



Long Paper

Key Actors' Implementation Processes and Challenges in the MATATAG Curriculum Rollout in Selected Elementary Schools of a Rural School District in the Philippines

Ryan F. Fajnilan

Department of Education, Philippines
fajnilano40@gmail.com
(corresponding Author)

Emelyn R. Villanueva

Graduate Education & Professional Studies, Romblon State University, Philippines
ricoemelyn119@gmail.com

Date received: December 3, 2025

Date received in revised form: April 2, 2026

Date accepted: April 14, 2026

Recommended citation:

Fajnilan, R. F., & Villanueva, E. R. (2026). Key actors' implementation processes and challenges in the MATATAG curriculum rollout in selected elementary schools of a rural school district in the Philippines. *Puissant*, 7, 3247-3270.

Abstract

This study investigated how school leaders and teachers implemented the MATATAG Curriculum Standards in selected rural elementary schools in the Philippines, and the challenges encountered during its rollout. Anchored in educational leadership, distributed leadership, and evidence-informed implementation theories, the research employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design involving 25 purposively selected school heads and teachers from the selected schools. Data were gathered using validated Likert-scale questionnaires covering five key implementation areas: strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, data-driven decision-making, and continuous improvement. Four challenge areas were also examined: resource constraints, preparedness, administrative support, and external factors. The findings revealed that curriculum implementation was practiced to a very high degree, particularly in professional development, instructional supervision, and stakeholder collaboration. Challenges were experienced only to a small extent; however, technological limitations, difficulties in aligning instruction with new standards, and varying levels of community involvement were notable



concerns. Correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between the implementation processes and the identified challenges, indicating that these factors did not hinder effective implementation. The results suggest that rural schools successfully sustain curriculum implementation through strong leadership practices, shared responsibilities, and supportive school cultures. This study underscores the resilience and commitment of educators in overcoming contextual limitations. It also highlights the need to enhance technological support, strengthen curriculum-focused professional development, and increase stakeholder participation. Based on these findings, a curriculum implementation enhancement program was proposed to support the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the MATATAG Curriculum in rural and geographically challenged areas.

Keywords – MATATAG Curriculum, curriculum implementation, educational leadership, rural schools, implementation challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum reform is widely recognized as a key mechanism for improving instructional quality and learner outcomes; however, a persistent concern lies in how such reforms are implemented in diverse educational contexts. In the Philippines, the nationwide rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum has presented a significant shift in basic education. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how key actors in rural school districts operationalize implementation processes and address contextual challenges. Existing studies have largely focused on general readiness or urban-based settings, leaving a gap in understanding how rural schools, often characterized by limited technological infrastructure, inadequate instructional resources, and varying levels of administrative and community support, translate policy into practice (Caballero et al., 2025; Kilag et al., 2024; Ubias, 2024). This lack of localized evidence presents a critical problem for policymakers and educational leaders who aim to ensure equitable and effective curriculum implementation in geographically diverse and resource-constrained environments.

The MATATAG Curriculum, introduced by the Department of Education, aims to decongest competencies, strengthen foundational skills, and enhance instructional coherence across grades. While its design addresses systemic learning gaps, its success largely depends on school-level implementation. The educational leadership literature emphasizes that effective implementation is shaped by organizational processes such as strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, instructional supervision, and data-driven decision making (Bush, 2020; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Youngs, 2020). However, both global and local studies highlight that these processes are often constrained by contextual realities, particularly in disadvantaged settings such as rural areas. Persistent inequalities in access to information and communication technology (ICT), uneven resource distribution, and difficulties in adapting reforms to local contexts continue to affect the

implementation outcomes (Antoninis et al., 2023; Dimmock et al., 2021). In the Philippine setting, emerging studies on the MATATAG Curriculum point to issues related to teacher preparedness, curriculum alignment, and access to sustained professional development (Blando, 2025; Fuentes, 2025).

Despite these contributions, there are still significant research gaps. First, there is limited empirical investigation into the interaction between implementation processes and contextual challenges in rural elementary schools. Second, while distributed leadership and collaborative practices are recognized as critical factors in successful reform, there is insufficient evidence on how they function under conditions of resource scarcity and infrastructural limitations (Ainin et al., 2025; Bentayao et al., 2024). Third, most existing studies lack localized, data-driven analyses that capture rural educators and school leaders lived realities. Although studies such as those by Caballero et al. (2025), Kilag et al. (2024), and Ubias (2024) identify common challenges, they do not comprehensively examine how these factors relate to or influence implementation processes in actual school settings. These gaps highlight the need for a context-specific investigation that bridges national policy expectations and ground-level realities in rural districts.

Addressing these gaps is essential not only for academic inquiry but also for community development in the region. Rural schools serve a significant portion of the learner population, and their capacity to implement curriculum reforms directly affects educational equity, access, and the quality of education. This study contributes to rural communities by providing evidence-based insights that can guide school leaders, teachers, and local stakeholders in strengthening the implementation of practices despite contextual limitations. By identifying both enabling processes and existing challenges, this study supports the development of responsive strategies that enhance teaching effectiveness, improve learner outcomes, and foster stronger school–community partnerships. This study promotes more inclusive and sustainable educational practices in underserved areas.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to theory and practice. Theoretically, this study extends the application of educational leadership, distributed leadership, and evidence-informed implementation frameworks to rural and resource-constrained contexts. Practically, it provides empirical evidence that can inform policy decisions, capacity-building initiatives, and school-based interventions tailored to rural schools' needs. As a concrete output, this study developed the MATATAG Curriculum Implementation Enhancement Program, an evidence-based intervention framework designed to strengthen key implementation processes through targeted strategies in technological support, curriculum-focused professional development, instructional supervision, and stakeholder engagement. This framework offers a structured and adaptable guide for schools and districts to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of curriculum implementation in the future. In this context, this study aims to examine the implementation processes employed by key actors and the challenges encountered in selected rural elementary schools and to determine whether a significant relationship exists between these variables, thereby providing localized and actionable insights for improving curriculum implementation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards is grounded in educational leadership theories that emphasize the pivotal role of key actors in shaping instructional quality, organizational coherence, and reform sustainability. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) argue that successful leadership is defined by a clear instructional vision, strong professional capacity building, and collaborative school cultures. Bush (2020) likewise highlights that leadership functions within broader organizational systems that influence policy interpretation, resource allocation, and implementation behavior. In the context of the MATATAG rollout, these perspectives explain why strategic planning, instructional supervision, and stakeholder collaboration are essential components of effective implementation processes, especially in rural settings where key actors often navigate contextual limitations.

Complementing these leadership perspectives, distributed leadership theory provides a lens for understanding how curriculum reforms become more adaptive when roles and responsibilities are shared among key actors across the school organization. Youngs (2020) asserts that distributed leadership promotes shared accountability, collaborative problem-solving, and empowered participation in reform initiatives. Local MATATAG studies support this theoretical stance: Bentayao, Cagape, and Quibod (2024) found that collaborative management enhanced key actors' capacity to respond to policy shifts, while Ubias (2024) reported that active involvement and shared leadership among teachers strengthened implementation readiness. These insights illustrate that leadership within MATATAG implementation is relational and collective, emerging from the coordinated actions of multiple key actors rather than positional authority alone.

The second theoretical anchor relevant to this study is the evidence-informed and continuous improvement approach to educational change. Wyse et al. (2025) emphasized that data-driven decision-making enhances instructional alignment, supports targeted interventions, and strengthens implementation consistency across schools. Stosich (2024) similarly highlights that continuous improvement through iterative cycles of monitoring, feedback, and refinement helps key actors maintain responsiveness to learners' needs and emerging challenges. These perspectives align with the implementation processes assessed in this study, particularly data-based decision-making, capacity building, and continuous improvement, which were found to be highly utilized by the key actors involved in the MATATAG rollout.

Finally, context-responsive implementation research underscores that curriculum reforms unfold within specific resource, cultural, and environmental conditions that influence how key actors enact the policies. Philippine-based studies have identified persistent gaps in ICT access, teacher preparedness, and administrative coordination that shape MATATAG implementation, particularly in rural settings (Kilag et al., 2024; CABALLERO

et al., 2025). Global analyses have also noted that technological readiness, resource adequacy, and professional development opportunities significantly affect reform outcomes (Antoninis et al., 2023). These contextual considerations align with the challenge dimensions examined in this study: resource constraints, preparedness, administrative support, and external factors. Together, these theoretical strands provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how implementation processes and contextual challenges interact as key actors implement the MATATAG Curriculum Standards.

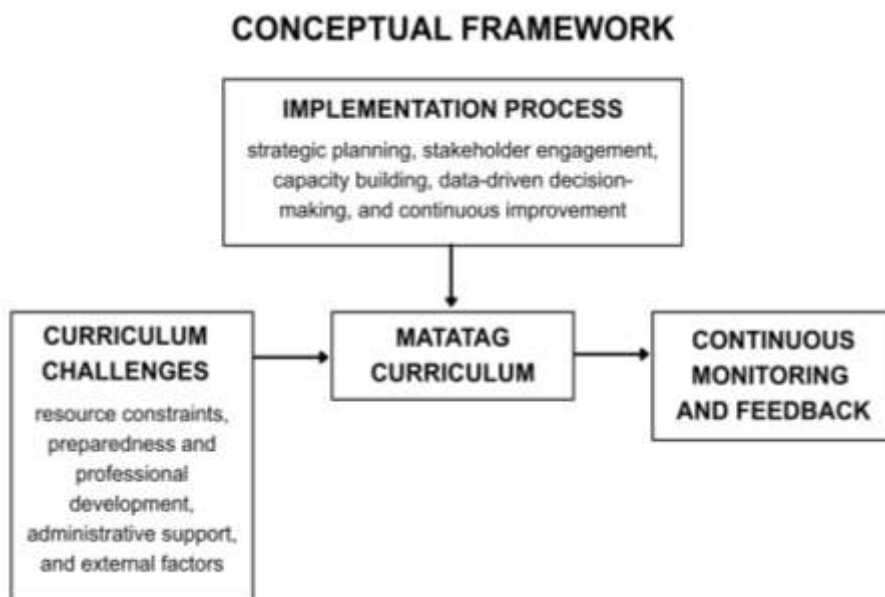


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study rests on the premise that curriculum implementation is shaped by both organizational processes and contextual conditions. Drawing from leadership, evidence-informed practice, and context-responsive implementation perspectives, the framework positions key implementation processes such as strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, data-driven decision-making, and continuous improvement as central mechanisms through which key actors carry out the MATATAG Curriculum Standards. These processes represent tangible practices that translate national curriculum policies into school-level routines and classroom instructional actions.

Simultaneously, the framework acknowledges that key actors operate within a broader landscape of curriculum challenges that can influence the quality and consistency of its implementation. These challenges include resource constraints, preparedness and professional development needs, administrative support issues, and external environmental factors, all of which are commonly experienced in rural and geographically isolated school communities. Such contextual conditions outline the structural realities that may hinder or enable key actors to effectively perform the required processes. The framework assumes

that while these challenges pose limitations, strong and coherent implementation practices, particularly planning, supervision, collaboration, and monitoring, can mitigate their effects.

At the core of this framework is the anticipated outcome, a strengthened and well-implemented MATATAG Curriculum. It assumes that when implementation processes are robust and responsive, and contextual challenges are minimized or strategically managed, curriculum enactment becomes more coherent, equitable, and sustainable. A continuous monitoring and feedback loop connects these components, underscoring the iterative nature of curriculum implementation and the need for ongoing reflections and adjustments. This framework provides a structured and integrated lens for examining how implementation processes and contextual challenges interact to shape the MATATAG Curriculum rollout in rural schools.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the nationwide rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards, limited empirical evidence exists on how key actors in rural and geographically isolated districts carry out the required implementation processes. Schools in these contexts often operate with persistent constraints, including inadequate technological infrastructure, inconsistent access to curriculum-aligned professional development, and varying levels of administrative and community support. These conditions may affect the consistency and quality of essential implementation practices such as strategic planning, capacity building, instructional supervision, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision making.

Although previous studies emphasize the importance of strong implementation processes in achieving reform goals, few have examined how these processes interact with contextual challenges in resource-limited elementary schools. Existing literature is largely focused on national or urban settings, leaving a gap in understanding the realities faced by rural schools where resource shortages, preparedness issues, administrative coordination, and external factors significantly shape curriculum enactment. Without such localized evidence, policymakers and educational leaders may find it difficult to design interventions that address the unique needs of these learning environments.

This study responds to these gaps by determining the extent to which key actors utilize implementation processes and the degree of challenges encountered in selected elementary schools in a rural district in the Philippines. It also investigates whether a significant relationship exists between these variables and identifies implications for strengthening curriculum implementation. Through these insights, the study aims to inform strategic planning, capacity building, and policy measures that support the effective and sustainable implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards in rural settings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the implementation processes employed and the extent of challenges encountered in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum Standards in selected elementary schools of a rural school district in the Philippines.

Specific Objectives:

1. To determine the level of utilization of the different implementation processes by key actors in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum Standards.
2. To determine the extent of the challenges encountered by the respondents in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum Standards.
3. To examine whether there is a significant relationship between the level of implementation processes employed and the extent of the challenges encountered by key actors in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum Standards.
4. To propose intervention strategies aimed at improving the effectiveness of implementation processes in executing the MATATAG Curriculum Standards.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum reforms succeed when strong implementation processes, supportive leadership, and responsive school systems work together. Research consistently shows that organizational structures, teacher capacity, and contextual realities shape the enactment of reforms in practice. In the Philippine context, these factors are central to understanding the rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum, which depends on coherent planning, collaborative leadership, and sustained support for teachers. The following review synthesizes literature across three themes: (1) Implementation Processes and Curriculum Reforms, (2) Challenges in the Implementation of Educational Change, and (3) MATATAG Curriculum–Related Research.

Implementation Processes and Curriculum Reforms

Successful curriculum changes require strong leadership, structured processes and continuous professional learning. Leadership frameworks emphasize that strategic planning, capacity building, and instructional supervision drive reform coherence (Gonzales & Roberts, 2025; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). These practices ensure that curriculum intentions are translated into classroom routines, supported by monitoring, and data-informed decision-making.

Distributed leadership further strengthens implementation, as shared roles encourage collaboration and collective responsibility for instructional improvement (Youngs, 2020). Studies in Philippine settings affirm that collaborative management and shared decision-making improve responsiveness to curriculum shifts and reinforce teacher engagement in reform work (Ainin et al., 2025; Bentayao et al., 2024). These findings align with Implementation Science perspectives, which highlight the value of structured processes, feedback loops, and ongoing professional learning in sustaining curriculum reforms (Stosich, 2024; Wyse et al., 2025).

In diverse contexts, schools that maintain systematic planning, coaching, stakeholder involvement, and reflective monitoring demonstrate stronger curriculum alignment and instructional consistency. Such practices are the backbone of effective reform.

Challenges in the Implementation of Educational Change

Despite these structured processes, educational reforms often encounter significant barriers. Global reports have identified persistent constraints such as limited ICT infrastructure, inadequate training, and inequitable access to resources, particularly in lower-income educational systems (Antoninis et al., 2023). These problems are more pronounced in rural and geographically isolated schools than in urban areas.

Philippine-based research similarly documents issues related to technological readiness, uneven professional development, and administrative coordination during curriculum transitions (Caballero et al., 2025; Kilag et al., 2024). Teachers in inclusive and resource-constrained settings continue to struggle with access to digital tools, curriculum-aligned training, and consistent leadership support, which shapes their daily implementation demands.

System-level concerns identified in broader international studies, such as local adaptation to new teaching requirements, limited materials, and contextual disparities, further illustrate how structural inequalities complicate the enactment of reform (Dimmock et al., 2021). These challenges highlight that successful implementation depends not only on individual teacher readiness but also on systemic support, equitable resources, and coherent administrative processes within schools.

MATATAG Curriculum–Related Research

Research on the MATATAG Curriculum highlights both its promise and the persistent gaps in its implementation. The curriculum aims to streamline competencies, strengthen foundational skills, and clarify learning standards (Kilag et al., 2024). Early studies suggest that teacher readiness and leadership support are key determinants of smooth implementation, particularly in rural districts with varied resource availabilities (Ubias, 2024).

Integrative reviews indicate that teachers continue to encounter challenges in digital preparedness, alignment of instructional materials, and access to sustained training specific to MATATAG competencies (Blando, 2025; Fuentes, 2025). These constraints reflect broader systemic issues affecting the delivery of curriculum reforms. Despite these challenges, research shows that collaborative teacher practices, stakeholder engagement, and effective school-level management strategies positively contribute to implementation progress (Bentayao et al., 2024).

Emerging studies in science education under the MATATAG Curriculum emphasize the need for clearer competency sequencing and stronger professional development support to enhance classroom implementation (Diquito, 2024). Furthermore, broader analyses of Philippine educational reforms reveal persistent learning gaps and underscore the importance of leadership, teacher capacity, and contextual responsiveness in achieving the intended curriculum outcomes (Enchikova et al., 2025; Miramon et al., 2024).

MATATAG-related studies emphasize that while the reform provides structural clarity, sustained training, improved ICT resources, and strengthened school–community partnerships are necessary for effective implementation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationship between the implementation processes of the MATATAG Curriculum and the challenges encountered by key actors in selected rural elementary schools. Descriptive–correlational designs are appropriate when the objective is to systematically describe variables and determine the degree of association between them without manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This approach allows researchers to capture naturally occurring conditions and relationships in real-world educational settings. The use of this design is supported by recent educational leadership and implementation studies, which emphasize that correlational approaches are effective in examining how organizational practices interact with contextual constraints in curriculum reform (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Stosich, 2024). In this study, the design enabled the researcher to analyze how implementation processes such as strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making relate to challenges such as resource constraints, preparedness, and administrative support within rural school contexts.

Locale and Participants

The study was conducted in five (5) purposively selected elementary schools located in a rural school district in the Philippines. These schools were identified as pilot implementers of the MATATAG Curriculum, making them appropriate sites for examining the actual implementation processes in geographically and resource-constrained settings. Each school contributed one (1) school head, resulting in a total of five (5) school heads, alongside twenty (20) teachers who were directly involved in curriculum implementation. Specifically, each school was represented by one school head and four teachers, yielding a total of twenty-five (25) key actors composed of both instructional leaders and classroom implementers.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique widely used in educational research to ensure the inclusion of individuals with direct knowledge and experience relevant to the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This method is particularly appropriate for implementation studies, where the focus is on individuals actively engaged in the execution of a program or reform (Stosich, 2024). In this study, the concept of “firsthand information” refers to data obtained from primary implementers who possess direct lived experience in executing the MATATAG Curriculum at the school level. These participants were not merely passive recipients of policy but were actively involved in its operationalization through teaching, supervision, and leadership functions.

Moreover, the participants had undergone official capacity-building activities facilitated by the Department of Education, primarily through the Division Office, with training provided by the Regional and Central Office. This top-down dissemination model is commonly employed in large-scale curriculum reforms to ensure consistency in policy implementation across different levels of the educational system (Antoninis et al., 2023; Kilag et al., 2024). Such qualifications ensured that the participants possessed informed and credible perspectives, thereby strengthening the validity of the data collected in this study. All the participants had at least one year of experience in teaching or school administration, ensuring sufficient exposure to curriculum processes and school operations. The inclusion of both school heads and teachers reflects the principles of distributed leadership, wherein multiple actors collaboratively contribute to curriculum implementation (Youngs, 2020).

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured, researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of two main sections: (1) implementation processes and (2) challenges encountered by teachers. The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale, which is widely recognized in educational research for measuring perceptions, attitudes, and levels of agreement because of its reliability and ease of interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The first section assessed key implementation domains, including strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, data-driven decision-making, and continuous improvement. These domains are grounded in contemporary educational leadership and implementation frameworks that emphasize structured processes and collaborative practices to achieve successful curriculum reform (Leithwood et al., 2020; Wyse et al., 2025). The second section measured challenges such as resource constraints, preparedness and professional development, administrative support, and external factors. These variables reflect the commonly identified barriers in both global and Philippine curriculum implementation studies (Antoninis et al., 2023; Kilag et al., 2024).

Validity and Reliability Procedures

To establish content validity, the instrument was evaluated by four experts in educational management, curriculum implementation, and research methodology. Expert

validation ensures that the instrument adequately represents the constructs being measured and aligns with the study objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Necessary revisions were made to improve the clarity, coherence, and alignment with the theoretical constructs. A pilot test was conducted among respondents outside the study sample to assess the clarity, structure, and applicability of the instruments. Pilot testing is essential for refining research tools and identifying potential ambiguities prior to full-scale data collection. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating a high internal consistency. According to recent research standards, a coefficient of 0.80 or higher is considered acceptable and indicative of a reliable measurement (Stosich, 2024).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the established ethical standards in educational research to ensure the protection of the participants and the integrity of the research process. In accordance with the principles outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2023), participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents after the purpose, procedures, and nature of their involvement, including their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, were clearly explained. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed by omitting any personally identifiable information and ensuring that all responses were treated with the utmost privacy. The data collected were securely stored and used solely for academic and research purposes. These ethical safeguards are consistent with contemporary research standards that emphasize respect for persons, beneficence, and data protection in educational research (Stosich, 2024). By upholding these principles, this study ensured that the participants' rights, dignity, and welfare were fully protected throughout the research process.

Data Collection and Statistical Treatment

Data were collected through the administration of a validated questionnaire to the selected respondents. Prior to data gathering, formal permission was secured from the appropriate authorities, and participants were properly oriented regarding the purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study. The accomplished questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of the responses. For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed. Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize the level of implementation processes and the extent of challenges encountered. These measures are appropriate for describing the central tendency and variability of quantitative data, thereby providing a clear overview of respondents' perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Inferential statistics were used to determine the relationships between variables. The Shapiro–Wilk test was first conducted to assess the normality of the data distribution, as it is

recommended for studies with small sample sizes. For variables that met the assumption of normality, Pearson’s *r* was applied to measure the strength and direction of linear relationships. Conversely, for data that did not meet normality assumptions, Spearman’s rho was used as a nonparametric alternative suitable for ordinal data and non-linear relationships (Stosich, 2024). These statistical procedures are widely applied in educational research to generate objective, evidence-based conclusions regarding relationships among variables.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents a summary of the level of utilization of the different implementation processes. The results indicate that key actors consistently demonstrate a high level of utilization of the major implementation processes required to carry out the MATATAG Curriculum Standards, as reflected in an overall mean of 4.57 (SD = 0.32). All five domains: Strategic Planning and Implementation (M = 4.67), Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration (M = 4.60), Capacity Building and Professional Development (M = 4.45), Data-Driven Decision-Making (M = 4.53), and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement (M = 4.70) were rated “Highly Utilized,” suggesting strong organizational readiness and aligned practices across the schools. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement registered the highest utilization, indicating that mechanisms for tracking progress and informing adjustments are well established. Although Capacity Building and Professional Development obtained the lowest mean among the processes, it still reflects high engagement, pointing to ongoing but uneven opportunities for professional growth. The findings suggest that the essential methods for effective curriculum implementation are firmly in place, supporting a conducive environment for the successful realization of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards.

The consistently high utilization across all domains indicates that school leaders and teachers possess strong organizational and instructional practices that support the implementation of the curriculum. However, enhancing capacity-building initiatives remains essential to ensure that teachers are continuously equipped with competencies aligned with the evolving demands of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 1: Summary of the Level of Utilization of the Different Implementation Processes

Implementation Processes	Mean	SD	DI
1. Strategic Planning and Implementation	4.67	0.51	HU
2. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration	4.60	0.63	HU
3. Capacity Building and Professional Development	4.45	0.57	HU
4. Data-Driven Decision-Making	4.53	0.48	HU
5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement	4.70	0.27	HU
Overall Mean Score	4.57	0.32	HU

Table 2 reveals the mean scores of the challenges encountered by the respondents. The findings indicate that the challenges faced in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum Standards were experienced only to a little extent, as reflected in the overall mean of 3.76 (SD = 0.71), which falls within the “TLE” verbal interpretation. Among the four dimensions, administrative support registered the highest mean (M = 3.90), suggesting that issues related to leadership facilitation and support were perceived more often than other challenges, though still only to a minor degree. This was followed by preparedness and professional development (M = 3.86) and external factors (M = 3.79), which likewise indicate a minimal but notable presence of constraints. Resource constraints obtained the lowest mean (M = 3.68), indicating that material and logistical limitations were the least encountered among the categories. The results suggest that while challenges exist, they are generally not severe, implying that the current implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards proceeds with relatively manageable difficulty.

The findings imply that while schools can manage existing challenges effectively, there is still a need to strengthen administrative support systems and teacher preparedness programs. Addressing these areas can further minimize implementation gaps and enhance the overall efficiency of curriculum delivery.

Table 2. Summary of the Extent of Challenges Encountered by the Respondents

Challenges	Mean	SD	DI
1. Resource Constraints	3.68	0.77	TLE
2. Preparedness And Professional Development	3.86	0.72	TLE
3. Administrative Support	3.90	0.68	TLE
4. External Factors	3.79	0.67	TLE
Overall Mean Score	3.76	0.71	TLE

The data presented in Table 3 summarizes the differences between the level of implementation processes employed and the extent of the challenges encountered by key actors. The analysis revealed that none of the identified curriculum challenges exhibited a statistically significant relationship with the implementation process of the MATATAG Curriculum. Resource constraints showed a weak, positive but non-significant correlation ($r = 0.092$, $p = 0.883$), while preparedness and professional development demonstrated a negligible, negative association ($r = -0.018$, $p = 0.977$). Administrative support produced a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.403$, $p = .502$), yet remained statistically insignificant. External factors, evaluated using Spearman’s rho due to non-normal distribution, yielded a relatively strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.671$, $p = 0.215$), which was not significant. These results suggest that the perceived challenges measured in this study are not significantly related to the implementation processes carried out in the participating schools.

The absence of a significant relationship suggests that strong implementation practices can be sustained despite the existing challenges. This highlights the resilience and adaptability of the school leaders and teachers. However, this also indicates that

interventions should focus not only on reducing challenges but also on further strengthening existing implementation systems to ensure long-term sustainability.

Table 3. Summary of the correlation between the level of implementation processes and challenges encountered by key actors

		Implementation Processes (SW-p = 0.28)	Interpretation	Decision
Resource Constraints (SW-p=0.81)	Pearson's r	0.092	Not significant	Accept Ho
	p-value	0.883		
Preparedness and Professional Development (SW-p=0.42)	Pearson's r	-0.018	Not significant	Accept Ho
	p-value	0.977		
Administrative Support (SW-p=0.25)	Pearson's r	-0.403	Not significant	Accept Ho
	p-value	0.502		
External Factors (SW-p=0.04)	Spearman's rho	0.671	Not significant	Accept Ho
	p-value	0.215		

Proposed MATATAG Curriculum Implementation Enhancement Program

Rationale:

The findings revealed that the implementation processes of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards were highly utilized across schools, particularly in monitoring, instructional supervision, and stakeholder collaboration. Despite this strong utilization, persistent concerns have been noted regarding technological infrastructure, curriculum-specific professional development, and community engagement, all of which influence the long-term sustainability of curriculum reforms. Although the study found no significant relationship between implementation processes and challenges, the presence of technological limitations, uneven access to training, and minor administrative issues demonstrates the need for a structured intervention program. The proposed strategies aim to strengthen existing processes, reinforce teachers' capabilities, improve resource access, and establish clearer support systems. By addressing these contextual gaps, schools can further enhance the effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum rollout and ensure greater curriculum coherence, learner engagement, and instructional alignment.

The Proposed MATATAG Curriculum Implementation Enhancement Program serves as the primary output of this study, grounded in findings that revealed consistently strong implementation practices among key actors despite the presence of manageable challenges. Key actors demonstrated commitment and coherence in carrying out essential processes, such as planning, supervision, collaboration, and continuous improvement. However, certain

issues, particularly technological readiness, curriculum-focused professional development, administrative coordination, and community involvement, continued to surface. These conditions underscore the need for a structured and responsive intervention capable of reinforcing existing strengths while addressing contextual limitations that may affect the long-term sustainability of the MATATAG Curriculum implementation.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the program is anchored on key components such as Capacity Building and Professional Strengthening, and Resource Improvement and Mobilization, which are translated into actionable and context-responsive strategies. Under Capacity Building and Professional Strengthening, one example of an activity is the conduct of quarterly MATATAG-focused Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, where teachers collaboratively review competencies, align lesson plans, and share best practices in terms of instruction and assessment. Meanwhile, under Resource Improvement and Mobilization, an example activity is the implementation of a school-based ICT enhancement project, which includes the procurement of basic digital tools such as laptops and projectors and the establishment of partnerships with local stakeholders or local government units (LGUs) to support technological needs.

Proposed MATATAG Curriculum Implementation Enhancement Program

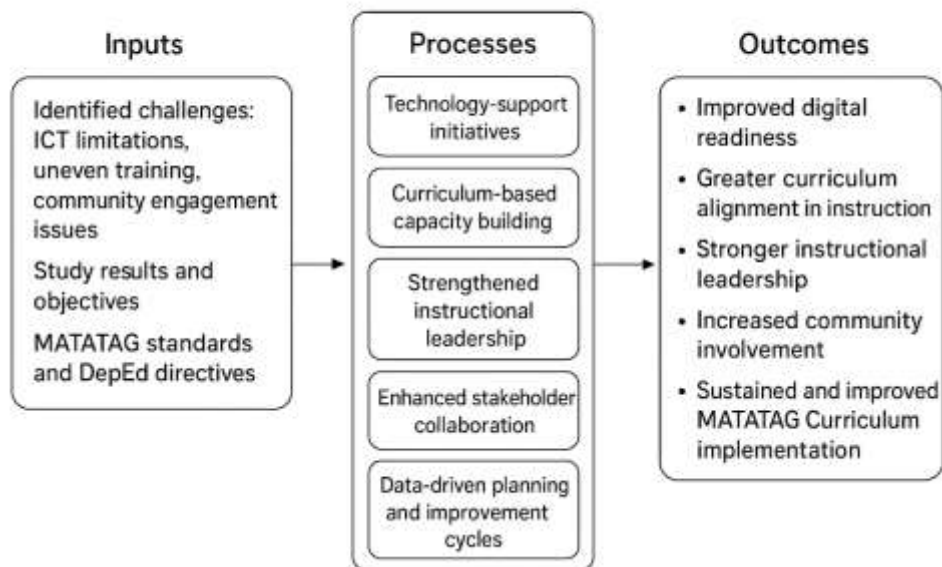


Figure 2. Proposed Program Intervention

Figure 3 presents the proposed plan of activities, which operationalizes the intervention through structured and targeted actions. For capacity building, these include conducting training workshops on MATATAG curriculum alignment and assessment design, as well as organizing peer coaching and mentoring sessions among teachers to strengthen their instructional practices. On the other hand, resource improvement initiatives include launching a “Brigada Eskwela Plus for ICT” program to generate community support for

technological resources and the development of a resource-sharing system within schools to maximize the use of available instructional materials. Collectively, these activities are designed to enhance teacher competence, improve access to essential resources, and promote stronger collaboration among the stakeholders.

ACTUAL PLAN OF ACTIVITIES



Figure 3. Proposed Actual Plan of Activities

The proposed intervention provides a practical and sustainable approach to improving curriculum implementation in teacher education. By focusing on both human resource development and material support, the program ensures a balanced strategy that enhances teacher effectiveness, resource availability, and stakeholder participation, thereby contributing to the long-term success and sustainability of the MATATAG Curriculum implementation.

DISCUSSION

This study’s findings provide important insights into how key actors in selected rural elementary schools implement the MATATAG Curriculum Standards despite contextual limitations. Overall, the very high level of utilization of implementation processes suggests that the participating schools demonstrate strong organizational readiness and coherent instructional practices. This confirms earlier assertions that effective curriculum enactment depends on clear strategic planning, collaborative leadership, and systematic monitoring (Bush, 2020; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). The consistently high mean scores across all five domains, particularly in monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement,

indicate that schools have established mechanisms for instructional oversight and iterative improvement, which are hallmarks of effective curriculum reforms.

The high level of utilization in strategic planning and stakeholder engagement reinforces the importance of distributed leadership in curriculum development. Youngs (2020) emphasized that shared leadership strengthens collective responsibility, and similar patterns appeared in this study, as both teachers and school heads reported strong involvement in planning and collaboration. These findings align with earlier studies showing that collaborative practices enhance reform responsiveness, particularly in the MATATAG rollout (Bentayao, Cagape, & Quibod, 2024; Ubias, 2024). However, the relatively lower mean in capacity building and professional development while still “Highly Utilized” suggests uneven access to ongoing training for teachers. This finding is consistent with Blando (2025) and Kilag et al. (2024), who noted persistent gaps in teacher preparedness in MATATAG implementation, particularly in rural districts. This indicates that while schools perform well in planning and monitoring, they may lack sustained training to support deeper curriculum understanding. Without consistent professional development, implementation quality may depend heavily on existing teacher competencies, rather than system-level support.

Although the overall extent of the challenges was rated “To a Little Extent,” the presence of minor but notable concerns remained significant. Administrative support emerged as the highest challenge, corroborating earlier Philippine studies citing inconsistent leadership facilitation during curriculum shifts (Caballero et al., 2025; Fuentes, 2025). Even when leadership commitment is evident, as reflected by high implementation scores, limitations in administrative coordination may slow curriculum alignment at the classroom level. Preparedness and professional development were also notable concerns. This echoes global findings that reforms often outpace teacher readiness, particularly in low-resource contexts (Antoninis et al., 2023). Although participants reported minimal difficulty, this does not negate the possibility that deeper challenges were buffered by strong school cultures and informal support among teachers factors that are frequently observed in rural schools with tight-knit communities. Resource constraints were the least encountered challenge, which diverges from prior research identifying the lack of materials and ICT limitations as major hindrances in rural settings (Dimmock et al., 2021; Kilag et al., 2024). This suggests that the schools in this study benefited from recent regional support or local adaptation strategies. However, this finding should be interpreted cautiously; the low mean does not necessarily reflect the abundance of resources but may indicate that teachers have learned to navigate scarcity through improvisation, an observation common in rural Philippine schools.

The absence of a significant relationship between implementation processes and challenges suggests that contextual limitations did not hinder key actors from carrying out the MATATAG Curriculum. This is a meaningful result, as it implies that strong leadership practices, shared responsibilities, and established monitoring systems are sufficient to maintain implementation quality, even under constraints. This finding supports Wyse et al. (2025), who argued that robust data-driven and continuous improvement systems help

mitigate the effects of environmental and resource-related challenges. However, a lack of correlation does not necessarily mean that challenges are irrelevant. It is possible that the small sample size limited the statistical detection of relationships. Another interpretation is that the rural schools in this study may possess strong adaptive cultures, enabling teachers and administrators to compensate for resource or preparedness issues, an insight supported by Miramon et al. (2024). Additionally, the “low” level of challenges may reflect underreporting due to cultural tendencies to maintain harmonious relationships within small school communities, as noted in the Southeast Asian reform literature.

The findings underscore the resilience and adaptability of rural educators, demonstrating that despite structural limitations, schools can sustain high-quality implementation practices through strong leadership collaboration and systematic monitoring systems that serve as key enablers of curriculum reform. However, notable concerns related to administrative support and uneven access to professional development emphasize the need for stronger, more consistent curriculum-focused training that deepens teachers’ understanding of MATATAG competencies, as well as improved administrative coordination to ensure alignment between division-level directives and school-level implementation. Furthermore, continued investment in technology and instructional resources remains essential, even if current constraints appear minimal, to support the sustainability of long-term reforms. These insights point to several directions for future research. Qualitative studies are needed to capture the nuanced and often hidden challenges experienced by teachers and administrators that may not be revealed through self-report surveys. Research involving larger and more diverse samples may provide a clearer picture of whether and how contextual challenges interact with implementation quality in different educational settings. Such investigations would enhance understanding of the MATATAG Curriculum rollout and offer evidence-based guidance for strengthening policy and practice in rural schools.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that key actors in the selected rural elementary schools demonstrate consistently strong implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum Standards, marked by effective planning, supervision, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement practices. Although challenges related to administrative support, preparedness, and resource limitations were present, they were experienced only to a little extent and did not hinder overall implementation quality. The absence of significant relationships between implementation processes and challenge dimensions further indicates that strong internal leadership structures and collaborative routines enable schools to sustain curriculum reform, despite contextual constraints. However, the results also point to the continuing need for technological readiness, curriculum-aligned professional development, and stakeholder participation. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening context-responsive support systems that build on existing school capacities while addressing persistent gaps to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends strengthening curriculum-aligned professional development by prioritizing sustained and focused training programs that enhance teachers' competencies in curriculum planning, assessment design, differentiated instruction, and data-driven decision making. Continuous capacity-building initiatives will ensure that teachers are better equipped to implement the MATATAG Curriculum with greater fidelity and instructional coherence.

In addition, it is essential to enhance instructional supervision and coaching by intensifying mentoring practices, strengthening classroom observation processes, and ensuring consistent feedback-driven support from school heads. This will help address instructional gaps and support teachers in adapting to the emerging curriculum demands.

Furthermore, improving technological and learning resource provision should be a priority, particularly in rural schools, where resource limitations persist. The Department of Education, in collaboration with local stakeholders, should allocate adequate support to upgrade digital tools, instructional materials, and school infrastructure to facilitate more effective curriculum delivery.

The study also underscores the importance of strengthening stakeholder and community engagement by institutionalizing structured mechanisms that encourage active participation from parents, community members, and local government units (LGUs). Such collaboration can expand support networks, mobilize additional resources, and promote shared responsibility for sustaining curriculum reforms.

Finally, it is recommended to institutionalize systematic monitoring and evaluation processes through regular progress tracking, data analysis, and reflective practices. This will enable school and district leaders to identify challenges early, make informed adjustments, and sustain the quality and long-term effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum implementation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of several limitations that may affect the breadth and applicability of our results. The study involved only 25 key actors from five elementary schools in a rural district, which inherently restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader school settings or more diverse educational environments. The purposive sampling of school heads and teachers, while appropriate for capturing the perspectives of direct implementers, may not represent the experiences of other stakeholders who also influence the MATATAG Curriculum rollout. Moreover, reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, as perceptions of

implementation processes and challenges may reflect personal beliefs or socially desirable responses rather than objective conditions. The descriptive correlational design further limits the ability to determine causal relationships, offering only a snapshot of the interaction between implementation practices and contextual challenges at a single point in time.

At the institutional level, the study's scope was confined to early stage MATATAG implementation, leaving the long-term effects of evolving policies, shifting administrative priorities, and future capacity-building initiatives unexamined. The absence of qualitative data, such as interviews or classroom observations, also constrained the depth of insight into how teachers and school leaders navigate the day-to-day complexities of curriculum reform in geographically isolated and disadvantaged regions. Additionally, contextual factors such as varying degrees of technological readiness, differences in community engagement, and disparities in professional development opportunities were acknowledged but not thoroughly explored due to the study design. Despite these constraints, the findings provide foundational evidence that can inform future, more comprehensive investigations of curriculum implementation in rural educational contexts.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have meaningful implications for curriculum implementation policy, instructional leadership, and teacher support systems, particularly in rural and geographically isolated school districts. The consistently high utilization of implementation processes such as strategic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and monitoring, despite the presence of only minimal challenges, demonstrates that key actors possess strong organizational routines and adaptive capacities that enable them to sustain curriculum reforms, even in resource-constrained contexts. This suggests that strengthening these existing structures while addressing persistent gaps in technological infrastructure, curriculum-aligned training, and community engagement is essential for ensuring a more coherent and responsive implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. At the policy level, the results emphasize the importance of providing differentiated, context-sensitive support for rural schools, especially in enhancing ICT readiness and access to sustained, curriculum-specific capacity building.

Institutionally, this study underscores the need for continuous, structured support mechanisms that reinforce teachers' professional agency and school heads' instructional leadership. The absence of significant relationships between implementation processes and challenges suggests that effective leadership practices anchored in collaboration, supervision, and data-informed decision-making serve as stabilizing forces that help schools navigate the contextual limitations. The proposed MATATAG Curriculum Implementation Enhancement Program offers a practical and evidence-based framework for strengthening leadership and instructional processes, promoting greater teacher preparedness, curricular alignment, and stakeholder involvement. By investing in these dimensions, educational

leaders can foster resilient, collaborative, and reflective school communities, thereby supporting the long-term sustainability of curriculum reform efforts in underserved contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers extend their heartfelt appreciation to the teachers and school administrators who generously shared their time and perspectives, contributing significantly to this study. Gratitude is likewise given to the partner institution and colleagues whose support, guidance, and encouragement were instrumental throughout this research journey.

FUNDING

The study did not receive funding from any institution.

DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest. The research was carried out independently, and no financial or personal affiliations influenced the conduct of the study, interpretation of the data, or conclusions drawn.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. No personal information was gathered at any stage of the research.

Ethics Approval

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the institution's Ethics Review Committee. All procedures followed the established ethical standards in educational research, ensuring that the participants' rights, privacy, and overall well-being were protected throughout the study.

REFERENCES

Ainin, J., Tampus, M. G., & Eliseo, J. M. (2025). Teacher leadership and collaboration in leading curriculum innovation: A case study on effective practices. *International Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities*, 6(1), 96–114. <https://ijrss.org/index.php/ijrss/article/download/485/322>

- Antoninis, M., Alcott, B., Al Hadheri, S., April, D., Barakat, B. F., Barrios Rivera, M., Baskakova, Y., Barry, M., Bekkouche, Y., Caro Vasquez, D., D'Addio, A. C., Davydov, D., Endrizzi, F., Flynn, S., Gil, L., Jain, C., Joshi, P., Kaldi, M.-R., Kiyenje, J., Linkins, K., De Moraes, C. L., Lucatello, A., Lythrangomitis, K., Mechtar, A., Montjouridès, P., Mukizwa, C., Murakami, Y., Pombo Polanco, M., Randrianatoavina, J., Redman, K., Rojnov, M., Sharma, D., Stipanovic, L., Wang, D., & Weill, E. (2023). *Global education monitoring report 2023: Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?* UNESCO. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10195257/1/385723eng%20%283%29.pdf>
- Bentayao, G. J., Cagape, W., & Quibod, C. P. G. (2024). School head's management practices on policy changes in Davao City: MATATAG Curriculum implementation in focus. *EPR International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management*, 11(11), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra18886>
- Blando, H. D. (2025). *Bridging the digital divide: A systematic review of teacher preparedness and technology integration in the MATATAG Curriculum*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15113816>
- Bush, T. (2020). *Theories of educational leadership and management (5th ed.)* <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066693.pdf>
- Caballero, M. A., Espina, R. C., Reyes, N. R. T. D., Cabigon, A. F. P., Mangubat, R. C., Mamites, I. O., & Nacario, L. E. (2025). Unravelling the challenges and adaptive preparedness of public-school teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum within inclusive education settings. *International Journal of Humanities Education*, 13(1), 804–839. <https://cm.os-cgrn.org/index.php/ijhe/article/download/100/92>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Dimmock, C., Tan, C. Y., Nguyen, D., Tran, T. A., & Dinh, T. T. (2021). Implementing education system reform: Local adaptation in school reform of teaching and learning. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 80, 102302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102302>
- Diquito, T. (2024). Basic education curriculum under the newly implemented K to 10 (MATATAG) curriculum in the Philippines: The case of science education. *American Journal of Education and Technology (AJET)*, 3(3), 123–132. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajet.v3i3.3396>
- Enchikova, E., Neves, T., Toledo, C., & Nata, G. (2025). A long road to educational equity: Tracking trends through PISA 2000–2018. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 8, 100445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2025.100445>
- Fuentes, M. (2025). Teacher experiences, challenges, and support needs in the implementation of the Philippine MATATAG Curriculum: An integrative literature review. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(12), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.716>
- Gonzales, M. M., & Roberts, M. B. (2025). Realities of leading change: Challenges and successes of an innovation faced by principals. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 34(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10567879221106713>
- Kilag, O. K., Andrin, G., Abellanosa, C., Villaver Jr., M., Uy, F., & Sasan, J. M. (2024). MATATAG curriculum rollout: Understanding challenges for effective implementation.

- International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(5), 172–177. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11183037>
- Kilag, O. K., Sasan, J. M., Maguate, G., Odango, J., Cruz, J. N. D., & Fulgencio, R. (2024). Curriculum innovation in Philippine education: The MATATAG Curriculum. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(6), 727–732. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11546969>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Miramón, S., Kilag, O. K., Groenewald, E., & Barayuga, L. (2024). Teacher leadership in the Philippines: Evaluating its impact on K-12 education reform. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(1), 162–167.
- Stosich, E. L. (2024, November). Working toward transformation: Educational leaders' use of continuous improvement to advance equity. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1430976. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2024.1430976/pdf>
- Ubias, L. D. (2024). School readiness, gaps, and prospects in the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in the Gonzaga West District: Basis for an intervention plan. *ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(V). <https://isrgpublishers.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/ISRGJAHSS6062024PH.pdf>
- Wyse, D., Baumfield, V., Mockler, N., Reardon, M., & Vanlommel, K. (2025). Evidence-informed educational change: Conceptual proposal for a capacity-building model. In *The BERA-Sage handbook of research-informed education practice and policy: Two volume set* (pp. 982–1004). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://sk.sagepub.com/hnbk/edvol/the-bera-sage-handbook-of-research-informed-education-practice/chpt/46-evidenceinformed-educational-change-conceptual>
- Youngs, H. (2020). Distributed leadership. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.612>
- Youngs, P., Kim, J., & Mavrogordato, M. (Eds.). (2020). *Exploring principal development and teacher outcomes: How principals can strengthen instruction, teacher retention, and student achievement*. Routledge. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IREIEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1950&dq=Youngs,+P.+\(2020\).+Educational+policy+and+teacher+effectiveness.+Teachers+College+Press&ots=YSG-r5w-l_&sig=TTtrqgb5uVkJ8mrO48ibhwon-4](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IREIEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1950&dq=Youngs,+P.+(2020).+Educational+policy+and+teacher+effectiveness.+Teachers+College+Press&ots=YSG-r5w-l_&sig=TTtrqgb5uVkJ8mrO48ibhwon-4)

Author's Biography

Ryan Fallaria Fajanilan is a dedicated public-school teacher from Alegria, Corcuera, Romblon, and the lead author of the study titled “Key Actors’ Implementation Processes and Challenges in the MATATAG Curriculum Rollout in Selected Elementary Schools of a Rural School District in the Philippines.” He earned his Bachelor of Elementary Education

from Romblon State University and is currently pursuing a Master in Educational Management at the same institution. With seven years of teaching experience, Mr. Fajnilan has served in various roles, including volunteer teacher, classroom teacher at Colong-Colong Elementary School, and District BSP Coordinator in the Corcuera District. Now designated as Teacher III, he remains deeply committed to promoting inclusive and high-quality education in rural areas. His strong sense of service, leadership in grassroots educational initiatives, and dedication to community development reflect an enduring passion for teaching and lifelong learning.

Dr. Emelyn Rico-Villanueva is an accomplished educator, researcher, and academic leader who currently serves as Associate Professor V at Romblon State University. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Management from the Philippine Normal University and has held key academic leadership positions, including Vice President for Academic Affairs, College Dean, and Director of the RSU Science High School. Her professional expertise spans instructional leadership, educational governance, and policy implementation, complemented by a strong research background in educational management and in higher-education development. She has published three Scopus-indexed works, one as a lead author and two as a co-author, covering themes such as employability, digital leadership, and participatory governance in higher education. Widely recognized for her academic excellence and leadership contributions, Dr. Rico-Villanueva continues to champion educational advancement through research, innovation, and dedicated public service.