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# MATATAG and K-12 Curriculum: A Comparative Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions in Selected Schools in Patikul East District

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**Abstract**

The Philippine educational system has undergone significant reform through the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum (enacted via Republic Act 10533 in 2013) and its successor, the MATATAG Curriculum launched by the Department of Education in 2023. While national policy promotes these reforms, their ground-level effectiveness—especially in underserved contexts such as Bangsamoro autonomous communities—remains underexamined. This study comparatively analyzed teachers' perceptions of both curricula across three dimensions: learning, teaching techniques and strategies, and teaching method and guidance. Using a quantitative, descriptive-comparative research design, 48 permanent elementary teachers from three schools in Patikul East District, Sulu, were purposively selected to complete a validated 27-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were employed. Results showed that teachers rated both curricula as Moderately Effective across all dimensions (K-12: M = 3.16–3.21; MATATAG: M = 2.88–2.99). No significant differences in perceptions were found when teachers were grouped by gender, educational attainment, age, or length of service ($p > .05$ for all). Pearson correlation analysis revealed very high, statistically significant positive correlations between K-12 and MATATAG perceptions across all dimensions ($r = .829$ to $.971$, $p < .05$). These findings suggest that teachers consistently perceive both curricula as moderately effective, irrespective of demographic profile, and that their evaluative frameworks transfer meaningfully from one curriculum to the other. Implications for curriculum policy, teacher professional development, and school administration in BARMM contexts are discussed.

**Keywords:** K-12 curriculum, MATATAG curriculum, teacher perceptions, curriculum comparison, Philippine basic education, Bangsamoro, Patikul East District

## 1. Introduction

The Philippines has long grappled with persistent challenges in basic education quality. Prior to 2013, the country operated under a 10-year basic education cycle—one of the last in Asia—resulting in graduates who were insufficiently prepared for global higher education and employment standards (Cabansag, 2014). To address this, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10533) mandated the transition to a 12-year K-12 system, adding Kindergarten, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School. The K-12 curriculum was anchored on three broad goals: mastery of core academic

subjects, development of 21st-century competencies, and preparation for tertiary education, employment, and entrepreneurship (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012).

Despite these ambitions, the K-12 curriculum encountered substantial implementation barriers, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient classroom supply, and a shortage of trained teachers (Acosta & Acosta, 2017). Performance outcomes on international assessments have remained discouraging: in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Philippines ranked 78th out of 79 participating countries in reading and 77th in mathematics; in the 2019 SEA-PLM, it placed last among seven participating nations in both subjects (OECD, 2019; Mullis et al., 2020). These results prompted significant policy re-evaluation.

In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum in 2023, targeting Kindergarten to Grade 10. The MATATAG framework addresses two key structural problems identified through curriculum review: content congestion and misaligned prerequisite competencies. Decongesting the curriculum by approximately 70%, the MATATAG framework concentrates instructional weight on English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, and EPP/TLE, while restructuring Grade 1 from seven learning areas to five—introducing the Language, Reading and Literacy, and Makabansa learning areas (DepEd, 2023; Philippine News Agency, 2023).

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), curriculum implementation has faced distinct challenges. Government support for basic teaching requirements—including teacher training, instructional resources, and school infrastructure—has been inconsistent, affecting teaching-learning performance as measured by national and international assessments (Philippine News Agency, 2023; OECD, 2019). The Patikul East District in Sulu represents one such underserved context where both the K-12 and MATATAG curricula have been progressively implemented.

Evaluating curriculum effectiveness from the perspective of implementors—the teachers—is critical, because teacher perceptions directly influence instructional decisions, professional motivation, and the quality of classroom practice (Kilag et al., 2024). Yet comparative studies examining how teachers in BARMM contexts perceive both curricula across consistent dimensions remain sparse in the literature. This study addresses that gap.

### 1.1 Theoretical Grounding

This study is anchored on three complementary theories of educational change. The Power-Coercive Theory (Kennedy, 1996) holds that curriculum change is accomplished through authority, with government educational bodies imposing curriculum frameworks upon teachers who are expected to comply. This characterizes the top-down nature of both K-12 and MATATAG curriculum rollouts in the Philippines. The Rational-Empirical Theory (Nickols & Forbes, 2001) posits that teachers, as rational agents, will adopt curriculum innovations when these are demonstrated to be beneficial. Accordingly, DepEd positions the MATATAG curriculum as an evidence-based improvement over K-12, expecting teacher adoption to follow logically. The Normative Re-Educative Theory (Chin & Benne, 1969) complements both by asserting that lasting behavioral change—including attitude shifts toward curriculum innovation—requires deliberate re-education that acknowledges socio-cultural influences. Together, these three theories explain the dynamics of curriculum implementation: coercive imposition may generate compliance without internalization; rational demonstration may build informed adoption; and normative re-education may ultimately reshape teachers' professional values and practices.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

This study aimed to: (1) describe the demographic profile of teachers in Patikul East District; (2) assess te

achers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the K-12 and MATATAG curricula across three dimensions—learning, teaching techniques and strategies, and teaching method and guidance; (3) determine whether significant differences in perceptions exist when teachers are grouped by gender, educational attainment, age, and length of service; and (4) determine whether a significant correlation exists between teachers' perceptions of K-12 and MATATAG curricula.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 The K-12 Basic Education Curriculum

The K-12 curriculum represents the most sweeping reform in Philippine basic education in decades. Structured around a spiral progression approach, it revisits and deepens learning competencies at increasing levels of complexity across grade levels (Tirol, 2022). Learning areas span Languages, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Technology and Livelihood Education, and Arts, aiming to produce holistically developed and globally competitive graduates (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012; Ednave et al., 2018). Despite these design strengths, implementation outcomes have been uneven. Acosta and Acosta (2017) documented widespread resource shortfalls and inadequate teacher preparation. Standardized assessment results—particularly PISA and TIMSS—consistently indicate that Filipino learners perform below global averages (Mullis et al., 2020; World Bank, 2018).

### 2.2 The MATATAG Basic Education Curriculum

The MATATAG Curriculum was designed to correct structural weaknesses in K-12 by decongesting content, refocusing on foundational literacy and numeracy, and promoting deeper learning over breadth coverage (DepEd, 2023). At Grade 1, seven learning areas were reduced to five, with entirely new areas—Language, Reading and Literacy, and Makabansa—replacing or merging legacy subjects. The Language learning area foregrounds oral language development in the learner's first language (L1), acknowledging the Philippines' rich linguistic diversity of over 180 languages (DepEd, 2023). Reading and Literacy targets phonemic awareness, decoding skills, sight word recognition, and comprehension strategies, while Makabansa integrates civics, history, arts, and health using a transdisciplinary approach for Key Stage 1 (Grades 1–3).

Pedagogically, MATATAG retains the constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, and integrative approaches of K-12 (RA 10533; DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019), while introducing structural supports such as the 4Cs instructional framework (Context, Connection, Collaboration, Creativity) and the 4Es learning cycle (Engage, Explore, Experience, Empathize). Initial feedback from pilot implementation was positive, with teachers and students reported as receptive to the new framework (Philippine News Agency, 2023). Kilag et al. (2024) noted that effective MATATAG implementation requires overcoming infrastructural and attitudinal barriers that have persisted from the K-12 era.

### 2.3 Teacher Perceptions and Curriculum Effectiveness

Teachers are the primary agents of curriculum implementation. Their perceptions of a curriculum's effectiveness shape how it is enacted in classrooms, affecting student learning outcomes (Lacbao, 2024). Studies on curriculum adoption internationally suggest that teacher perceptions are influenced by training adequacy, resource availability, perceived alignment between curriculum goals and classroom realities, and institutional support (World Bank, 2018). In the Philippine context, Kilag et al. (2024) found that perceived implementation challenges—such as resource gaps and competency misalignments—mediate teacher receptiveness to curriculum reforms. Lacbao (2024) similarly documented that teachers' initial

views of MATATAG are shaped by both the practical demands of curriculum transition and broader systemic conditions.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, descriptive-comparative research design. Survey methodology was used to gather numerical data on teacher perceptions, enabling both descriptive profiling and inferential comparison across curriculum and demographic groups.

### 3.2 Participants and Sampling

Participants were permanent elementary school teachers from three schools in Patikul East District, Sulu: Don Jose Godinez Elementary School (n = 33), Latih Elementary School (n = 8), and Danag Elementary School (n = 6). A purposive, total-population sampling strategy was employed, yielding a final sample of N = 48 teachers. This approach ensured representativeness across grade levels and subject assignments within the district.

### 3.3 Instrument

A structured, researcher-developed 27-item questionnaire used a comparative side-by-side format, with respondents rating both the K-12 BEC and the MATATAG BEC simultaneously on each item. Items were organized under three dimensions: (A) Learning (7 items), (B) Teaching Techniques and Strategies (10 items), and (C) Teaching Method and Guidance (10 items). A 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = Not Effective; 2 = Less Effective; 3 = Moderately Effective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very Effective). The instrument was validated by three experts—the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (MSU-Sulu), the Chairman of the Graduate School of Education, and the Intern Supervisor for Secondary Level—and reliability was assessed using the split-half method prior to full administration.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Following approval from the respective school heads, questionnaires were administered directly to all permanent teachers during April 2025. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Completed questionnaires were collected and processed for statistical analysis.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Frequency and percentage distributions described the demographic profile. Means and standard deviations summarized perceptions on each curriculum dimension. Independent samples t-tests compared perceptions by gender and educational attainment; one-way ANOVA compared perceptions by age group and length of service. Pearson product-moment correlation examined the relationship between K-12 and MATATAG perceptions. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from school administrators prior to data collection. Respondents were fully informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw without consequence. All data were anonymized and used exclusively for academic purposes. The study adhered to ethical guidelines prescribed by the American Psychological Association (APA).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 48 teacher-respondents. The majority (54.2%) were in the

41–50 age bracket, and 95.8% were female. In terms of educational attainment, 93.8% held a Bachelor's degree, with only 6.3% having completed a Master's degree. Regarding length of service, most respondents (66.7%) had served fewer than 10 years. The dominance of female teachers at mid-career professional levels reflects broader patterns in Philippine elementary school staffing, particularly in Bangsamoro communities.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Teacher-Respondents (N = 48)**

| Profile Variable | Category | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | | |
| | Below 30 years | 4 | 8.3 |
| | 31–40 years | 12 | 25.0 |
| | 41–50 years | 26 | 54.2 |
| | 51 years and above | 6 | 12.5 |
| **Gender** | | | |
| | Male | 2 | 4.2 |
| | Female | 46 | 95.8 |
| **Educational Attainment** | | | |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 45 | 93.8 |
| | Master's Degree | 3 | 6.3 |
| **Length of Service** | | | |
| | Below 10 years | 32 | 66.7 |
| | 11–20 years | 8 | 16.7 |
| | 21–30 years | 5 | 10.4 |
| | 31–40 years | 3 | 6.3 |
| **Total** | | 48 | 100.0 |

### 4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of K-12 Curriculum Effectiveness

Teachers rated the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum as Moderately Effective across all three dimensions (Table 2). The highest mean was recorded for Teaching Method and Guidance (M = 3.21, SD = 0.63), followed by Teaching Techniques and Strategies (M = 3.18, SD = 0.65), and Learning (M = 3.16, SD = 0.67). Within the Learning dimension, the highest-rated indicators were cumulative assessment (M = 3.31) and teacher preparedness and professional development (M = 3.31). In the Teaching Strategies dimension, integration and association of experience in teaching received the highest rating (M = 3.48), closely approaching the Effective category. School leadership of school heads was the highest-rated item under Teaching Method and Guidance (M = 3.42).

**Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of K-12 BEC Effectiveness (N = 48)**

| Dimension | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Learning | 3.16 | 0.67 | Moderately Effective |
| Teaching Techniques & Strategies | 3.18 | 0.65 | Moderately Effective |
| Teaching Method & Guidance | 3.21 | 0.63 | Moderately Effective |
| Legend: 1.00–1.49 = Not Effective; 1.50–2.49 = Less Effective; 2.50–3.49 = Moderately Effective; 3.50–4.49 = Effective; 4.50–5.00 = Very Effective | | | |

### 4.3 Teachers' Perceptions of MATATAG Curriculum Effectiveness

Teachers similarly rated the MATATAG Basic Education Curriculum as Moderately Effective across all dimensions, though with slightly lower mean scores compared to K-12 (Table 3). Teaching Techniques and Strategies yielded the highest mean (M = 2.99, SD = 0.56), followed by Teaching Method and Guidance (M = 2.96, SD = 0.56), and Learning (M = 2.88, SD = 0.58). Under Learning, teacher preparedness and professional development was rated highest (M = 3.17). The use of classroom discussion received the top rating under Teaching Strategies (M = 3.21), and elevating teacher-teacher relationships led under Teaching Method and Guidance (M = 3.27).

**Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions of MATATAG BEC Effectiveness (N = 48)**

| Dimension | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Learning | 2.88 | 0.58 | Moderately Effective |
| Teaching Techniques & Strategies | 2.99 | 0.56 | Moderately Effective |
| Teaching Method & Guidance | 2.96 | 0.56 | Moderately Effective |
| Legend: 1.00–1.49 = Not Effective; 1.50–2.49 = Less Effective; 2.50–3.49 = Moderately Effective; 3.50–4.49 = Effective; 4.50–5.00 = Very Effective | | | |

### 4.4 Differences in Perceptions of K-12 by Demographic Profile

Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing for $H_0 1$. No statistically significant differences were found in perceptions of K-12 curriculum effectiveness when grouped by any demographic variable. The t-test for gender yielded t = 1.115 (p = .286), and for educational attainment t = 1.343 (p = .204). ANOVA results were similarly non-significant for age group (F = 1.458, p = .853) and length of service (F = 2.060, p = .461). Accordingly, $H_0 1$ was accepted for all profile variables.

**Table 4. Difference in Perceptions of K-12 BEC by Demographic Profile**

| Profile Variable | Test | Statistic | p-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | t-test | 1.115 | 0.286 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Educational Attainment | t-test | 1.343 | 0.204 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Age | ANOVA | 1.458 | 0.853 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Length of Service | ANOVA | 2.060 | 0.461 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Note: $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed). Accept $H_0$ = no significant difference. | | | | |

### 4.5 Differences in Perceptions of MATATAG by Demographic Profile

Table 5 presents hypothesis testing results for $H_0$2. Similarly, no significant differences were found across any demographic grouping for MATATAG curriculum perceptions. Gender comparisons yielded $t = 0.773$ ($p = .454$); educational attainment yielded $t = 0.778$ ($p = .452$). ANOVA showed $F = 0.251$ ($p = .479$) for age and $F = 0.132$ ($p = .912$) for length of service. $H_0$2 was accepted for all variables.

**Table 5. Difference in Perceptions of MATATAG BEC by Demographic Profile**

| Profile Variable | Test | Statistic | p-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | t-test | 0.773 | 0.454 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Educational Attainment | t-test | 0.778 | 0.452 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Age | ANOVA | 0.251 | 0.479 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Length of Service | ANOVA | 0.132 | 0.912 | Accept $H_0$ |
| Note: $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed). Accept $H_0$ = no significant difference. | | | | |

### 4.6 Correlation Between K-12 and MATATAG Perceptions

Table 6 displays Pearson correlation coefficients between corresponding dimensions of K-12 and MATATAG perceptions. All correlations were statistically significant ($p < .05$ or $p < .01$) and very high in magnitude ($r = .829$ to $.971$). The strongest correlation was observed between K-12 Teaching and MATATAG Learning ($r = .971$, $p < .001$), indicating a near-perfect positive relationship. These findings led to the rejection of $H_0$3 (no significant correlation) and confirmed that teachers who rated K-12 effectiveness highly in a given dimension also tended to rate MATATAG effectiveness highly in corresponding dimensions.

**Table 6. Pearson Correlation Matrix: K-12 and MATATAG BEC Perceptions (N = 48)**

| K-12 Dimension | MATATAG Dimensions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | r | Learning | p | Teaching | p | Guidance |
| Learning K-12 | .886** | .008 | .851** | .007 | .829* | .011 |
| Teaching K-12 | .971** | .000 | .964** | .000 | .957** | .000 |

| K-12 Dimension | MATATAG Dimensions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | r | Learning | p | Teaching | p | Guidance |
| Guidance K-12 | .888** | .008 | .956** | .000 | .950** | .000 |
| * p < .05 (2-tailed). ** p < .01 (2-tailed). | | | | | | |

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Moderate Effectiveness Ratings Across Both Curricula

The consistent rating of both curricula as Moderately Effective is significant on two levels. First, it indicates that neither curriculum has yet reached the threshold of high effectiveness in teachers' professional judgment—a finding consistent with the documented challenges of K-12 implementation in under-resourced Philippine settings (Acosta & Acosta, 2017; World Bank, 2018). Second, the absence of a stark qualitative difference between K-12 and MATATAG perceptions suggests that curriculum reform, by itself, may not be sufficient to dramatically alter teaching experiences without commensurate improvements in teacher support, resource provision, and professional development.

The slightly higher mean scores for K-12 across all dimensions (compared to MATATAG) may reflect greater teacher familiarity and accumulated experience with K-12 implementation over more than a decade, contrasted with the relative novelty of MATATAG at the time of data collection. This is consistent with diffusion of innovations theory: perceptions of an innovation improve as experience with it deepens over time (Kilag et al., 2024). It should be expected that MATATAG ratings will improve as teachers gain more implementation experience and as institutional support systems mature.

The Power-Coercive dimension of curriculum change is evident here: both curricula were mandated from above, without full teacher participation in development. The moderate—rather than high—ratings may reflect compliance without full professional endorsement, which aligns with the theoretical prediction that coercive change generates superficial rather than deeply internalized adoption. The Normative Re-Educative path—sustained professional re-education—represents the recommended intervention to move perceptions from moderate toward high effectiveness.

### 5.2 Demographic Profile and Perception Uniformity

The finding that perceptions did not significantly differ by gender, educational attainment, age, or length of service across both curricula is theoretically and practically important. It suggests that curriculum perceptions in this context are shaped more by systemic factors—the nature of the curriculum itself, the institutional environment, and community context—than by individual teacher characteristics. This uniformity across demographic subgroups implies that interventions to improve curriculum effectiveness should be directed at systemic and organizational levels rather than targeting specific teacher subgroups.

The demographic profile of respondents—predominantly female, mid-career, Bachelor's degree holders with fewer than 10 years of service—reflects the current workforce composition in Patikul East District. The preponderance of relatively new teachers (66.7% with below 10 years of service) is noteworthy, as newer teachers may have greater adaptability to new curricula but may also lack the depth of experience needed to critically evaluate long-term curriculum impact. Future research may benefit from disaggregating perceptions by years of K-12 and MATATAG specific implementation experience.

### 5.3 High Correlations as Evaluative Framework Consistency

The very high positive correlations between K-12 and MATATAG perceptions (r = .829 to .971) across all corresponding dimensions indicate that teachers apply a stable evaluative lens when assessing both

curricula. This finding has important implications: teachers' professional standards for curriculum effectiveness appear to be robust and internally consistent, transcending the specific features of any one curriculum. Educators who valued student engagement and professional development within K-12 similarly prioritized those elements in MATATAG, and those who found K-12 less effective in a dimension likewise rated MATATAG lower in that dimension.

These correlations also suggest that if systemic conditions (resource provision, training, leadership support) that shape one curriculum's perceived effectiveness are improved, positive spillover effects on perceptions of the other curriculum may also emerge. This implies that comprehensive school improvement strategies—rather than curriculum-specific interventions—are likely to yield the greatest gains in teacher-perceived curriculum effectiveness.

## 6. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that elementary school teachers in Patikul East District, Sulu perceive both the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum and the MATATAG Curriculum as moderately effective in terms of learning, teaching techniques and strategies, and teaching method and guidance. Demographic characteristics—including gender, age, educational attainment, and length of service—do not significantly differentiate these perceptions. Furthermore, teachers' evaluations of both curricula are very highly correlated, indicating a stable and consistent professional framework for curriculum assessment.

These findings call for context-sensitive, systemic interventions rather than curriculum redesign alone. Specifically: (1) DepEd and BARMM authorities should intensify teacher professional development programs aligned with both curricula's pedagogical demands; (2) School Improvement Plans in the district should explicitly incorporate strategies to enhance teachers' capacities in the three effectiveness dimensions; (3) administrators should create enabling institutional conditions—adequate resources, mentoring systems, and collaborative professional communities—that allow curricula to be implemented with fidelity and innovation; and (4) teachers of Patikul East District should be actively involved in curriculum review and implementation planning, moving curriculum change from Power-Coercive to Normative Re-Educative modalities.

Future research should extend this comparative framework to other districts in BARMM and to secondary school levels, incorporate qualitative methods to deepen understanding of the perceptions captured here, and conduct longitudinal tracking to observe how MATATAG perceptions evolve as implementation matures.

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