies teachers in Banga, South Cotabato, are navigating the curriculum shift. The researcher connected the themes to the research questions, highlighting how they contribute to understanding the challenges and strategies teachers employ in this transition.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher ensured that the essential ethical considerations were taken into account and followed throughout the study's execution. To ensure that the research did not violate any ethical standards in its conduct, established standards, particularly the privacy and confidentiality of information, were strictly followed and substantially explained in the study context.

Informed Consent. In this study, informed consent forms were obtained from all participants prior to the interviews. To allow the participants to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study, the researcher clearly stated in the informed consent form the purpose of the study, study procedures, potential risks and discomforts, potential benefits to participants and/or society, data privacy and confidentiality, the voluntariness of participation and rights to withdraw from the research, reimbursement and compensation, investigator's contact information (Ortega & Sumayo, 2024; Esto, 2024). Furthermore, the researcher provided the identified participants with a detailed and comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose. The researcher ensured that the condition of consent is a voluntary choice. The participants have adequate information and understanding of both the proposal and the implications of their participation in the study. Individuals were assigned codes in the data presentation. This process allowed them to be anonymized in the study (Redocto & Sumayo, 2024). The researcher signed each page of the in-depth interview transcriptions to attest that the key information interviews were conducted with the consent of the participants. In addition, the participants were treated with dignity.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's results and deliberates the implications of data gathered through an interview guide questionnaire during the interview conducted with the participants.

Emerging Themes on the Lived Experiences of Teachers in the Transition to the MATATAG Curriculum

Four (4) emerging themes were articulated through careful data analysis and interpretation, which were synthesized from various initial and clustered themes. The four emerging themes were the following: Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty, Adjustments in Teaching Preparations & Time, Comparison to K–12 and Gains, and Effects on Student Interactions & Engagement. These themes characterized the lived experiences of teachers who underwent a transition from the K+12 Curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum, which is now being implemented by the Department of Education nationwide

Table 1. *Lived Experiences of Teachers in the Transition to the MATATAG Curriculum*

Emerging Theme	Clustered Themes	Codes	Significant Statements

Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty	-Challenging Shift -Easier/More Focused	- "major challenge" - "very challenging" - "easier to teach" - "not that difficult"	Kenneth: "I can describe this change as a major challenge because there are many new topics that I did not teach extensively under the K–12 Curriculum before..."
			Dave:"My experience transitioning... has been very challenging."
			Michelle: "My experience... has made teaching the children much easier..."
			Mark: "My experience... was not that difficult because, for me, teaching Araling Panlipunan has become easier."
			Mon: "...we need to prepare our lesson within the time allotment... strategies on how to plan the topic."
			Dave: "The 45 minutes is insufficient for practicing HOTS... to fully develop the concept…"
Adjustments in Teaching Preparations & Time	-45-Minute Allotment -Resources Searching or Simplified	-"time allotment" -"45 minutes" -"exemplar" -"focused topics"	Michelle: "...I don't find it too difficult because exemplars are already prepared... can also access other PowerPoint presentations..."
			Mark: "...it has become easier to prepare... you focus only on a specific topic..."
			Mon: "This new MATATAG curriculum is an answer to... congested curriculum... also focuses on different skills to develop 21st-century learners."
			Michelle: "...the difference is significant... Now, the MATATAG Curriculum focuses only on a specific sub-region of Asia—Southeast Asia... places greater emphasis on fostering patriotism..."
Comparison to K–12 & Gains	-Streamlined Content -Positive Benefits	- "not as congested" "unpacked competencies" - "focus on southeast Asia" - "more interactive"	Mark: "...the learning competencies have been unpacked... The transition... has brought many positive benefits... our classes have become more interactive."
			Michelle: "The students become more interested because their lessons have been simplified... I can provide them with more activities..."
Effects on Student Interactions & Engagement	- Improved Engagement -Time Constraints	- "not as congested" -""unpacked competencies" - "focus on southeast Asia" - "more interactive"	Mark: "...the class has become more interactive, the students are more attentive, and they adjusted easily..."
			Dave: "...time is limited, especially when I give HOTS (Higher-Order Thinking Skills) questions. They cannot be rushed..."

Emerging Theme 1: Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty

This theme highlights the contrasting experiences of Social Studies teachers during the transition. Some participants described the process as challenging due to new topics, while others found it easier because of the more focused content. The two clustered themes under this are challenging shift and easier/more focused.

Participants shared their experiences:

Original: "Mailalarawan ko ang pagbabagong ito bilang isang malaking hamon dahil marami ang mga bagong paksa na hindi ko masyadong naituro noon sa K-12

Kurikulum." Kenneth

Translation: "I can describe this change as a major challenge because there are many new topics that I did not teach extensively under the K–12 Curriculum before." Kenneth

Original: "Ang aking karanasan sa paglipat… ay napaka-challenging." Dave

Translation: "My experience transitioning... has been very challenging." Dave

Original: "Ang karanasan ko… , mas naging madali ang pagtuturo ko sa mga bata…". Michelle

Translation: "My experience... has made teaching the children much easier." Michelle

Original: "My experience… is hindi naman sya ganoon kahirap kasi para sa akin ang pagtuturo ng Araling

Panlipunan is naging mas madali...". Mark

Translation: "My experience... was not that difficult because, for me, teaching Araling Panlipunan has become easier." Mark

Approximately 6 out of 7 participants noted that the transition was either challenging or easier, depending on their level of preparation.

Emerging Theme 2: Adjustments in Teaching Preparations & Time

Teachers reported adjusting their teaching practices to meet the requirements of the MATATAG curriculum. A major challenge was the limited 45minute time allotment, which often restricted opportunities to incorporate HigherOrder Thinking Skills (HOTS). On the other hand, the availability of pre-prepared exemplars and streamlined topics eased their lesson planning.

Participants shared their thoughts:

Original: "...we need to prepare our lesson within the time allotment... strategies on how to plan the topic." Mon

 Original: "…ang 45 minutes para sa pagsasanay ng hots questioning… upang mabuo ang concept ng topic." Dave

Translation: "The 45 minutes is insufficient for practicing HOTS... to fully develop the concept." Dave

Original: "…hindi po ako masyadong nahihirapan kasi ready na po yung mga exemplar, makukuha ko na rin po yung ibang mga PowerPoint…" Michelle

Translation: "...I don't find it too difficult because exemplars are already prepared... can also access other PowerPoint presentations." Michelle

Original: "…is mas madali siyang iprepare kasi nasa specific kalang na topic ...". Mark

Translation: "...it has become easier to prepare... you focus only on a specific topic." Mark

Approximately 5–6 out of 7 participants mentioned these adjustments in their teaching strategies while navigating the curriculum shift they face in their day to-day encounter with the students and the like.

Emerging Theme 3: Comparison to K–12 and Gains

This theme reflects the advantages teachers observed in the MATATAG curriculum compared to K–12. Participants appreciated the unpacked competencies and less congested content, as well as the emphasis on Southeast Asia and the inclusion of interactive activities.

Teachers noted the following:

"This new MATATAG curriculum is an answer to... congested curriculum... also focuses on different skills to develop 21st-century learners." Mon

Original: "…, malayo po talaga yung pagkakaiba nila .... Ngayon po, naka-focus lamang ang MATATAG curriculum sa iisang sub-region ng Asya, yung Timog Silangang Asya lamang po …, natututukan ang pagiging makabayan ng mga tao, ..." Michelle

Translation: "...the difference is significant... Now, the MATATAG Curriculum focuses only on a specific subregion of Asia—Southeast Asia... places greater emphasis on fostering patriotism." Michelle

Original: "… in terms of learning competencies na unpack na sya ... Sa paglipat ng curriculum, maraming positibong benepisyo… nagiging interactive ang klase naming…" Mark

Translation: "...the learning competencies have been unpacked... The transition... has brought many positive benefits... our classes have become more interactive." Mark

Approximately 4–5 out of 7 participants highlighted these curriculum benefits.

Emerging Theme 4: Effects on Student Interactions & Engagement

The transition to the MATATAG curriculum led to changes in student engagement and classroom interaction. Simplified lessons increased student interest and participation in class activities, but time constraints posed a challenge to conducting deeper discussions and implementing HOTS effectively.

Teachers expressed the following:

Original: "…mas nagiging interesado sila kasi mas napadali po yung lesson nila… mas marami yung activity na maibibigay ko sa kanila…" Michelle Translation: "The students become more interested because their lessons have been simplified... I can provide them with more activities." Michelle

Original: "…ang klase ay nagiging interactive, nagiging attentive yung bata at madali silang naka-adjust…" Mark

Translation: "...the class has become more interactive, the students are more attentive, and they adjusted easily." Mark

Original: "…dahil kulang ang oras lalong lalo na 'pag nagbigay ako ng hots question, hindi naman sila pwedeng madaliing sumagot." Dave

Translation: "...time is limited, especially when I give HOTS (Higher-Order Thinking Skills) questions. They cannot be rushed." Dave

Approximately 3–4 out of 7 participants observed these changes in student engagement.

Emerging Themes on the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Transition to the MATATAG Curriculum

Five (5) emerging themes were articulated through careful data analysis and interpretation, which were synthesized from various initial and clustered themes. The five emerging themes were the following: Major Challenges with Implementation, Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines, Impact on

Workload & Access to Materials, Support & Collaboration, and Observations of Others' Challenges. These themes characterized the lived experiences of teachers who underwent a transition from the K+12 Curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum, which is now being implemented by the Department of Education nationwide.

Table 2. *Challenges Encountered by Social Studies Teachers in the Transition to the MATATAG Curriculum*

Emerging Theme	Clustered Themes	Codes	Significant Statements
Major Challenges with Implementation	- Time Management - Content Scope - Learning Resources - Material Preparation	"time adjustment" - "new scope"	Mon: "The challenges that I faced in terms of the MATATAG curriculum are the time adjustment... the preparation of the lessons..."
Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines	Hard-to-Find Topics - Aligning exemplars within 45 mins - Some find it straightforward	"insufficient materials"	Mark: "For me, it's not difficult... the MATATAG Curriculum guidelines are better than those of the K–12 Curriculum..." Kenneth: "The significant challenge is the change of the content in Social Studies 7... all focused on Southeast Asia only." Dave: "...looking for learning resources that coincided with the provided lesson exemplar." Michelle: "...materials were insufficient, so I had to find ways to source them..."

Impact on Workload & Access to Materials	-Increased Workload -Collaboration -Use of Technology	-"time allotment" - "not difficult for me	Mark: "In the MATATAG Curriculum, the number of subjects you teach per day increases... every classroom is equipped with smart TVs... we have adopted a paper system..."
			Dave: "The workload has increased... requiring more time to find additional resources... need for more paper and a printer..." "time adjustment" - "new scope" Dave: "One of the challenging experiences... finishing a concept within the allotted time for the subject every day."
Support & Collaboration	**-** Trainings from DepEd Peer Sharing	- "seminars" - "collaboration" - "not enough support"	Mon: "I attended different seminars in line with this MATATAG Curriculum... but... we do not have enough resources..."
			Kenneth: "The support received includes training from DepEd, guidance from other teachers... I believe this support is not yet sufficient since the MATATAG Curriculum has only recently been implemented."
			Michelle: "...the teachers work together to create materials for the students, and the administration also provides resources... but for me, the support seems insufficient..."

Emerging Theme 1: Major Challenges with Implementation

Teachers encountered significant challenges during the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum. These challenges were primarily related to time management, content scope, learning resources, and material preparation. The adjustment to new time allotments, the need to source materials, and the narrowed content scope posed substantial difficulties.

Participants shared the following:

"The challenges that I faced in terms of the MATATAG curriculum are the time adjustment... the preparation of the lessons..." Mon

Original: "Ang pinakamalaking hamon ay ang pagbabago ng mga paksa sa Araling Panlipunan 7. … lahat ng mga paksa ay iniangkop sa Timog-Silangang

Asya lamang." Kenneth

Translation: "The significant challenge is the change of the content in Social Studies 7... all focused on

Southeast Asia only." Kenneth

Original: "…ay ang paghahanap ng learning resources na naaangkop sa ibigay na exemplar." Dave

Translation: "...looking for learning resources that coincided with the provided lesson exemplar." Dave

Original: "…kulang ang kagamitan kailangan mo talaga, maghahanap ka talaga ng paraan kung paano mo mahanapan ng kagamitan…" Michelle

Translation: "...materials were insufficient, so I had to find ways to source them..." Michelle

Approximately 5–6 out of 7 participants identified challenges related to implementing the MATATAG curriculum.

Emerging Theme 2: Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines

Some teachers experienced difficulty in understanding or implementing the guidelines of the MATATAG curriculum. Challenges included hard-to-find topics, aligning exemplars within the 45-minute time allotment, and varying perceptions of the ease of use of the guidelines.

Participants elaborated:

Original: "Medyo mahirap ang pagkuha ng mga impormasyon, lalo na't hindi ito madaling makita sa mga karaniwang pagkukunan."

Kenneth

Translation: "I find it difficult to find information; topics are not easily found in the commonly used learning resources..." Kenneth

Original: "Ang isa sa mga challenging na naranasan ko …ang kung paano matapos ang isang konsepto ng aralin sa ibinigay na oras ng asignatura bawat araw." Dave

Translation: "One of the challenging experiences... finishing a concept within the allotted time for the subject every day." Dave

Original: "Para sa akin, hindi naman sya mahirap,… the MATATAG Curriculum guidelines are better than those of the K–12 Curriculum…" Mark

Translation: "For me, it's not difficult... the MATATAG

Curriculum guidelines are better than those of the K–

12 Curriculum..." Mark

Approximately 4 out of 7 participants expressed difficulty with or ease of understanding the guidelines.

Emerging Theme 3: Impact on Workload & Access to Materials

The transition to the MATATAG curriculum significantly increased the workload for teachers. They faced difficulties due to the need for additional resources, collaboration, and adapting to the use of technology. The limited availability of printers and paper added to the workload challenges.

Participants shared these experiences:

Original: "…gagawa po talaga ng bagong DLL, bagong quarterly exam… So, talagang napadami yung trabaho naming…" Michelle

Translation: "We have to create new DLLs, quarterly exams... This has greatly increased our workload..." Michelle

Original: "Sa MATATAG curriculum, yun lang dumadami o nagkakaroon ng dami yung subject na tinuturo mo per day… every classroom is equipped with smart TVs… nag adopt kami ng paper system…" Mark

Translation: "In the MATATAG Curriculum, the number of subjects you teach per day increases... every classroom is equipped with smart TVs... we have adopted a paper system..." Mark

Original: "Mas nadagdagan ang work load, mas marami ang time na kailangan ko sa paghahanap ng iba pang mga resources para gamitin upang iangkop sa exemplar, maraming papel at may printer…" Dave

Translation: "The workload has increased, requiring more time to find additional resources... need for more paper and a printer..." Dave

Approximately 5 out of 7 participants noted an increased workload and challenges in accessing resources while in the context of this curriculum shift in the Department of Education.

Emerging Theme 4: Support & Collaboration

Teachers acknowledged receiving support through DepEd training sessions and peer collaboration. However, they felt the support was insufficient to address the immediate challenges of transitioning to the new curriculum.

Participants noted the following:

"I attended different seminars in line with this MATATAG Curriculum... but... we do not have enough resources..." Mon

Original: "Ang natanggap na suporta ay sa pamamagitan ng mga pagsasanay mula sa DepEd, gabay mula sa ibang mga guro… Sa tingin ko, hindi pa ito sapat dahil kasisimula pa lamang ng MATATAG

Kurikulum." Kenneth

Translation: "The support received includes training from DepEd, guidance from other teachers... I believe this support is not yet sufficient since the MATATAG Curriculum has only recently been implemented."

Kenneth

Original: "…yung mga guro nagtutulong-tulungan kami sa trabaho sa paggawa ng mga materials para sa mga bata… Para sa akin, parang hindi sapat yung suporta." Michelle

Translation: "...the teachers work together to create materials for the students, and the administration also provides resources... but for me, the support seems insufficient..." Michelle

Approximately 5 out of 7 participants highlighted the need for more comprehensive support and resources.

Emerging Theme 5: Observations of Others' Challenges

Teachers also observed challenges faced by their colleagues, particularly in relation to time management and the difficulties experienced by older teachers in adapting to technology.

Participants observed:

"I believe the challenges I observed in other teachers is on how to use the 45 minutes... transitions from one classroom to another, which is time-consuming..." Mon

Original: "Yes… lalong lalo na po sa gurong may mga edad na po nahihirapan po silang humanap ng mga instructional materials… sa YouTube, pagkuha ng

PPT." Michelle

Translation: "Yes... especially for older teachers who struggle to find instructional materials... using YouTube or PPTs." Michelle

Approximately 4–5 out of 7 participants shared their observations of challenges faced by other teachers.

Emerging Themes on Teachers' Adaptation Strategies During the Curriculum Shift

Four (4) emerging themes were articulated through careful data analysis and interpretation, synthesized from various clustered themes and significant statements. The four emerging themes were the following: Coping Strategies & Adjustments, Stress Management & Support, Future Implications & Growth, and Specific Resources & Challenges. These themes characterized the lived experiences of teachers who underwent transition from K+12 Curriculum to the MATATAG Curriculum being implemented now by the Department of Education nationwide.

Table 3. *Social Studies Teachers' Adaptation Strategies During the Curriculum Shift*

Emerging Theme	*Clustered Themes*	*Codes*	*Significant Statements*
Coping Strategies & Adjustments	**-** Use of External Tools -Time Management -Student-Centered Methods	-"online resources" -"collaborate with peers" -"inquiry approach"	**Mon:** "...the Quipper System...it helps teachers... Quipper provides PowerPoint presentations, lesson plans... students' guides..." **Dave:** "The personal strategy that I used is time management in order to finish tasks within the day and other work on the next day."
Stress Management & Support	-Positive Mindset -Peer Collaboration -Formal Training	- "always staying positive" - "seek colleagues' help" - "professional development"	**Michelle**: "...employing various teaching methods, especially student-centered strategies... sometimes use the inquiry approach..." **Mark**: "...I need to learn how to maximize the 45 minutes..." **Kenneth**: "By being a flexible teacher and embracing the changes brought about by the MATATAG Curriculum." **Dave**: "Always staying positive and embracing change as part of growth."
Future Implications & Growth	-Becoming Stronger/Resilient -Refined Methods	- "strong teacher" -"more resilient" -"tasks easier in future"	**Michelle**: "Yes, I seek programs for development, training, and support from my fellow teachers..." **Mark**: "...we had a seminar about the MATATAG Curriculum... This was one of the training sessions or support systems we received." **Mon**: "I believe this experience will shape me to become a strong teacher... understanding the value of time..." **Dave**: "This helps us become more resilient and expert as

			teachers in handling students..."
			Kenneth: "Because of these experiences... my tasks will be easier in the future..."
			Kate: "Moving forward, I am braver to take on new steps."
Specific Resources & Approaches	-Ready-Made Systems (Quipper, Exemplars) -Internet/Paper System	- "Quipper system" - "lesson exemplars" -"paper system"	**Mon**: "I believe... the use of the Quipper Learning System because everything is there... For example, the resources of the teachers, we provide lesson plans..."
			Michelle: "Yes, ma'am... the exemplar, which already contains all the activities you can use with the students unless you decide to modify it."
			Mark: "We already have a paper system where all the prepared lessons are stored... This paper system is aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum..."

Emerging Theme 1: Coping Strategies & Adjustments

Teachers employed various coping strategies and adjustments to navigate the challenges of transitioning to the MATATAG curriculum. These included the use of external tools, time management techniques, and the adoption of studentcentered methods to enhance classroom learning.

Participants shared their strategies as follows:

"...the Quipper System... it helps teachers... Quipper provides PowerPoint presentations, lesson plans...

students' guides..." Mon

Original: "Ang personal na estratehiya na aking ginamit ay ang time management upang matapos ang mga gawain sa araw at ibang trabaho naman kinabukasan." Dave

Translation: "The personal strategy that I used is time management in order to finish tasks within the day and other work on the next day." Dave

Original: "… sa pagtuturo gumagamit ako ng iba't ibang estratehiya lalong lalo na yung paggamit ng studentcentered na strategy… Maliban dito, minsan

gumagamit ako ng inquiry approach, ..." Michelle

Translation: "...employing various teaching methods, especially student-centered strategies... sometimes use the inquiry approach..." Michelle

Original: "…I have to learn kung paano gamitin ang 45 minutes…" Mark

Translation: "...I need to learn how to maximize the 45 minutes..." Mark

Approximately 5–6 out of 7 participants mentioned implementing strategies to address the demands of the curriculum shift.

Emerging Theme 2: Stress Management & Support

To manage the stress associated with the transition, teachers adopted a positive mindset, sought peer collaboration, and engaged in formal training programs to equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Participants expressed their approaches as follows:

Original: "Sa pamamagitan ng pagiging flexible na guro at pagtanggap sa mga pagbabago bunga ng

MATATAG Kurikulum" Kenneth

Translation: "By being a flexible teacher and embracing the changes brought about by the MATATAG

Curriculum." Kenneth

Original: "Always thinking positive. Tanggapin ang pagbabago bilang bahagi ng pag-unlad" Dave

Translation: "Always staying positive and embracing change as part of growth." Dave

Original: "Oo, naghahanap ako ng programa para sa pag-unlad, pagsasanay, at suporta mula sa aking kapwa guro…" Michelle

Translation: "Yes, I seek programs for development, training, and support from my fellow teachers..." Michelle

Original: "…kami ay nagkaroon ng seminar about MATATAG curriculum… isa yun sa mga trainings or support na nakuha namin." Mark

Translation: "...we had a seminar about the MATATAG Curriculum... This was one of the training sessions or support systems we received." Mark

Approximately 5 out of 7 participants highlighted the importance of stress management and external support in adapting to the new curriculum.

Emerging Theme 3: Future Implications & Growth

Teachers recognized the long-term benefits of adapting to the MATATAG curriculum. They believed that these experiences would make them stronger and more resilient, lead to refined teaching methods, and ultimately make their tasks easier in the future.

Participants reflected on their growth:

"I believe this experience will shape me to become a

strong teacher... understanding the value of time..." Mon

Original: "Ito ay nakakatulong upang mas maging MATATAG at expert kaming mga guro sa pag handle ng mga bata." Dave

 Translation: "This helps us become more resilient and expert as teachers in handling students..." Dave Original: "Dahil sa mga karanasang ito… mas mapapadali ang aking gawain sa hinaharap…" Kenneth

Translation: "Because of these experiences... my tasks will be easier in the future..." Kenneth

"Moving forward, I am braver to take on new steps." Kate

Approximately 4–5 out of 7 participants expressed optimism about their professional growth and resilience.

Emerging Theme 4: Specific Resources & Approaches

Teachers utilized specific resources and approaches to adapt to the new curriculum, including ready-made systems such as Quipper and exemplars, as well as digital and paper-based systems for organizing and delivering lessons.

Participants described their reliance on these resources:

"I believe... the use of the Quipper Learning System because everything is there... For example, the resources of the teachers, we provide lesson plans..." Mon

Original: "Opo ma'am… tulad po ng exemplar, andun na po lahat ng ng activities at pwede mong gawin sa mga bata maliban na lang kung ibahin ko po ito." Michelle

Translation: "Yes, ma'am... the exemplar, which already contains all the activities you can use with the students unless you decide to modify it." Michelle

Original: "meron na kaming paper system kung saan nandun na lahat… ang paper system is in lined din sa

MATATAG curriculum..." Mark

Translation: "We already have a paper system where all the prepared lessons are stored... This paper system is aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum..." Mark

Approximately 3–4 out of 7 participants mentioned their reliance on these specific systems and resources.

Emerging Themes on the Lived Experiences of Teachers in the Transition to the MATATAG Curriculum

The transition to the MATATAG Curriculum brought significant changes in instructional delivery, learning content, and classroom engagement. Through a careful analysis of the teachers' lived experiences, four major themes emerged:

(1) Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty, (2) Adjustments in Teaching Preparations & Time, (3) Comparison to K–12 and Gains, and (4) Effects on Student Interactions & Engagement. These themes illustrate the varying challenges and benefits that educators encountered, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness and areas for improvement in the new curriculum framework.

Emerging Theme 1: Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty

Teachers had diverse experiences in adapting to the MATATAG Curriculum, with some finding the transition challenging, while others viewed it as a simplification of their teaching process. The level of difficulty largely depended on content familiarity and instructional adjustments.

For many, the curriculum introduced new topics that were previously not extensively covered under the K–12 program, making lesson planning and content delivery more demanding. The need to teach additional subject matter without prior experience resulted in increased preparation time and uncertainty in instructional approaches. This aligns with studies by Bala (2017) and Combalicer (2016), which emphasize that curriculum shifts often require extensive teacher retraining to ensure content mastery and effective pedagogy.

Conversely, some teachers found the transition less challenging, as the more focused content and streamlined topics made lessons easier to teach. The unpacking of competencies allowed them to concentrate on specific learning objectives, minimizing the overwhelming nature of broad curriculum coverage. These findings are supported by Dizon et al. (2019), who highlighted the need for structured and well-defined curricular content to ensure teaching efficiency.

Teachers' contrasting experiences—where some found the transition challenging, and others perceived it as easier—underscore the dynamic nature of experiential learning as proposed by Dewey's Pragmatism, as cited by Singh (2007). Their firsthand, practical encounters with new topics and instructional adjustments illustrate that knowledge and teaching methods evolve through active engagement. Additionally, differences in perceived ease or difficulty reflect Thorndike's Law of Readiness, as cited by Irwan (2016) and Ni & Lu (2020); teachers who were more prepared (both cognitively and emotionally) appeared to navigate the transition with greater ease. For instance, those with prior experience or targeted training were better equipped to handle the curriculum changes, whereas others encountered more obstacles when their readiness was lower.

Emerging Theme 2: Adjustments in Teaching Preparations & Time

The MATATAG Curriculum required teachers to make significant modifications in their lesson planning and instructional strategies. One of the most notable challenges was the limited 45-minute class period, which often constrained teachers' ability to incorporate Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and facilitate in-depth discussions.

Educators had to develop new strategies to maximize the time allotment while ensuring that learning objectives were met. This included condensing explanations, using visual and digital aids, and implementing quick yet effective assessment techniques. Research by Albert et al. (2023) highlights similar concerns, emphasizing that curriculum changes should be accompanied by adequate instructional support to help teachers navigate time constraints effectively.

Despite these challenges, the availability of pre-prepared exemplars and structured lesson guides significantly eased the transition. These resources provided teachers with ready-to-use instructional materials, reducing their workload in lesson preparation. The integration of PowerPoint presentations and digital materials further supported the efficiency of lesson delivery. The study by Kilag et al. (2024) supports this observation, emphasizing that well-developed curriculum materials contribute to teacher adaptability and effective knowledge dissemination.

However, while the preparation process became more structured, the restricted time for in-depth discussions and HOTS remains a concern. This highlights the need for further curriculum refinements, particularly in ensuring that learning objectives align with realistic instructional timeframes.

The modifications in lesson planning—driven by the constraints of a limited 45-minute period—align with Dewey's emphasis on learning by doing, as cited by Singh (2007). Teachers experimented with various instructional strategies, continually reflecting on what worked best, thereby embodying experiential learning. Moreover, the positive influence of pre-prepared exemplars and digital aids is consistent with Skinner's Operant Conditioning, as cited by Staddon & Cerruti (2003). These external reinforcements (i.e., ready-made materials) have encouraged teachers to adopt new planning techniques, while those without sufficient support struggled to adjust effectively. The concept of readiness, as outlined by Thorndike (as cited by Irwan, 2016 and Ni & Lu, 2020), is evident here; educators who had been better prepared prior to the curriculum shift managed the time constraints more effectively.

Emerging Theme 3: Comparison to K–12 and Gains

The MATATAG Curriculum introduced several improvements compared to the K–12 framework, particularly in reducing content congestion and refining learning competencies. Teachers observed that the previous curriculum often resulted in overloaded lesson plans, making it difficult to cover topics thoroughly. The new framework addressed this issue by unpacking competencies and focusing on essential concepts, allowing for more structured and meaningful learning experiences.

Additionally, the MATATAG Curriculum introduced a stronger regional and national emphasis, particularly in Social Studies, where topics were narrowed down to Southeast Asian studies. This allowed for a more in-depth exploration of regional history and culture, fostering a stronger sense of patriotism among students. These findings are consistent with Estrellado (2023), who emphasized that curriculum adjustments should prioritize content relevance and contextualized learning experiences.

Another notable improvement was the integration of interactive activities, which shifted lessons from rote memorization to active participation. Teachers noted that the curriculum's emphasis on 21st-century skills—such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and

collaboration—created a more dynamic classroom environment. Research by Olipas (2024) supports this, emphasizing that studentcentered curricula lead to higher engagement levels and improved learning outcomes.

Despite these advantages, concerns remain regarding the extent to which these changes address deeper educational challenges. Studies by Aguas (2023) and Cruz (2019) argue that while reducing curriculum congestion is beneficial, the success of educational reforms ultimately depends on implementation quality and teacher support systems. These findings suggest that while the MATATAG Curriculum has introduced meaningful changes, ongoing assessment, and refinements are necessary to ensure sustained effectiveness.

The observed benefits—such as the unpacking of competencies, reduced content congestion, and a regional focus—demonstrate how the MATATAG curriculum facilitates more focused and meaningful teaching experiences. Dewey's Pragmatism, as cited by Singh (2007), is reflected in this shift, as the experiential component of teaching is enhanced by a clearer, more manageable curriculum. Simultaneously, these gains connect with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as cited by Trivedi & Mehta (2019): when teachers' professional needs (e.g., clear guidance, adequate resources, and recognition of their efforts) are met, they are more motivated to embrace the changes. This improved motivation and focus suggest that teachers, having satisfied their basic and esteem needs, can better pursue self-actualization in their instructional practice.

Emerging Theme 4: Effects on Student Interactions & Engagement

Teachers observed a positive shift in student engagement and classroom interactions following the transition to the MATATAG Curriculum. The simplification of lessons and more structured topics helped students grasp concepts more easily, increasing their interest and active participation in class.

The interactive nature of the curriculum also contributed to a more engaging learning environment, with students responding well to group discussions, handson activities, and contextualized learning experiences. These observations align with Pantao (2021), who emphasized that curriculum coherence plays a crucial role in improving student motivation and academic performance.

However, a major limitation that teachers encountered was the difficulty of incorporating HOTS within the limited time frame. While students showed greater enthusiasm for learning, the constrained class schedule often left little room for extended discussions and critical thinking exercises. Similar concerns were raised by Tan et al. (2018), who argued that time limitations may restrict the depth of student learning, particularly in complex subject areas.

Despite this experience, the findings suggest that the MATATAG Curriculum's focus on interactive learning has enhanced classroom engagement. However, further refinements—such as strategic time allocation and curriculum pacing adjustments—may be necessary to fully optimize student participation and cognitive development.

The positive changes in student engagement and classroom interactions further support Skinner's Operant Conditioning, as cited by Staddon & Cerruti (2003). The new curriculum's structure—with its emphasis on interactive activities and a more focused content delivery—provides immediate positive reinforcements (e.g., increased student participation and interest) that encourage teachers to maintain and refine these strategies. Additionally, as teachers' own professional needs are increasingly met (in line with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as cited by Trivedi & Mehta, 2019), they are better able to foster environments that stimulate higher-order thinking and active learning among students.

Emerging Themes on the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Transition to the MATATAG Curriculum

The transition to the MATATAG Curriculum introduced various challenges that significantly impacted teachers' instructional practices, workload, and resource accessibility. Through a comprehensive analysis of their experiences, five major themes emerged: (1) Major Challenges with Implementation, (2) Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines, (3) Impact on Workload & Access to Materials, (4) Support & Collaboration, and (5) Observations of Others' Challenges. These themes highlight the systemic difficulties teachers faced and provide insights into the immediate and long-term implications of the curriculum shift.

Emerging Theme 1: Major Challenges with Implementation

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum posed significant challenges, particularly in terms of time management, content scope, learning resources, and material preparation. Teachers had to adjust to new time allotments, which often constrained their ability to effectively cover learning objectives within the prescribed period. The shift in content scope, such as the refocusing of Social Studies to Southeast Asia, required them to source new learning materials, many of which were either difficult to find or not readily available. Additionally, the need to prepare additional teaching resources further complicated the transition.

These findings are consistent with Ednave et al. (2018), who identified similar issues during the K-12 transition, particularly in terms of teacher preparedness and resource limitations. Sergio (2012) also noted that curriculum shifts often bring substantial logistical challenges, requiring extensive redesigning of lesson content, professional training, and infrastructure development. Furthermore, Combalicer (2016) highlighted that teachers often struggle with insufficient learning materials, forcing them to source, adapt, or create their own resources, adding to their workload.

The challenges in implementation emphasize the need for structured support systems, particularly in terms of providing well-curated

learning materials and adjusting time allocations to ensure that teachers can effectively deliver content without compromising depth or quality.

Teachers reported significant hurdles with time management, content scope, and resource acquisition. These challenges are illuminated by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as cited by Trivedi & Mehta (2019): when basic needs (such as adequate teaching materials and sufficient time) are not met, teachers' ability to progress to higher levels of professional performance is impeded. Furthermore, Skinner's Operant Conditioning, as cited by Staddon & Cerruti (2003), suggests that the lack of positive reinforcements (for example, timely and clear support) can discourage adaptive behaviors, thereby exacerbating the difficulties in implementing the new curriculum.

Emerging Theme 2: Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines

Some teachers experienced difficulty in understanding or applying the guidelines of the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly in terms of locating relevant topics, aligning lesson exemplars within the 45-minute class period, and adapting to new instructional approaches. While some found the curriculum easier to navigate compared to the previous K-12 system, others struggled to adjust to its structural changes.

One key issue was the availability of instructional references. Many teachers found that topics were not easily accessible in commonly used learning resources, making it difficult to align content with lesson exemplars. This aligns with findings by Li (2011) and Sun (2009), which suggest that teachers' receptivity to curriculum changes is strongly influenced by the accessibility of teaching resources. Additionally, studies on curriculum reform in China (McCormick & Ayres, 2009) highlight that low self-efficacy and inconsistent implementation guidelines often result in increased stress and uncertainty among educators.

Some teachers found it hard to align the new guidelines within the restricted class period. This struggle reflects Thorndike's Law of Readiness, as cited by Irwan (2016) and Ni & Lu (2020), where a gap in preparedness—whether due to insufficient training or unclear instructional resources—can hinder the learning process. Additionally, the absence of immediate positive feedback or reinforcement, as explained by Skinner's theory (as cited by Staddon & Cerruti, 2003), further complicates the successful implementation of the curriculum guidelines.

These findings suggest that the clarity and accessibility of curriculum guidelines play a crucial role in ensuring successful implementation. To support teachers, DepEd should provide additional instructional guides, localized lesson plans, and teacher-friendly references that allow educators to navigate new content with confidence.

Emerging Theme 3: Impact on Workload & Access to Materials

The transition to the MATATAG Curriculum resulted in a substantial increase in teachers' workload, particularly due to the need for revising lesson plans, preparing new instructional materials, and adapting to technology-assisted instruction. Teachers had to develop new Daily Lesson Logs (DLLs), create quarterly exams, and source additional materials, which demanded additional time and effort. Furthermore, limited access to essential resources, such as printers and paper, created further difficulties, especially in schools where technological support was minimal.

Similar concerns were raised in previous studies on curriculum transitions. Guo (2012) found that educational reforms often result in extended working hours, as teachers are forced to adjust their teaching strategies and administrative workload simultaneously. Likewise, Cocal and Marcellano (2017) identified that many public schools in the Philippines lacked adequate infrastructure and resources, making it challenging to implement curriculum changes effectively. The increased demand for technology-assisted instruction was also highlighted by McCormick & Ayres (2009), who noted that teachers with limited exposure to digital tools often struggle with curriculum shifts that require ICT integration.

The increased workload and limited access to essential resources highlight critical unmet needs. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as cited by Trivedi & Mehta (2019), when teachers' fundamental needs (such as access to adequate materials and support) are not fulfilled, their overall effectiveness and morale suffer. This shortage of resources also weakens the positive reinforcements that might otherwise encourage adaptive teaching behaviors, as posited by Skinner's Operant Conditioning (as cited by Staddon & Cerruti, 2003).

Given the increased workload and resource constraints, it is imperative for DepEd to allocate additional funding for technology integration, resource development, and administrative support. Schools should also explore collaborative teaching models, where teachers can share materials and lessen individual preparation burdens.

Emerging Theme 4: Support & Collaboration

Teachers acknowledged receiving training sessions and collaborative support from DepEd and fellow educators, but they found these efforts insufficient in fully addressing the challenges of the curriculum transition. While seminars and workshops helped provide foundational knowledge, teachers expressed a need for more intensive and ongoing support to navigate the practical aspects of implementation.

Collaborative efforts among teachers helped ease some of the burdens, as they worked together to develop instructional materials and

adapt to new pedagogical approaches. However, the lack of direct access to comprehensive learning materials and insufficient administrative support made it difficult for educators to fully maximize collaboration efforts.

These findings echo Perez (2023), who identified leadership and management issues as critical barriers to curriculum reform success. Similarly, Li (2009) highlighted that teacher support networks play a vital role in the effective execution of curriculum shifts, as educators who receive strong peer collaboration and administrative backing experience higher levels of confidence and success in implementation.

While teachers benefited from DepEd training sessions and peer collaboration, many felt that these supports were insufficient. This shortfall can be understood through Thorndike's Law of Readiness, as cited by Irwan (2016) and Ni & Lu (2020): without adequate preparation and support, even well-intentioned instructional changes become more challenging. In addition, Skinner's theory, as cited by Staddon & Cerruti (2003), emphasizes that regular and consistent reinforcement (such as ongoing professional development) is crucial for solidifying new teaching practices.

The results highlight the need for ongoing professional development and institutional support. DepEd should consider rolling out phased training programs that provide teachers with gradual, hands-on exposure to curriculum modifications, rather than relying solely on one-time workshops.

Emerging Theme 5: Observations of Others' Challenges

Teachers also observed that their colleagues, particularly older educators, faced additional struggles in adapting to the MATATAG Curriculum. The most common challenges included time management, transitioning between classrooms, and technological adaptation.

Many senior teachers found it difficult to navigate digital learning tools, such as PowerPoint presentations and YouTube resources, which were increasingly being integrated into instructional design. Additionally, the shortened time allotment for each subject created further difficulties in managing lesson pacing and classroom transitions.

This data aligns with findings by Gurobat and Lumbu-an (2022), who reported that older educators often struggle with technology integration due to limited exposure to ICT-based instruction. Similarly, Chao (2023) highlighted that socio-economic disparities in schools influence the accessibility of technological resources, further exacerbating the digital divide among educators.

It is clear that there is a strong need for targeted support programs for older teachers, particularly in digital literacy training and instructional time management. Schools should provide on-site assistance and mentoring initiatives, allowing educators to gradually integrate technology without feeling overwhelmed.

The findings illustrate that the transition to the MATATAG Curriculum introduced significant challenges in terms of implementation, guideline clarity, workload management, resource accessibility, institutional support, and teacher adaptation. While some positive adjustments were made through collaborative efforts, ongoing difficulties persist in ensuring that educators receive sufficient training, resources, and administrative support.

Observations regarding older teachers' struggles with technology and time management further illustrate the importance of readiness, where more problems stem from. Here, Thorndike's Law of Readiness, as cited by Irwan (2016) and Ni & Lu (2020) is particularly relevant here; educators who have not had prior exposure or training in digital tools are less prepared to adapt to the new environment. This gap not only increases the difficulty of the transition but also highlights the need for tailored support that addresses the varying levels of teacher preparedness.

These results align with previous research on curriculum transitions, reinforcing the importance of teacher preparation, professional development, and instructional resource allocation in ensuring the long-term success of curriculum reforms. Moving forward, policy adjustments, structured implementation plans, and sustained teacher support systems will be crucial in addressing the systemic issues that continue to challenge educators during curriculum shifts.

Emerging Themes on Teachers' Adaptation Strategies During the Curriculum Shift

The transition to the MATATAG Curriculum has required teachers to adopt various adaptation strategies to cope with new instructional demands, curriculum content, and pedagogical adjustments. Four emerging themes were identified through a systematic analysis of teachers' responses: (1) Coping Strategies & Adjustments, (2) Stress Management & Support, (3) Future Implications & Growth, and (4) Specific Resources & Approaches. These themes highlight how teachers have navigated the curriculum shift and provide insights into the effectiveness of their strategies in mitigating the challenges of implementation.

Emerging Theme 1: Coping Strategies & Adjustments

Teachers employed various coping strategies and adjustments to manage the challenges posed by the MATATAG Curriculum. These strategies included the use of external tools, such as Quipper and other digital platforms, to access teaching materials, PowerPoint presentations, and lesson exemplars. Additionally, time management techniques played a crucial role in ensuring that teachers could complete their daily tasks efficiently despite the shortened 45-minute class periods.

Beyond these logistical strategies, teachers also incorporated studentcentered instructional approaches, such as the inquiry-based method, to facilitate active learning and encourage student participation. This reflects findings by Guadalupe et al. (2023), who emphasized that teachers leverage community and external resources to enhance their curriculum adaptation strategies. Similarly, Lee and Yin (2011) categorized teachers into various groups based on their adaptability, highlighting that some educators actively seek new teaching methods to accommodate curriculum changes.

The varied coping strategies—ranging from the use of digital tools to refined time management techniques—are a practical demonstration of Dewey's Pragmatism, as cited by Singh (2007). Teachers learn and adapt through direct experience, continually modifying their methods in response to classroom demands. These self-initiated adjustments are reinforced by positive outcomes, in line with Skinner's Operant Conditioning, as cited by Staddon & Cerruti (2003), where the receipt of effective resources and immediate benefits motivates the continued use of these strategies.

These findings underscore the importance of teacher agency in curriculum adaptation. Schools and educational institutions should consider enhancing access to digital tools and professional development opportunities to equip teachers with more innovative and effective coping mechanisms.

Emerging Theme 2: Stress Management & Support

To manage the stress associated with the transition, teachers adopted a positive mindset, actively engaged in peer collaboration, and sought formal training programs to enhance their skills. Recognizing the inevitable changes in curriculum policies, many teachers embraced flexibility as a key strategy for reducing stress and increasing professional adaptability.

The role of training and institutional support was particularly crucial in helping teachers navigate new instructional frameworks. Teachers attended DepEd training sessions and participated in faculty collaboration efforts to refine their understanding of the MATATAG Curriculum's goals and implementation strategies. These findings are consistent with Bringula et al. (2019), who emphasized that professional development and certification programs serve as essential tools for teachers to build resilience and enhance instructional competence.

Furthermore, Evans (2000) noted that curriculum shifts often result in teacher demoralization when there is a lack of institutional support. However, when teachers are provided with adequate training and collaborative spaces, their ability to embrace educational reforms improves significantly.

Teachers' efforts to manage stress through a positive mindset, peer collaboration, and formal training exemplify the integration of external support systems. In this regard, Skinner's theory, as cited by Staddon & Cerruti (2003), is evident as positive reinforcements—such as supportive professional networks and training—help reduce stress and promote adaptive behaviors. Similarly, Thorndike's Law of Readiness, as cited by Irwan (2016) and Ni & Lu (2020), applies here: teachers who are mentally prepared for change are more likely to successfully implement stress management strategies.

This theme highlights the necessity for long-term professional development programs that go beyond initial training workshops. Schools and DepEd should ensure that ongoing mentorship and collaborative support systems are in place to help teachers continuously refine their instructional strategies in response to curriculum demands.

Emerging Theme 3: Future Implications & Growth

Despite the challenges encountered, teachers recognized that adapting to the MATATAG Curriculum would ultimately contribute to their professional growth. Many believed that the experience would improve their resilience, strengthen their teaching methods, and enhance their ability to manage instructional time effectively.

Teachers expressed optimism about their ability to navigate future curriculum changes, noting that overcoming current obstacles would make their teaching tasks easier in the long run. This aligns with Troman and Woods (2000), who described self-actualization as a coping mechanism wherein teachers reinvent themselves to align with new educational policies. Additionally, Lee et al. (2013) found that while teachers initially experience overwhelm and dissatisfaction during curriculum transitions, many later develop a sense of fulfillment as they become more adept at handling instructional changes.

These findings also resonate with Day (2002), who emphasized that curriculum changes can reshape teachers' professional identities, prompting them to reflect on their instructional strengths and areas for growth.

The optimism expressed by teachers regarding their future growth indicates that, over time, the satisfaction of higher-level needs (as described by Maslow) plays a significant role in fostering resilience and professional development. As teachers meet both their basic and higher-level needs, they are empowered to develop stronger instructional methods and become more adaptable—a progression that also mirrors the experiential learning cycle outlined in Dewey's Pragmatism.

This essential theme highlights the long-term benefits of resilience-building and professional adaptability. Schools should incorporate continuous skills development initiatives to help teachers transition smoothly into future curriculum reforms without experiencing excessive professional strain.

Emerging Theme 4: Specific Resources and Approaches

To effectively implement the MATATAG Curriculum, teachers relied on specific resources and instructional approaches that streamlined lesson planning and content delivery. Among the most commonly used tools were the Quipper Learning System, exemplars, and pre-prepared paper-based lesson systems. These resources helped reduce workload stress by providing ready-made instructional materials, which teachers could modify or adapt based on classroom needs.

The reliance on digital and structured lesson plans reflects findings from Bringula et al. (2018), who noted that educators strategically utilize available learning technologies to minimize the workload associated with curriculum adjustments. Similarly, Tagg (2012) highlighted that teachers are more likely to embrace reforms when they feel that adequate resources are available to support their instructional delivery.

However, despite the availability of these tools, some teachers expressed concerns about the accessibility of physical resources, such as printing materials and supplementary references. This finding aligns with Cocal and Marcellano (2017), who noted that infrastructure inadequacies often hinder the smooth implementation of new curricula in public schools.

Ensuring equitable access to digital and physical learning materials should be a priority for DepEd and school administrations. While online platforms like Quipper provide significant instructional support, there is also a need to improve access to printed and supplementary resources, particularly in public schools with limited technological infrastructure.

The reliance on specific digital platforms (such as the Quipper Learning System) and structured resources reinforces the notion that external reinforcements can significantly shape behavior. Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory helps explain why teachers continue to use these resources: the positive outcomes associated with these tools (e.g., reduced workload and more effective lesson planning) act as reinforcers. Additionally, the availability of such resources enhances teacher readiness—supporting Thorndike's assertion that preparedness is key to effective learning and adaptation.

The study highlights the various adaptation strategies employed by teachers in response to the MATATAG Curriculum shift. While educators faced significant challenges, they managed to develop coping mechanisms, including external resource utilization, time management strategies, stress management approaches, and peer collaboration. Additionally, teachers acknowledged the longterm benefits of adapting to the curriculum, recognizing its potential to strengthen their instructional resilience and professional growth.

These findings align with previous research on teacher adaptation to curriculum reforms, which underscores the importance of training, support systems, and access to teaching resources in ensuring successful implementation. Moving forward, educational policymakers should focus on enhancing professional development initiatives, providing comprehensive instructional resources, and fostering a supportive teaching environment to facilitate smoother curriculum transitions in the future.

Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of Grade 7 Social Studies teachers transitioning from the K–12 to the MATATAG curriculum in Banga, South Cotabato, Philippines. Utilizing a phenomenological research design, the study investigated teachers' perceptions, challenges, and strategies for adaptation during the curriculum shift. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with seven teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover deeper insights into their experiences.

The findings revealed several key themes concerning the teachers' experiences: Mixed Ease vs. Difficulty, Adjustments in Teaching Preparations and Time, Comparison to K–12 and Gains, and Effects on Student Interactions and Engagement. Teachers expressed varied reactions to the transition, with some finding it challenging due to unfamiliar topics and restricted class time, while others appreciated the curriculum's more focused content and clearer competency structure. The transition brought about both struggles and perceived benefits, particularly in enhancing student engagement through more localized content.

The challenges teachers faced were categorized into five themes: Major Challenges with Implementation, Difficulty Understanding or Implementing Guidelines, Impact on Workload and Access to Materials, Support and Collaboration, and Observations of Others' Challenges. Primary difficulties included time constraints, limited availability of learning materials, ambiguous implementation guidelines, increased workload, and inconsistent institutional support.

To overcome these hurdles, teachers employed various adaptation strategies, which were grouped into the following themes: Coping Strategies and Adjustments, Stress Management and Support, Future Implications and Growth, and Specific Resources and Approaches. These strategies included the use of digital tools, enhanced time management, peer collaboration, stress-reduction practices, and reliance on prepared exemplars and other instructional resources to ease the burden of planning and teaching under the new curriculum.

Based on the emergent themes and participants' insights, several conclusions were drawn. The transition to the MATATAG curriculum elicited mixed reactions from Social Studies teachers. While some teachers welcomed the simplified and more regionally focused content, others encountered significant challenges, particularly due to time limitations and unfamiliar material. The mandated 45-minute class period emerged as a major concern, restricting opportunities for deeper discussions and the effective application of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Although the curriculum introduced unpacked competencies that fostered student engagement, gaps in

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resource provision and vague implementation guidelines presented barriers to smooth execution.

Teachers experienced increased workloads, especially in preparing new lesson plans, searching for supplementary resources, and adapting to digital teaching tools. Older educators, in particular, struggled with the technological demands of the new curriculum. Despite receiving support through DepEd training programs and peer collaboration, many teachers emphasized the need for more detailed guidance, equitable resource distribution, and targeted professional development. To cope, teachers developed various strategies such as digital resource utilization, collaborative planning, and stress management. While these helped mitigate challenges, the study underscored the need for sustained institutional support and ongoing capacity building.

Based on the conclusions, several recommendations are offered. First, the Department of Education (DepEd) should provide more comprehensive and clear guidelines to ensure consistent MATATAG curriculum implementation. It must also develop and distribute high-quality instructional resources, including textbooks, digital materials, and lesson exemplars, to reduce the burden on teachers. Furthermore, targeted training, especially for older teachers, should be implemented, and the feasibility of extending the 45-minute period for Social Studies should be reassessed to allow for deeper engagement and the use of HOTS.

Second, school administrators should enhance institutional support by offering additional teaching resources, improved access to technology, and printing facilities. Professional development should be continuous and integrated into regular INSET programs through mentoring, peer coaching, and collaborative planning. Monitoring implementation challenges and communicating them to higher authorities should also be prioritized.

Third, teachers should continue maximizing digital tools and online resources while participating in professional learning communities to exchange effective strategies. Further training in instructional technology and time management would improve efficiency in the classroom. Teachers are also encouraged to actively provide feedback to school leaders and policymakers to advocate for meaningful reforms.

Lastly, future research should expand the scope of this study to include other subject areas and institutions. Including perspectives from students and parents through focus group discussions could validate and enrich the findings. Longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term effects of the MATATAG curriculum on student outcomes and teacher performance. Mixed-method approaches may also be employed to evaluate the effectiveness of specific adaptation strategies, ultimately contributing to best practices for broader curriculum implementation.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Janette M. Demalata
Rang-ay Integrated School s
Department of Education – Philippines

Nancy B. Espacio
Sultan Kudarat State University – Philippines