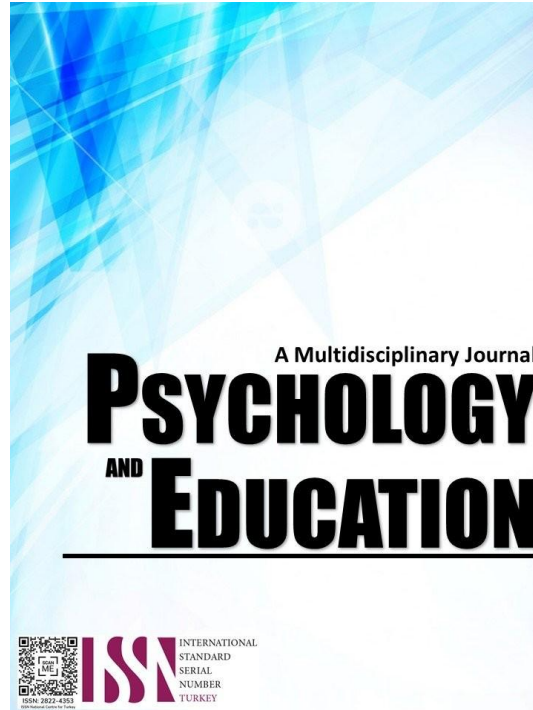


# TEACHING ENGLISH UNDER MATATAG: A CLOSER LOOK AT GRADE 7 TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES



## PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 45

Issue 2

Pages: 166-184

Document ID: 2025PEMJ4350

DOI: 10.70838/pemj.450204

Manuscript Accepted: 07-07-2025

# Teaching English Under Matatag: A Closer Look at Grade 7 Teachers' Experiences

Froilan O. Hernandez,\* Kristopher M. Ngilangil  
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

## Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Grade 7 English teachers in Surigao del Norte during the initial implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Anchored on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), particularly the Stages of Concern (SoC), and analyzed through Colaizzi's descriptive method, the research aimed to capture these experiences in the context of instructional shifts, pedagogical adjustments, and practical challenges brought about by the curricular reform. Guided by the general problem of understanding teachers' experiences and responses to the MATATAG Grade 7 English Curriculum, data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically. The study revealed that teachers encountered institutional constraints, instructional realignments, and adaptation challenges that shaped their implementation experiences. Their concerns were primarily situated in Stage 3 (Management) of the CBAM framework, indicating a focus on organizing instructional tasks, adjusting to classroom realities, and managing resource limitations. This highlight the need for improved implementation planning, targeted logistical support, and validation of grassroots strategies. It is recommended that educational stakeholders enhance pre-implementation readiness, provide context-specific training, and recognize teacher-driven innovations as part of sustaining effective curriculum reform.

**Keywords:** *lived experiences, CBAM, Grade 7 teachers, qualitative method*

## Introduction

The Philippine educational system had experienced significant changes to meet the shifting needs of learners, including the implementation of the K–12 curriculum. While its goal was to better prepare students for higher education and employment, it faced challenges such as learning poverty, overloaded content, and implementation difficulties (Abragan et al., 2022). To address these issues, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum through DepEd Order No. 010, series of 2024 during school year 2024–2025. This recalibrated framework focused on foundational learning and lifelong competencies, aiming to resolve past curriculum issues (Estrellado, 2023).

The MATATAG Curriculum, particularly in language instruction, emphasized literacy, language, and text, promoting communicative competence, critical thinking, and cultural relevance (DepEd, 2023). By addressing content overload and misaligned assessments, this framework redefined language education to develop proficient communicators, critical thinkers, and globally competent individuals. In actual classroom observations, however, it became evident that many Grade 7 English students struggled with basic reading and writing tasks, revealing a disconnect between curriculum expectations and learner readiness—a challenge teachers had to deal with on their own terms.

However, teachers reacted differently to educational reforms like the MATATAG Curriculum, as change is a personal process involving emotional and cognitive responses (Hall & Hord, 2020). Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), this study examined the lived experiences of Grade 7 English teachers in Surigao del Norte, assessing their impact on curriculum effectiveness and rollout.

Hence, CBAM emphasizes that change is an ongoing process rather than a single event and provides a framework to analyze implementers' experiences at various levels (Magallanes et al., 2022). By addressing these experienced concerns, the educational system could be more improved and supported. Ultimately, this study sought to bridge the gap between policy and practice, offering insights into potential challenges and ensuring a more cohesive and effective curriculum implementation.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to assess the implementation and practices of alternative delivery mode in select secondary schools in the Division of Rizal input for development framework. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the extent of implementation of alternative delivery mode in select secondary schools in the Division of Rizal as assessed by the two groups of respondents in terms of:
  - 1.1 access and enrollment rates;
  - 1.2 quality of educational materials;
  - 1.3 teacher training support;
  - 1.4 student engagement and performance; and
  - 1.5 stakeholders' involvement and support?
2. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the two groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of alternative delivery mode in select secondary schools in the Division of Rizal?

3. What is the level of practices of alternative delivery mode in select secondary schools in the Division of Rizal as assessed by the two groups of respondents in terms of:
  - 3.1 access and enrollment rates;
  - 3.2 quality of educational materials;
  - 3.3 teacher training support;
  - 3.4 student engagement and performance; and
  - 3.5 stakeholders' involvement and support?
4. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the two groups of respondents on the level of practices of alternative delivery mode in select secondary schools in the Division of Rizal?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of implementation and the level of practices of alternative delivery mode in select secondary schools in the Division of Rizal?
6. Based on the findings of the study, what development framework may be developed?

## Literature Review

### *MATATAG Curriculum*

The MATATAG curriculum is a big reform in the Philippine education system that aims to solve problems such as curriculum congestion and complex setup. It emphasizes foundational skills, including literacy and numeracy, to better prepare students for the demands of the 21st century (Kilag, 2024). This initiative mitigates the pressing educational issues, where Surigao del Norte has taken pace, by restructuring learning areas, allowing for more time and resources to be allocated to essential competencies.

What K-12 program fails to address; this new curriculum directly acts upon resolving the major issues. In the context of pedagogy, K-12 struggled to address the issue of learning poverty, with many students failing to achieve proficiency in basic competencies such as reading and mathematics (Malbas, 2023). Thus, MATATAG Curriculum layouts a strategic response to the challenges faced by the K-12 system, offering a streamlined and competency-focused alternative that prioritizes foundational learning and lifelong skills.

From the teachers' perspective, the MATATAG Curriculum redefines their role as facilitators of learning, placing greater emphasis on their responsibilities in ensuring the successful implementation of the reformed educational framework. Teachers are tasked with mastering the streamlined content, employing innovative pedagogical approaches, and adapting to the competency-based focus of the curriculum (DepEd, 2023). They are expected to continuously assess student progress through formative and authentic evaluation methods, ensuring that learners achieve the foundational and lifelong competencies outlined in the curriculum.

### *Grade 7 English*

In the arena of languages curricula, specifically, English, MATATAG Curriculum introduces several innovations to its framework to address gaps in the previous K-12 system. These include a spiral progression of language skills (literacy, language, text) that ensures learners build on prior knowledge at each grade level and achieve mastery over time by which Grade 7 falls at higher level (text). Mainly, its strong emphasis on communicative competence is its defining feature. This entails equipping students with the ability to use English effectively in real-life contexts, both written and oral, while also fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity and heritage (DepEd, 2023).

Nevertheless, Domingo and Masabpi (2024), highlight in their study that despite the promising framework of the new curriculum, for instance the Language Programs (i.e. English), with its emphasis on communicative competence, cultural awareness, and critical literacy, language teachers recognize the need for additional support to effectively implement these innovations, underlining the importance of comprehensive and sustained training to familiarize themselves with the curriculum's advanced methodologies and assessment strategies.

Building upon this insight, it becomes evident that conducting assessments or empirical studies on any curricular reform or newly implemented curriculum is essential to produce authentic and grounded evaluations. These evaluations not only provide critical feedback but also serve as foundational tools for improving subsequent rollouts and ensuring sustainable implementation. In this regard, Alvarado and Galigao (2024) emphasize the importance of early-phase evaluations in curriculum implementation, noting that such assessments are instrumental in identifying systemic challenges like resource constraints and the urgent need for teacher reactive trainings. Their study underscores that timely evaluations inform targeted interventions and guide policy refinements, making them indispensable in supporting the success of curricular reforms such as the MATATAG Curriculum.

### *Teachers' Lived Experiences*

Kayır and Toraman's (2021) study even underscores the significant role that teachers' lived experiences and attitudes play in the success of curriculum changes. Their findings reveal that while the technical completion of curriculum development is crucial, the success of its implementation largely depends on how teachers engage with and evaluate the new curriculum during the process of change. Teachers' attitudes—whether supportive, resistant, or neutral—can either facilitate or hinder the adoption of curriculum innovations. Also, their active involvement in evaluating and providing feedback during the curriculum development and

implementation phases ensures that the curriculum aligns with classroom realities, making it more effective in achieving its intended outcomes.

Furthermore, Sakkir et al. (2021) explored the multifaceted lived experiences that teachers face in teaching English amidst curriculum changes across different periods—before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study maintains that these experiences arise from various interrelated factors, including the conditions of students, teachers, schools, the environment, instructional materials, learning processes, administrative demands, and the integration of technology which are important to consider in curricular transition.

Kassimova et al. (2024) highlights the broader implications of language curriculum changes beyond the immediate classroom setting. The study emphasizes that policymakers often advocate for curriculum changes to promote uniformity, standardization, efficiency education systems. However, this approach can sometimes overlook the practical realities faced by teachers in implementing these changes. By focusing on teachers' perspectives and lived experiences, the study underscores the importance of considering their insights when designing and implementing curriculum changes. This has significant implications for policymakers and educators, as it stresses the need to align curriculum reforms with the practical needs of teachers and the specific contexts in which they operate.

Also, the study by Sulaiman et al. (2020) spotlights critical attributes that influence how teachers deal and implement curriculum changes. According to their findings, lateral thinking, resilience, and flexibility are pivotal in shaping teachers' lived experiences and responses to educational reforms. These attributes collectively underscore the importance of equipping teachers not only with technical knowledge but also with the personal and professional skills necessary to thrive in dynamic teaching environments.

### ***Concerns-Based Adoption Model Framework***

Notably, conventional to any reforms are personal impressions of the change implementers such as the teachers, thus, CBAM as a relevant framework of this study holds a significant role. It provides a structured approach to understanding how teachers react to, adapt to, and engage with innovations in their professional practice (Hall and Hord, 2020). It assumes that educators experience change along the process, encompassing personal, professional, and task-related concerns, which are categorized into seven Stages of Concern: Awareness, Informational, Personal, Management, Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing (Magallanes et al., 2022). These stages help researchers and administrators identify where teachers stand in their readiness and attitudes toward implementing reforms in the MATATAG Curriculum.

Chemutai et al. (2023) accentuates the value of CBAM in understanding teacher change, stating that this perspective is particularly valuable in understanding how teachers adapt to new curricula or instructional reforms. The CBAM framework underscores the significance of addressing teachers' evolving concerns at different stages of change, recognizing that their needs and perspectives shift as they engage with the innovation over time. This approach helps identify specific areas where interventions can be designed to address the teachers' concerns effectively, thereby fostering a smoother transition to the new curriculum.

As Fullan (2025) highlights in his study, teachers' concerns significantly influence the success of curricular changes, as their willingness to adopt and adapt to new methods determines the reform's practical outcomes. In the context of this new curriculum, where innovations in English instruction require shifts in pedagogy, CBAM can offer insights into the specific areas where teachers need support.

Significantly, Vela's (2023) study underlines how CBAM serves as a valuable framework for assisting teachers in adopting and applying new teaching methods by promoting engagement with content that connects cultural and linguistic elements. This aspect of CBAM is particularly significant for educators operating in diverse and dynamic contexts, as it not only acknowledges but also leverages their existing knowledge and experiences. The study also emphasizes how CBAM enables educators to bridge gaps between policy and practice, promoting self-efficacy in implementing innovations like MATATAG. Teachers in Surigao del Norte who are transitioning to the new curriculum may face challenges related to adapting content, language instruction, and resource limitations. CBAM's structured framework allows for identifying and addressing these concerns at various stages of adoption, fostering a deeper understanding of the innovation while building teacher confidence.

Additionally, successful implementation of innovations depends on addressing the personal and professional concerns of educators. As per the findings of Ohlemann et al. (2021), the relevance of the CBAM in understanding how "communication in the educational system predicts engagement for change," underscores its utility in analyzing teacher responses to educational reforms, paving way to actualized educational-reform visions. It provides a structured lens to assess and enhance communication strategies, making it instrumental in achieving meaningful and sustained educational changes.

As maintained by Zheng He and Yusop (2020), understanding the stages of concern among educators allows policymakers and administrators to tailor interventions that align with the specific needs and apprehensions of teachers. By categorizing concerns into various stages—ranging from personal uncertainties to task-related challenges and the broader impact of the reform, CBAM provides a structured approach to diagnosing potential barriers to implementation. This insight is crucial for smoothing the adoption process, as it enables targeted professional development, resource allocation, and communication strategies.

Also, understanding the concerns and professional development needs of educators can ensure that interventions are not only general

but tailored to their specific contexts and experiences. CBAM's Stages of Concern framework offers insights into how teachers perceive and respond to changes, which is critical for designing training programs and/or professional development initiatives that resonate with their personal and professional realities. By addressing these concerns through targeted, need-oriented, and context-specific seminars and workshops, educators are more likely to engage actively and effectively with the reform (Asiri, 2020). This personalized approach fosters confidence, reduces resistance, and enhances teachers' capacity to implement innovative practices, ultimately contributing to the successful adoption of educational reforms aligned with broader goals.

Kayaduman and Demirel (2020) highly note the necessity of incorporating concerns-based interventions, providing instructors with a multifaceted learning framework. This supports the concept of vicarious learning, enabling educators to observe and learn from the experiences of their peers and themselves. This approach fosters collaboration, builds confidence, and mitigates resistance to change, as educators feel supported in dealing with unfamiliar instructional tasks with their personal concerns addressed. Specifically, it ensures that interventions are dynamic, responsive, and rooted in real-world teaching challenges, enhancing educators' capacity to adapt and excel in evolving educational environments.

In the context of 21st century pedagogy, CBAM provides an essential framework for identifying and understanding technology-mediated teaching behaviors, particularly in the context of English instruction. Wang (2024) emphasizes that the integration of information technology (IT) into English instruction is shaped significantly by teachers' behaviors, concerns, and beliefs about the utility and effectiveness of these tools. CBAM's Stages of Concern framework help pinpoint where teachers stand in their readiness to adopt IT, ranging from initial awareness to full integration and innovative application. This insight is critical for English instruction, where technology can enhance language acquisition, improve access to diverse texts, and support interactive learning activities. However, the model also highlights barriers such as teachers' apprehension about their technological proficiency or the suitability of IT for language instruction. By addressing these concerns through targeted professional development and support, CBAM fosters a more confident and competent use of technology in English classrooms, enriching instruction and aligning teaching practices with 21st-century learning needs.

Moreover, CBAM plays a crucial role in fostering a supportive social environment during the implementation of educational reforms, such as a new reading curriculum. According to Hill (2023), teachers' perceptions of change are significantly influenced by the level of guidance and encouragement provided by school leaders. CBAM, through its Stages of Concern dimension, equips school leaders with insights into the individual concerns and readiness levels of teachers, enabling them to provide tailored assistance that aligns with these needs. By addressing personal and professional anxieties, school leaders can facilitate a positive and collaborative atmosphere, essential for systematic curriculum changes. Such an environment not only enhances teacher engagement but also helps sustain their commitment to improving instructional practices, ultimately contributing to significant gains in student reading proficiency.

On the other hand, Powers (2021) underscores the importance of understanding administrators' evolving concerns when utilizing CBAM to address teachers' emotional responses to change. The research explores how administrators' awareness and expressions of concern evolve as they employ CBAM as a framework for managing transitions within the educational system. Powers found that CBAM not only supports the identification of teachers' specific concerns at different stages of change but also provides administrators with a structured approach to address these concerns effectively. By aligning their leadership strategies with CBAM, administrators can create an environment that acknowledges the emotional challenges teachers face during curriculum or instructional innovation, fostering a smoother transition process.

**Synthesis.** Despite the wealth of research on curriculum reform and teacher adaptation, significant gaps remained that this study sought to address. Existing literature primarily focused on generalized responses to curriculum changes, with limited exploration of specific contexts like the new MATATAG Grade 7 English curriculum in Surigao del Norte. Additionally, while the importance of professional development and leadership support was well-documented, there was insufficient understanding of how local factors, such as resource availability and teacher training adequacy, influenced implementation outcomes in island and rural schools. While the MATATAG Curriculum promoted foundational competencies, it was unclear how the instruction, specifically in the field of English, was being utilized or perceived by teachers in this context. Also, their classroom responses during early implementation lacked sufficient empirical attention. This study aimed to fill these gaps by examining the specific lived experiences of school-based trained teachers in Surigao del Norte, identifying barriers to effective implementation, and proposing targeted interventions for Grade 7 English to support educators in this critical period of educational reform.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research design for this study employed a qualitative approach utilizing the descriptive phenomenological data analysis process developed by Colaizzi (1978). This method was particularly suitable for understanding the lived experiences of MATATAG Grade 7 English teachers in Surigao del Norte.

By adhering to Colaizzi's systematic approach, the study focused on extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, and



organizing themes to uncover the essence of the informants' experiences. This structured yet flexible design ensured a comprehensive exploration of the teachers' perspectives, allowing the research to yield rich and meaningful insights (Colaizzi, 1978). This approach was aligned with the study's goal of addressing teacher experiences using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, emphasizing the importance of contextual understanding in curriculum implementation.

## Participants

The informants included 10 teachers: 3 from ClaBaHipla, 3 from ATM, 3 from TSAM, and 1 from SNNHS. They were carefully selected based on specific inclusion criteria to ensure the reliability and relevance of the data. The primary requirement was that they must be MATATAG English teachers for Grade 7 within the DepEd Division of Surigao del Norte. Furthermore, these teachers should possess three to five years of teaching experience in DepEd, which signifies their familiarity with the institutional environment, practices, and challenges in the educational field. Additionally, the informants must have undergone the School-Based Training on the MATATAG Curriculum, ensuring they have a foundational understanding of its framework and objectives. These criteria aimed to select informants who are not only directly involved with the implementation of the MATATAG Grade 7 English curriculum but also have sufficient experience and training to provide insightful and credible responses regarding their experiences.

## Instrument

The primary research instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore the lived experiences of Grade 7 MATATAG English teachers. The guide contained open-ended questions aimed at uncovering the informants' primary concerns regarding the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum, as well as their perceptions of its impact on teaching and learning. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, it was presented to experts in education and curriculum studies for validation. Follow-up questions were also utilized during the interviews to delve deeper into the participants' responses, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences and concerns. This approach enabled the collection of rich, detailed data, facilitating a thorough exploration of the issues surrounding the MATATAG curriculum.

## Procedure

This study strictly adhered to ethical research standards to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and well-being of all informants.

**Conflict of Interest.** The researcher affirmed that there was no conflict of interest that could have influenced the process or outcome of this study. The researcher maintains a neutral stance and did not allow any personal or professional affiliations to affect the collection, interpretation, or presentation of data.

**Study Goals.** This study's primary objective was to explore and document the lived experiences of school-based trained teachers in Surigao del Norte regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Grade 7 English Curriculum.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** To ensure privacy and confidentiality, each informant was given an informed consent form that detailed the purpose, process, and voluntary nature of his/her participation. Pseudonyms were used in place of real names.

**Potential Risks.** There were no foreseeable physical, psychological, social, or financial risks to the participants. The interview questions were non-invasive and designed to encourage reflective sharing of professional experiences.

**Potential Benefits.** Participants would benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their professional practice and gain insights into the shared experiences of fellow educators navigating curriculum reform.

**Sponsorship.** This research was conducted as part of the academic requirements for the completion of the Master of Arts in Education at Surigao del Norte State University. No external sponsorship or funding agency is involved.

**Credibility.** To ensure credibility, the researcher employed rigorous data collection and analysis procedures, including iterative member checking to verify the accuracy of transcripts and the authenticity of interpreted meanings.

Further, this qualitative study employed a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Grade 7 English teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The data gathering process followed a rigorous and systematic procedure to ensure that rich, authentic insights were collected and interpreted based on informants' actual experiences.

Purposive sampling was used to select ten (10) Grade 7 English teachers from various schools in Surigao del Norte who had undergone the School-Based Training of Trainers (ToT) for the MATATAG Curriculum. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was secured, and informed consent was obtained from each participant. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method for data collection. The interviews generated narrative data which were later transcribed verbatim.

## Data Analysis

The lived experiences of Grade 7 English teachers on the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological data analysis strategy. Following verbatim transcription, the Colaizzi process was applied through the following steps:

Each transcript was thoroughly read and re-read to develop a comprehensive understanding of its overall content. At this stage, the researcher focused on the phenomenon as experienced by the informants, setting aside any personal thoughts, feelings, or ideas that may emerge.

From each transcript, significant statements relevant to the phenomenon under investigation were identified and documented on a separate sheet, along with their corresponding page and line numbers. During this phase, key statements and phrases reflecting the teachers' concerns about the implementation of the MATATAG Grade 7 English Curriculum were extracted, recorded on a separate sheet, and coded according to "transcript, page, and line numbers.

Meanings were derived from the significant statements, with each underlying meaning categorized to ensure comprehensive representation. The researcher then compared these formulated meanings with the original statements to ensure consistency and accuracy in the descriptions.

The formulated meanings were organized into categories, theme clusters, and overarching themes. Once all formulated meanings were agreed upon, they were grouped into categories that represent distinct clusters of themes. Each theme cluster was coded to encompass all related formulated meanings. Subsequently, related clusters of themes were combined to create a cohesive and distinctive theme construct. The accuracy and reliability of the themes were then validated with the assistance of an expert in qualitative research.

The study's findings were consolidated into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon being examined. After integrating all identified themes, the complete structure of the phenomenon was outlined. An expert then reviewed the findings to assess their depth and completeness, ensuring the description adequately represents the concerns of teachers regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Grade 7 English Curriculum.

The next step was the connection of the identified themes to the Concerns-Based Adoption Model's (CBAM) Stages of Concern (SoC) framework. Each major theme was analyzed and mapped to the specific stages of concern, ranging from awareness (Stage 0) to refocusing (Stage 6), to provide a nuanced understanding of the teachers' developmental journey in adopting the MATATAG Grade 7 English Curriculum. This process involved comparing the essence of each theme with the characteristics of the SoC stages, ensuring alignment and coherence.

The core structure of the phenomenon was refined by removing redundant, irrelevant, or exaggerated descriptions from the overall analysis. Finally, the findings were validated by the research informants to compare the researcher's interpretations with their actual experiences. This process involved presenting the findings to the informants, discussing the results with them, and securing their approval before proceeding to the defense.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussions of the study. The results of the analysis offer the experiences of the Grade 7 English teachers in the Division of Surigao del Norte on the implementation of MATATAG Curriculum, synthesized through a thematic map of the informants' experiences.

Table 1. *First Emergent Theme: Institutional Gaps in Implementation*

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Theme</i>
Institutional Gaps in Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited institutional preparation</li> <li>Abrupt implementation</li> <li>Workload Intensification</li> <li>Perceived lack of systemic support</li> </ul>

The first emergent theme reveals Institutional Gaps in Implementation. Despite the training conducted, the implementation surfaced several institutional challenges that hindered its smooth rollout. The abrupt nature of the curriculum's launch left many educators feeling unprepared, echoing similar concerns raised in recent studies about rushed educational reforms (Capuno et al., 2023).

Limited Institutional Preparation emerged as the initial theme cluster. Some teachers revealed that they received no clear or direct instructions from higher authorities on how the curriculum should be implemented.

Informant G admitted as shown in lines 20-21:

*"Some modules were introduced quickly, then amo na lang gibira sa among kaugalingon pagsabot."*

*(Some modules were introduced quickly, and we just pulled through by understanding them on our own.)*

This response highlights a disconnect between policy-level planning and grassroots execution, leaving teachers to rely on personal interpretation, which risks inconsistency and confusion in instructional delivery.

Also, Informant C remarked as indicated in lines 7-8:

*"Walay klarong teacher's guide, walay books, so grabe ang preparation needed."*

*(There's no clear teacher's guide, no books, so the preparation required is really intense.)*

These accounts reflect a larger issue in policy execution where the burden of interpretation falls on individual teachers, leading to inconsistency in classroom practices. Studies highlight that insufficient preparation undermines the fidelity of implementation, especially when frontline educators are left without guided frameworks (Domingo & Masabpi, 2024; Reyes & Aquino, 2022).

Following this, the theme cluster Abrupt Implementation was also evident. Several teachers recalled that the implementation came without sufficient orientation or preparatory sessions.

Informant H recalled as shown in lines 4-5:

*"Sa sugod lisod gyud kayo, Sir. Bago pa ang curriculum, unya nagkinahanglan mi og daghang adjustment..."*

*(At the start, it was really difficult, Sir. The curriculum was new, and we had to make a lot of adjustments...)*

This narrative illustrates that the rollout lacked transitional support, forcing teachers to adjust on the fly, often without the tools or time they needed.

Informant B added a remark as indicated in line 61:

*"Lisod usahay to prepare everything, labi na kung gamay ra ang time."*

*(Sometimes it's difficult to prepare everything, especially when there's only a short amount of time.)*

This sudden transition not only caused confusion but also limited the ability of educators to adapt effectively. Similar concerns were raised by teachers in previous curriculum reforms, emphasizing that abrupt systemic shifts without phased introduction lead to resistance and implementation fatigue (Capuno et al., 2023; Alvarado & Galigao, 2024).

Adding to the strain was the Workload Intensification that accompanied the new curriculum. Teachers described how the new demands added to their already heavy workload.

Informant A explained as shown in lines 60-62, transcript 1:

*"Sa workload, ni-increase gyud siya kay tungod lagi sa limited resources, magbuhat pa gyud ko og localized learning materials"*

*(The workload really increased because of the limited resources—I even had to create localized learning materials.)*

This account points to the teacher's burden that uncoordinated reform initiatives can place on frontline educators.

Also, Informant F pointed as indicated in lines 48-53:

*"I have to prepare a PowerPoint presentation... provide handout... search for a video... it's time-consuming"*

*(I have to prepare a PowerPoint presentation, provide handouts, search for video, it's very time-consuming.)*

Although DepEd Order No. 5, s. 2024, aimed to streamline teaching hours and recognize ancillary tasks, the added demands of implementing a new curriculum exacerbated workload issues. Several studies note that increased workload without corresponding structural support can lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and reduced instructional quality (Klusmann et al., 2022; Salazar & Dela Cruz, 2023).

Lastly, many participants pointed to a Perceived Lack of Systemic Support. This was not limited to vague instructions but also extended to a broader absence of resources and infrastructure.

Informant B mentioned as shown in lines 16-19, transcript 2:

*"Pero kinahanglan pa gyud og klaro nga support, like more sample activities and tools, kay kami ra gyud usahay ang maghimo tanan..."*

*(But there's still a need for clear support, like more sample activities and tools, because sometimes we're the ones who have to create everything ourselves.)*

This testimony emphasizes that systemic deficiencies—both in communication and material support—hindered the successful integration of the new curriculum at the school level.

Informant H expressed as indicated in line 36:

*"Kulang gyud mi ug mg materials — projectors, visual aids, ug books."*

*(We really lack materials —projectors, visual aids, and books.)*

These sentiment mirrors findings from research in similar contexts where curriculum implementation suffered due to infrastructure gaps, inconsistent policies, and limited instructional materials (Bautista & Bernabe, 2021; Magallanes et al., 2022).



Table 2. Second Emergent Theme: Instructional Emphasis on Foundational Skills	
Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Instructional Emphasis on Foundational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Literacy instruction demands</li><li>● Student readiness concerns</li><li>● Literacy as instructional focus</li><li>● Strategy adjustment for literacy</li></ul>

The second emergent theme, Instructional Emphasis on Foundational Skills, underscores a significant realignment in teaching priorities among Grade 7 English teachers. While the MATATAG Curriculum is structured to elevate higher-order text-based comprehension at this level, many educators reported reverting to literacy instruction typical of lower grade bands. This shift was driven by the reality that students lacked mastery in basic reading and writing skills, making it difficult for them to engage meaningfully with the expected Grade 7 content (Department of Education, 2023; Salazar & Dela Cruz, 2023).

The first theme cluster, Literacy Instruction Demands, emerged as teachers expressed how the curriculum required them to devote additional time and energy to developing students' basic literacy.

Informant A emphasized in lines 39-42:

*“Para nako challenging gyud siya kaayo, Sir, kay ang time allotment ba, 45 minutes ra per class, so kulang gyud siya kaayo to deliver the whole content.”*  
*(For me, Sir, it's really very challenging because the time allotment is only 45 minutes per class, which is not enough to deliver the whole content.)*

This statement shows how expectations for higher-level comprehension had to be recalibrated based on student performance levels. Similarly, as expressed in line 45-47, the Informant I added:

*“Kinahanglan gyud ko mag-usab-usab sa strategy kada klase... despite sa limitations”*  
*(I really have to constantly change my strategy for each class... despite the limitations.)*

This narrative reflects the adaptive measures that educators take to ensure foundational learning is prioritized, confirming how teachers reshape their instructional focus to align with learners' actual capacities (Kilag, 2024; Salazar & Dela Cruz, 2023).

The second theme cluster, Student Readiness Concerns, also emerged from these reflections.

Informant H noted in lines 31-32:

*“Daghan pa gyud ang dili kamao mobasa ug mosulat og tarong... mubalik gyud mi usahay sa basic...”*  
*(There are still many students who don't know how to read and write properly... so we sometimes have to go back to the basics.)*  
This line illustrates how educators' strategies were shaped by the recognition that many learners were not developmentally ready for Grade 7-level texts.

In line 39-41 of transcript 8, the Informant H added:

*“Naay mga bata nga dili pa kabalo mo-construct og sentence sa English...”*  
*(There are students who still don't know how to construct a sentence in English...)*

This concern highlights a broader issue in curriculum implementation, where a disconnect exists between the designed progression of competencies and actual student preparedness—a gap that has also been echoed in global research (UNESCO, 2023; Domingo & Masabpi, 2024).

Consequently, teachers began to reframe the instructional intent of the curriculum, giving rise to the third cluster, Literacy as Instructional Focus.

Informant D noted in lines 27-28:

*“Ang focus na sa Grade 7 kay text-based na... daghan sa ila di pa kabalo mubasa or magsulat og tarong.”*  
*(The focus in Grade 7 is now text-based... but many of them still don't know how to read or write properly.)*

This adjustment in focus suggests that teachers prioritized literacy not merely as a preliminary step but as a dominant component of instruction.

Supporting this, in lines 33-34, Informant I further shared:

*“Learning gaps sa mga bata... kinahanglan balikan sa basics like pagbasa ug pagsabot sa instructions.”*

*(There are learning gaps among the students... we need to go back to the basics, like reading and understanding instructions.)*

Such decisions demonstrate how teaching practices became centered around bridging foundational gaps rather than advancing to higher-order thinking tasks. This reinforces the growing understanding that literacy is not only a lower-grade concern but also a prerequisite for success across levels (Villanueva & Ramirez, 2024).

Lastly, the theme cluster Strategy Adjustment for Literacy reflects how teachers responded with context-specific instructional solutions.

In line 55-56, a Informant I shared:

*“Nagbuhat pud mi og localized learning materials para mas relatable ang mga content.”*

*(We also created localized learning materials to make the content more relatable.)*

By adapting their materials to be more relevant and accessible, teachers improved the effectiveness of literacy instruction.

Additionally, Informant D stated in line 44 of transcript 4:

*“Start with Binisaya explanations then gradually move to English.”*

*(I start with explanations in Binisaya, then gradually transition to English.)*

This emphasis on comprehension reflects a meaningful shift in instructional philosophy—from traditional grammar-first methods to understanding-based pedagogy—a direction increasingly endorsed in modern language instruction (Del Rosario, 2024; Alvarado & Galigao, 2024).

Table 3. *Third Emergent Theme: Instructional Adjustments*

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Theme</i>
Instructional Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in teaching strategies</li> <li>• Gap between curriculum and learner readiness</li> <li>• Instructional differentiation</li> <li>• Contextualized pedagogy</li> </ul>

The third emergent theme, Instructional Adjustments, highlights how teachers modified their practices in response to the evolving demands of the MATATAG Curriculum. As frontline implementers, teachers bore the responsibility of translating curriculum intentions into meaningful learning experiences, requiring both pedagogical flexibility and contextual sensitivity (Alvarado & Galigao, 2024).

Under the theme cluster Change in Teaching Strategies, teachers shared how they had to revise their instructional approaches to suit the curriculum.

Informant G mentioned, as shown in lines 25-27:

*“Kinahanglan kabalo ka mu-adjust, mu-modify sa lesson depending sa klase nga imo gi-handle.”*

*(You need to know how to adjust and modify the lesson depending on the class you’re handling.)*

This shift often meant rethinking lesson planning, pacing, and delivery to better meet the expected competencies.

Informant D emphasized the same point in lines 14-15:

*“Kinahanglan gyud nga mu-adjust ko sa pacing sa klase, sa mga attitude sa bata, ug sa bag-ong structure sa curriculum.”*

*(I really need to adjust to the pacing of the class, the students’ attitudes, and the new structure of the curriculum)*

These statements reflect how teachers stepped into the role of instructional designers, adjusting not only the content but the mode of instruction to keep up with MATATAG’s requirements (Del Rosario, 2024).

The theme cluster Gap Between Curriculum and Learner Readiness reveals a recurring concern among teachers about the disconnect between what the curriculum expects and what students are actually capable of.

In line 11, a Informant B shared:

*“Ang levels nila kay lahi-lahi gyud, so kinahanglan ko mag-adjust per lesson.”*

*(Their levels are really different, so I need to adjust for each lesson.)*

As expressed, learner needs and differences require personalized instruction, signaling a disconnect between the ideal curriculum structure and students' actual performance levels.

Informant I echoed this sentiment in lines 20-21:

*“Nagdala mi og exemplar pero kinahanglan gyud mi mag-adjust depende sa actual nga panginahanglan sa klase.”*

*(We brought an exemplar, but we really had to adjust based on the actual needs of the class.)*

These response underscores the challenges teachers face when curriculum design does not match student reality, particularly for those still recovering from foundational skill gaps (Bautista & Bernabe, 2021).

In response to these challenges, the theme cluster Instructional Differentiation emerged. Teachers explained how they diversified their instructional methods to suit varied learning levels.

Informant J stated in lines 59-60:

*“Maghimo ko og simplified worksheets nga akong gi-base sa exemplar pero ako nang gi-adjust based sa capacity sa klase levels.”*

*(I create simplified worksheets based on the exemplar, but I adjust them according to the class’s level and capacity.)*

This response indicates that differentiation was not a supplementary method but a necessary daily practice.

Informant H expressed in lines 19-20:

*“Kinahanglan gyud ko mag-adjust, magbuhat og materials nga mas angay sa sitwasyon sa among klase.”*

*(I really need to adjust and create materials that are more suitable for our class situation.)*

These efforts show that differentiated instruction was not optional but essential, enabling inclusive participation and equitable access to the learning content (Villanueva & Ramirez, 2024).

The final cluster, Contextualized Pedagogy, demonstrates how teachers localize instruction to reflect the backgrounds and abilities of their learners.

In lines 20-21, Informant D stated:

*“Gi-effort nga maminaw nila individually kung asa sila lisod.”*

*(I made an effort to listen to them individually to understand where they are struggling.)*

Current literature affirms that contextualized pedagogy leads to more meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes, especially in linguistically diverse and resource-constrained settings (Chen, 2024; Puspitasari, 2024).

Informant E affirmed this in lines 17-18:

*“Ang MATATAG curriculum kay focus sa mastery—usahay usa ra ka skill per lesson, so mas klaro og mas dali masundan sa mga bata.”*

*(The MATATAG curriculum focuses on mastery—sometimes there’s only one skill per lesson, so it’s clearer and easier for the students to follow.)*

Contextualizing content ensured that learning was not only delivered but also understood and retained, aligning with recent findings that culturally and contextually relevant teaching strengthens learning engagement and achievement. These adaptations allowed teachers to connect lessons with students’ everyday experiences, thereby increasing classroom participation and comprehension. Ultimately, contextualized pedagogy served as a bridge between curriculum standards and the actual learning capacities of students.

**Table 4. Fourth Emergent Theme: Emotional and Cognitive Struggles in Implementation**

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Theme</i>
Emotional and Cognitive Struggles in Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initial confusion and uncertainty</li> <li>● Performance pressure</li> <li>● Emotional fatigue</li> <li>● Gaining confidence</li> <li>● Collegial support boosts morale</li> </ul>

The fourth emergent theme, Emotional and Cognitive Struggles in Implementation, reveals how teachers underwent psychological and emotional challenges as they navigated the shift brought by the MATATAG Curriculum. This phase of implementation was not only instructional but also deeply personal, affecting teachers’ confidence, energy, and well-being (Martinez et al., 2023; Klusmann et al., 2022).

Under the theme cluster Initial Confusion and Uncertainty, teachers expressed difficulty understanding how to begin implementing the curriculum without concrete information. This lack of clarity led to hesitation and inconsistent instructional approaches during the initial stages of rollout.

Informant G explained in lines 15-18:

*“...kulang pa kay daghan kaayo nga part sa curriculum nga wala jud gi-expound.”*

*(...it’s still lacking because there are so many parts of the curriculum that were not fully explained.)*

This highlights how the absence of a clear roadmap made teachers question their next steps, hindering their readiness.

Also, Informant D shared in lines 50-52:

*“Gusto pa ko makakita og more samples sa performance tasks og assessment tools kay sometimes naglibog mi unsaon pag-measure properly sa ilang progress.”*

*(I still want to see more samples of performance tasks and assessment tools because sometimes we’re confused about how to properly measure their progress.)*

Unclear curriculum goals caused internal doubt and hesitation. This mirrors findings in recent research, which affirm that early confusion during reform is linked to unclear implementation guidelines and insufficient orientation (Alvarado & Galigao, 2024).

The second cluster, Performance Pressure, illustrates how teachers felt overwhelmed by expectations to quickly adapt while maintaining student outcomes. This pressure intensified their apprehension as they struggled to meet new standards with limited time and support.

As Informant B shared in lines 61-62:

*“Usahay bitaw, murag mahadlok ka nga basin naay bata nga wala kasabot, tungod sa limited resources og support.”*

*(Sometimes, you can’t help but worry that there might be a student who doesn’t understand because of the limited resources and support.)*

This statement indicates how teachers were caught between adjusting to innovation and meeting deliverables.

Informant I reflected in lines 4-5:

*“Bisan pa man Sir nga gi-introduce na sa training, lain ra gyud ang actual nga implementation sa classroom.”*

*(Even though it was already introduced during the training, Sir, the actual implementation in the classroom is really different.)*

Such concerns point to the tension between reform ideals and day-to-day realities, which often leave teachers feeling under pressure to meet benchmarks while adjusting practices (Salazar & Dela Cruz, 2023).

Thirdly, the theme cluster Emotional Fatigue emerged from teachers’ recurring accounts of exhaustion, both mental and emotional.

Informant D described in line 33:

*“Daily struggle.”*

This illustrates how ongoing change without recovery time wears teachers down.

Informant C noted in line 48-49:

*“Pressure and challenge gyud ang akong nabati tungod sa ka-broad sa curriculum ug kulang sa ready-made materials.”*

*(I really felt pressure and challenge because of how broad the curriculum is and the lack of ready-made materials.)*

These narratives reflect symptoms of burnout, a condition common during reform when support is inadequate and demands remain high (Klusmann et al., 2022).

Despite these difficulties, some teachers showed signs of adjustment and growth, as expressed in the cluster Gaining Confidence.

Informant I shared in line 7-8:

*“Mas nasabtan na namo ang flow sa lessons ug ang pacing.”*

*(We now have a better understanding of the flow of the lessons and the pacing.)*

As time passed, hands-on experience helped lessen doubts.

Also, Informant A said in line 43-44:

*“Naka-learn pud ko og bag-ong teaching strategies ug methodologies nga nindot pud kaayo gamiton.”*

*(I also learned new teaching strategies and methodologies that are very effective to use.)*

This experiential learning served as a coping mechanism, enabling them to refine approaches through reflection and action, aligned with studies suggesting confidence builds over time with contextual immersion (Domingo & Masabpi, 2024).

Finally, the theme cluster Collegial Support Boosts Morale reflected how peer support became a buffer against burnout and confusion. Informant C noted in lines 80-81:

*“Ang among collaborative efforts—sharing of ideas, experiences, materials—maoy pinaka-dako og impact.”*  
*(Our collaborative efforts—sharing ideas, experiences, and materials—had the greatest impact.)*

This collaborative environment lessened isolation and gave teachers a platform for shared understanding and problem-solving. As supported by Lopez and Pineda (2022), collegiality plays a critical role in building resilience among educators undergoing change. Peer connections not only provided emotional reinforcement but also enabled the exchange of effective instructional strategies. These relationships became essential in sustaining morale and instructional confidence.

Table 5. Fifth Emergent Theme: Professional Growth and Support Needs	
Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Professional Growth and Support Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate training</li><li>• Continuous professional learning</li><li>• Peer collaboration as support</li><li>• Trainings recommendation</li><li>• Material improvement recommendation</li><li>• Resource support recommendation</li></ul>

The fifth emergent theme, Professional Growth and Support Needs, captures how teachers’ capacity to implement the MATATAG Curriculum was shaped by the adequacy of training, peer support, and access to learning materials. This theme underscores the importance of continuous development and logistical assistance to sustain long-term instructional effectiveness (Del Rosario, 2024; Magallanes et al., 2022).

The first theme cluster, Inadequate Training, highlights that the initial training received by teachers did not fully equip them for implementation. Many teachers felt that the orientation sessions were too brief or too broad, leaving them unsure how to translate curriculum goals into classroom practice.

Informant H noted in line 17-18:

*“Dili tanan sa training ma-apply dayon, kay depende man sa klase sa estudyante ug sa available nga kagamitan.”*  
*(Not everything from the training can be applied immediately because it depends on the type of students and the available resources.)*

This reveals a mismatch between the content of training and the actual competencies needed in the classroom.

Informant G expressed in lines 15-18:

*“The training helped a lot... but kulang pa kay daghan kaayo nga part sa curriculum nga wala jud gi-expound.”*  
*(The training helped a lot... but it’s still lacking because many parts of the curriculum were not clearly explained.)*

This gap left educators unprepared to manage complex tasks such as assessment design, differentiation, and material development—an issue echoed in prior implementation studies (Alvarado & Galigao, 2024).

Under Continuous Professional Learning, teachers emphasized their desire for ongoing development to build confidence and mastery.

Informant J remarked in line 32-33:

*“Importante pud nga i-evaluate kada grading period kung unsay kulang sa implementation.”*  
*(It is also important to evaluate each grading period to identify what is lacking in the implementation.)*

This demonstrates the willingness of educators to grow professionally if given structured opportunities.

Informant 8 explained in line 15-16:

*“Na-apil ko sa school-based training ug makatabang man pudsya... masabtan nimo ang overallframework sa curriculum.”*  
*(I joined the school-based training and it was helpful... it helped me understand the overall framework of the curriculum.)*

Such calls reinforce the findings that regular upskilling helps alleviate doubts and promotes long-term curriculum integration (Domingo & Masabpi, 2024).

The next cluster, Peer Collaboration as Support, revealed that teachers relied heavily on each other to understand and implement the curriculum.

Informant C shared in lines 16-17:



*“Dako pud og tabang ang among teamwork with other teachers—mag-collaborate mi, mag-sharing og strategies.”*

*(Our teamwork with other teachers was also a big help—we collaborate and share strategies.)*

This indicates the value of collaborative environments in overcoming uncertainties to suffice task objectives.

Similarly, in lines 21-23, Informant G shared:

*“Naa mi community of teachers nga magtinabangay... we try to make sense of the exemplars and objectives together.”*

*(We have a community of teachers who help each other... we try to make sense of the exemplars and objectives together.)*

Such collaboration served as a grassroots strategy to fill in gaps left by formal training — a practice strongly supported in literature on effective implementation (Lopez & Pineda, 2022).

In Trainings Recommendation, teachers advocated for more interactive and applied forms of capacity-building.

As stated in lines 27-29, Informant J expressed:

*“Hangyo is to provide continuous training... mas hands-on ug mas localized ang approach.”*

*(The request is to provide continuous training... with a more hands-on and localized approach.)*

This suggests that hands-on strategies are preferred over lecture-based sessions, as they better reflect classroom realities.

The cluster Material Improvement Recommendation included comments urging DepEd to refine and simplify instructional resources. Teachers emphasized that clearer, more streamlined materials would reduce preparation time and enhance their ability to deliver lessons effectively.

Informant B stated in line 26-27:

*“Murag kulang siya og mga konkreto nga examples og ready-made materials ba.”*

*(It seems to lack concrete examples and ready-made materials.)*

Complex or unclear modules not only confuse teachers but may also disrupt instructional flow. Simplified guides would improve curriculum delivery by making it more accessible and user-friendly (Salazar & Dela Cruz, 2023).

Lastly, Resource Support Recommendation emphasized the importance of logistical aid, especially in under-resourced schools.

Informant J suggested in lines 29-30:

*“Support sa learning resources... like more printed modules or visual aids especially sa mga schools nga kulang sa equipment.”*

*(Support in learning resources... like more printed modules or visual aids, especially for schools that lack equipment.)*

This sentiment reflects the common barrier of inadequate ICT and teaching aids, a recurring issue in implementing education reforms in resource-constrained settings (Bautista & Bernabe, 2021).

As a result of teachers' challenges in implementing the new curriculum, they initiated specific local interventions. Firstly, teachers implement remedial reading sessions to address the significant foundational literacy gaps among students entering Grade 7. Instead of focusing on comprehension skill, which is the core of English 7, teachers are compelled to pace back to basic reading fluency and spelling to suffice the need of the learners. Teachers aim to bring students up to the expected proficiency level, ensuring they can participate meaningfully in regular classroom instruction and preventing long-term learning setbacks (Bautista & Bernabe, 2021). Secondly, teachers use the mother tongue in English classes functions as a scaffolding technique to make abstract concepts more accessible, as in multilingual settings, switching to students' first language helps reduce cognitive overload and enables them to process instructions, definitions, and explanations more effectively (Alvarado & Galigao, 2024). Thirdly, teachers create and use contextualized materials to enhance relevance and relatability and help bridge the gap between unfamiliar curriculum content and students' everyday experiences, thereby improving comprehension and interest. Lastly, teachers engage in collaborative lesson planning to share best practices, develop more effective strategies, and provide mutual support. Through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and informal collaboration, teachers are able to refine instructional methods, co-develop materials, and build confidence in their curriculum delivery (Lopez & Pineda, 2022).

Figure 1 shows a descriptive thematic map illustrating the lived experiences of Grade 7 English teachers in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. It presents an interconnected web of emergent themes drawn from teacher narratives, capturing both the challenges and adaptive strategies encountered during curriculum rollout. The figure culminates in Local Intervention for English 7 MATATAG Curriculum, representing the teachers' proactive measures to contextualize and implement the curriculum through school-based initiatives, which ultimately synthesize into the core theme: Experiences of Grade 7 English Teachers on the Implementation of MATATAG Curriculum.

The thematic map illustrating the lived experiences of Grade 7 English teachers in the MATATAG implementation, shows the major emergent themes—Institutional Gaps in Implementation, Instructional Emphasis on Foundational Skills, Instructional Adjustments, Emotional and Cognitive Struggles in Implementation, and Professional Growth and Support Needs—highlight the multidimensional nature of teachers' experiences. These themes reflect the complex interplay between system-level constraints and classroom realities.

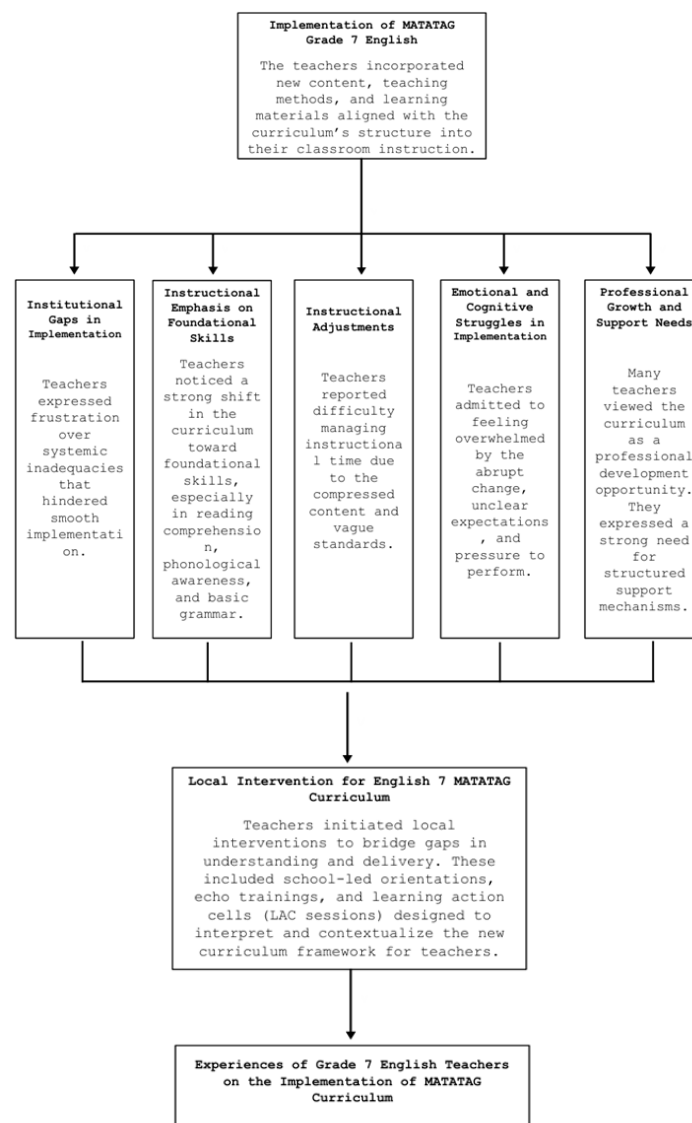


Figure 1. *Thematic map of the experiences of the teachers on the Implementation of Grade 7 English MATATAG Curriculum with exhaustive description of the emergent themes*

The five emergent themes were synthesized into three overarching categories—Instructional Realignments, Institutional Concerns, and Adaptation Challenges—to provide a more structured and integrative understanding of the teachers' lived experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. This thematic condensation allowed for the clustering of closely related concepts that shared underlying meanings and practical implications, a process aligned with the principles of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2021).

Instructional Realignments encompasses themes related to the pedagogical shifts teachers made in response to curriculum demands, such as the Instructional Emphasis on Foundational Skills and Instructional Adjustments, both of which reflect changes in teaching strategies, literacy focus, and contextualized delivery (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Institutional Concerns captures the systemic and organizational barriers highlighted in the theme Institutional Gaps in Implementation, such as intensified workloads, lack of preparation, and administrative lapses—common issues in curriculum reform settings (Dlamini & Zulu, 2024).

Lastly, Adaptation Challenges groups together the personal and professional struggles expressed in the themes Emotional and Cognitive Struggles in Implementation and Professional Support and Development, which reveal the psychological toll, performance

pressures, and need for continuous capacity building—factors frequently encountered in change management processes (Arpa, 2024). This synthesis not only reduces thematic fragmentation but also mirrors the interconnected and layered nature of the implementation process, wherein instructional, institutional, and emotional elements dynamically interact within the realities of the classroom. Moreover, organizing the emergent themes into these overarching categories provides a clearer lens through which stakeholders can interpret the findings and translate them into action. By framing the teachers’ experiences within Instructional Realignments, Institutional Concerns, and Adaptation Challenges, this structure facilitates a more targeted response from policymakers, curriculum developers, and school leaders. It highlights the interdependence between instructional practices, systemic support, and teacher well-being—reminding educational authorities that successful implementation requires simultaneous attention to classroom realities, institutional readiness, and the evolving needs of educators.

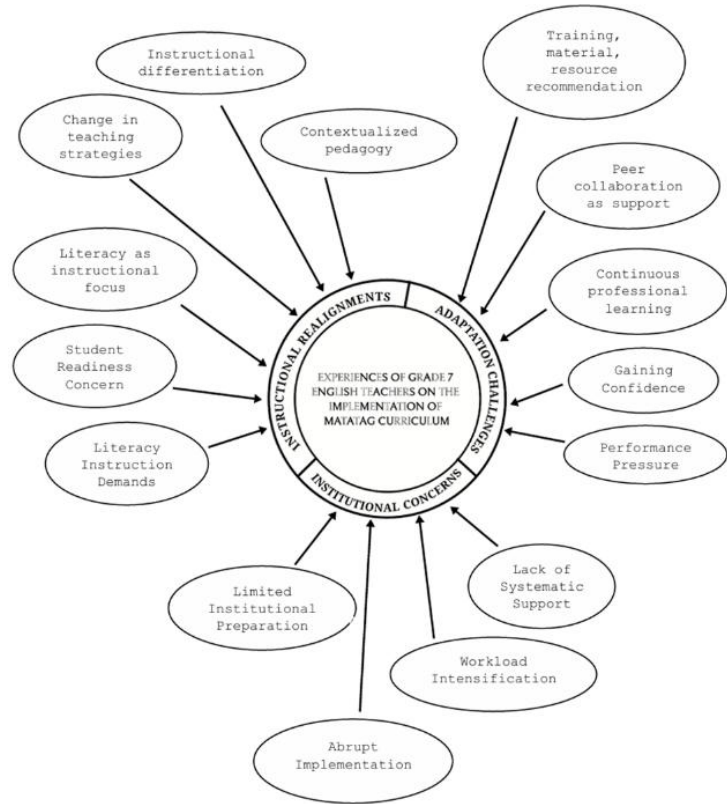


Figure 2. Thematic map of the experiences of the teachers on the Implementation of Grade 7 English MATATAG Curriculum

After the major themes were synthesized and the entire implementation process was represented, the researcher mapped them to the most relevant stage of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) according to their corresponding characteristics and focus as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6. Mapping themes to CBAM’s SoC		
Themes	Related CBAM Stage of Concern	Justification for Mapping
Instructional Realignments	Stage 3 – Management	This theme reflects teachers’ focus on organizing and managing instructional strategies, addressing logistical concerns, and adapting lessons to student needs—typical of Stage 3.
Institutional Concerns		The concerns raised about workload, abrupt rollout, limited preparation, and lack of systemic support align with the logistical and organizational focus of Stage 3.
Adaptation Challenges		Teachers’ emotional responses, need for training, peer collaboration, and adjustments in practice point to managing day-to-day tasks and coping strategies, consistent with Stage 3 concerns.

The three synthesized overarching dimensions—Instructional Realignments, Institutional Concerns, and Adaptation Challenges—reflect a task-oriented orientation consistent with Stage 3: Management of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) Stages of Concern framework. This stage is characterized by concerns about the processes, logistics, time management, and practical execution of the innovation, rather than abstract or philosophical apprehensions about its value or consequences (Hall & Hord, 2020). Teachers operating at this stage are primarily focused on how to efficiently manage instructional changes, classroom routines, and resource

allocations—precisely the focus reported by Grade 7 English teachers in this study.

The dimension of Instructional Realignments corresponds to management-level concerns as teachers were primarily engaged in modifying lesson delivery, differentiating instruction, and integrating foundational literacy skills in response to immediate classroom realities. These changes were not driven by deep theoretical opposition or ideological resistance but by the need to ensure curriculum fit and day-to-day learning success. According to Tondeur et al. (2021), such pragmatic adjustments reflect early-stage adoption wherein educators attempt to synchronize new practices with pre-existing constraints in time, resources, and student ability.

Similarly, Institutional Concerns mirror the logistical and procedural focus of Stage 3. Teachers voiced dissatisfaction over the abrupt rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum, citing intensified workloads, lack of timely instructional materials, and minimal administrative coordination. These align with what Hall and Hord (2020) describe as “operational barriers,” which become focal points of concern when educators begin to engage directly with implementation tasks. Teachers were less concerned about the theoretical rationale behind MATATAG and more preoccupied with its implications for daily planning, classroom pacing, and instructional continuity—hallmarks of the Management stage.

Lastly, Adaptation Challenges — which encapsulate the emotional and professional adjustments teachers experienced—also fall within the scope of Stage 3 concerns. While emotional responses may seem personal, they often stem from task overload, lack of confidence in execution, or performance anxiety—issues that are amplified when logistical demands outweigh available support structures (Zhao & Zhang, 2022). Teachers in this study highlighted the need for further training, continuous peer collaboration, and coping strategies to manage expectations and performance pressures, confirming their predominant preoccupation with implementation logistics rather than curriculum outcomes or student results. This aligns with findings by Fessehayee and Mihreteab (2023), who noted that during initial curriculum changes, educators often focus on self-efficacy, task management, and instructional clarity.

Overall, these three dimensions collectively reflect a transitional state where teachers are actively implementing but still grappling with how to make the curriculum work effectively in their classrooms. This affirms that the participants in this study are operating within Stage 3 (Management) of the CBAM SoC framework, where concerns are rooted in practical execution and resource alignment rather than deeper impact assessment or reform evaluation (Hall & Hord, 2020; Reyes et al., 2024).

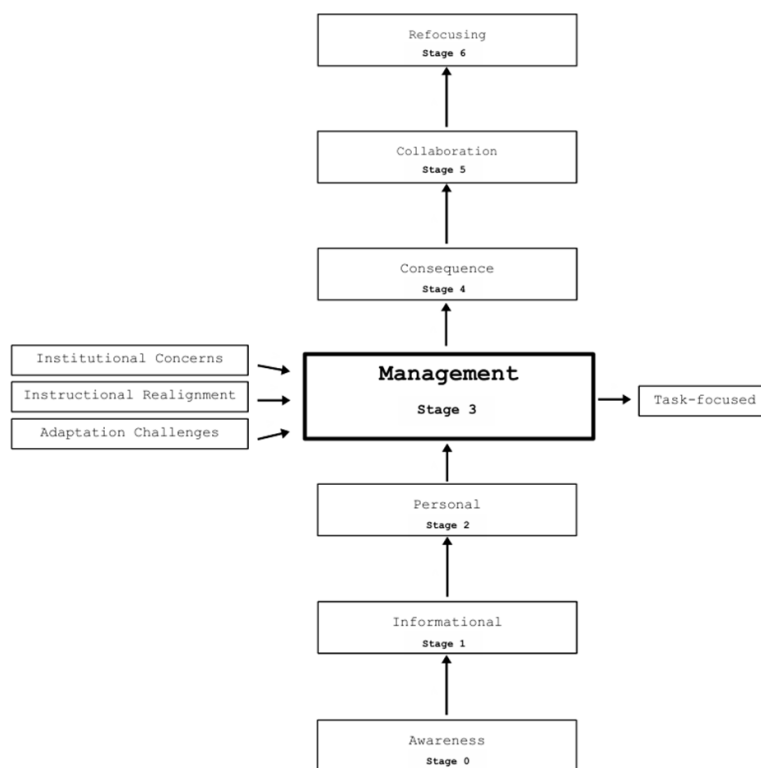


Figure 3. Mapping of Emergent Themes to Stage 3 (Management) of the CBAM Stages of Concern

Figure 3 illustrates that the teachers' lived experiences, as categorized under the three themes, align closely with concerns characteristic of the management stage, including managing materials, resources, time, and classroom adjustments. This alignment underscores how teachers were primarily preoccupied with task-oriented challenges during the initial implementation phase of the MATATAG Curriculum.

## Conclusion

Based on the thematic analysis and theoretical mapping, the following conclusions are drawn:

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum posed significant challenges for Grade 7 English teachers. These barriers highlight the gap between policy design and classroom realities, affecting teachers' readiness and instructional delivery.

As teachers' experiences predominantly align with Stage 3 (Management) of the CBAM Stages of Concern, this indicates that teachers are still in the transitional phase of curriculum adoption, where practical demands take precedence over broader pedagogical or outcome-based concerns.

Teachers responded proactively to curriculum demands by implementing localized interventions.

These grassroots innovations demonstrate teacher agency and adaptive capacity, underscoring the importance of bottom-up contributions to curriculum implementation.

Based on the findings and analysis in this section, the following recommendations are proposed:

The Department of Education and school administration should strengthen implementation planning by conducting readiness assessments prior to curriculum rollout, improving access to materials, clarifying policies, and streamlining workload expectations contextualized in English 7 Curriculum.

Since teachers are situated in the CBAM Stage 3 (Management), professional development programs must prioritize context-based training that targets logistical and organizational concerns.

These should include modules on lesson planning, time management, instructional material adaptation, and differentiated instruction under the MATATAG framework

Institutional systems should formally recognize and support localized instructional innovations by documenting and scaling successful practices across schools.

Initiatives such as sharing of best practices, localized material banks, and collaborative planning frameworks can reinforce teacher-led improvements and foster sustainability of the reform.

## References

- Abragan, F., Abarcas, V., Aquino, I. M., & Bagongon, R. E. (2022). Research review on K-12 curriculum implementation in the Philippines: A generic perspective. *European Journal of Educational and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1–8.
- Alvarado, J. R., & Galigao, R. P. (2024). Assessing the effectiveness of curriculum implementation across global educational systems. *Pantao: The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(4), Article 25. <https://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS030425>
- Arpa, A. T. (2024). Exploring the challenges of curriculum implementation at the secondary level science education in Bangladesh from teachers' perspective according to the National Curriculum Framework 2021. ResearchGate.
- Asiri, A. A. (2020). Teachers' concern and professional development needs in adopting inclusive education in Saudi Arabia, based on their gender for Vision 2030. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 9(6), 9–20. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v9n6p9>
- Bautista, R., & Bernabe, M. (2021). Bridging literacy gaps in Philippine secondary schools: Addressing post-pandemic learning loss through remediation. *Philippine Journal of Education and Development*, 43(2), 112–125.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/asi/thematic-analysis/book248481> Sage Publications
- Chemutai, B. M., Chang, J. K., Jepkoech, S., & Namubiru, P. (2023). Understanding teacher concerns in Uganda's lower secondary curriculum review: A Concerns-Based Adoption Model perspective. *The Educator*, 19(1), 52–68.
- Chen, S. (2024). During the reform: How teachers' lived experiences influence their beliefs and practices of project-based learning. *SAGE Open*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241265096>
- Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. S. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology*. Oxford University Press.
- DepEd. (2023). MATATAG Agenda for Basic Education. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines.
- DepEd. (2024). DepEd Order No. 5, s. 2024: Rationalizing the workload of public school teachers. <https://www.deped.gov.ph>
- Dlamini, T. C., & Zulu, F.-Q. B. (2024). Curriculum implementation challenges and responses during the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural secondary school in South Africa. *African Journal of Career Development*, 6(1), a73. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v6i1.73>



- Domingo, S. J. A., & Masabpi, A. G. (2024). MATATAG agenda: Analyzing school heads' and teachers' perspectives in Lambayong District I. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(6), 2071–2080. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12559940>
- Education Futures and Research Hub. (2023). Institutional readiness in curriculum reforms: Lessons from Southeast Asia. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Fessehaye, S., & Mihreteab, H. (2023). Teachers' implementation concerns during curriculum innovation: A CBAM-based perspective. *International Journal of Educational Change*, 19(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/ijedc.2023.04.008>
- Fullan, M. (2025). *The new meaning of educational change* (6th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Fuller, F. F. (1969). Concerns of teachers: A developmental conceptualization. *American Educational Research Journal*, 6(2), 207–226.
- Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (2020). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Hill, O. (2023). Teacher perceptions on the implementation of a new reading curriculum in third grade. Walden University. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- Kassimova, A., Yessengaliyeva, A., & Kassymova, D. (2024). Ambiguity and adaptation: Teachers' responses to a new English curriculum in Kazakhstan. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), Article 2375083.
- Kayir, G., & Toraman, Ç. (2021). Development of curriculum changes perception scale and teachers' perceptions of curriculum changes. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, 16(2), 7–24.
- Kilag, O. K. T., Andrin, G. R., Abellanos, C., Villaver, M. T., Jr., Uy, F. T., & Sasan, J. M. V. (2024). MATATAG curriculum rollout: Understanding challenges for effective implementation. Research Gate.
- Klusmann, U., Aldrup, K., Roloff, J., Lüdtke, O., & Hamre, B. K. (2022). Does instructional quality mediate the link between teachers' emotional exhaustion and student outcomes? A large-scale study using teacher and student reports. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 114(6), 1442–1460.
- Kullman, S. M., & Chudyk, A. M. (2025). Participatory member checking: A novel approach for engaging participants in co-creating qualitative findings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 31(2), 145–160.
- Llego, M. (2024). Teachers' Guide to the MATATAG Curriculum Implementation. TeacherPH. <https://www.teacherph.com>
- Lopez, J. C., & Pineda, S. R. (2022). Strengthening instructional practices through teacher collaboration: A case study on LAC implementation in junior high schools. *Southeast Asian Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*, 6(1), 57–70.
- Magallanes, K., Chung, J. Y., & Lee, S. (2022). The Philippine teachers' concerns on educational reform using Concern-Based Adoption Model. *Frontiers in Education*, 7, Article 763991.
- Malbas, M., Kilag, O. K., Diano Jr., F., Tiongzon, B., Catacutan, A., & Abendan, C. F. (2023). In retrospect and prospect: An analysis of the Philippine educational system and the impact of K-12 implementation. *Excellencia: International Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Education*, 1(4), 283–294. <https://multijournals.org/index.php/excellencia-imje/article/view/65>
- Ohlemann, S., Imhof, M., & Bellhäuser, H. (2021). *Implementing reform in the teacher education system: Concerns of teacher educators*. Elsevier BV.
- Orencia, A. C. (2023). Training and professional development in the MATATAG Curriculum: Challenges and best practices. *St. Francis College Journal of Education*, 18(2), 112–125.
- Powers, G. L. (2020). *Leading teachers and managing change: Guidance for school administrators*. Jscholarship.
- Puspitasari, M. (2024). Navigating classroom challenges and curriculum changes: A qualitative study of an English teacher's journey in the Indonesian education system. *Research in Education*, 114(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237241275799>
- Reyes, D. R., Martinez, M. J., & Salazar, A. T. (2024). Mapping teacher responses to curriculum change: A CBAM-informed analysis. *Philippine Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 12(2), 88–104.
- Salinas, M. & Ventura, R. (2022). Emotional labor in education: Filipino teachers' experiences during curriculum transitions. *Journal of Asian Educational Psychology*, 6(1), 45–58.
- Sakkir, G., Abduh, A., Andrew, M., Muslim, A. B., & Yasdin, Y. (2021). The challenges faced by teachers in teaching English in the current curriculum change. *Seminar Nasional Hasil Penelitian*.
- Saro, J. M., Montejo, C. B., Sucong, J. A., Bustamante, M. F. O., & Perez, J. B. (2024). A qualitative exploration on the perceived impact of the MATATAG curriculum on basic education teaching in the school year 2024–2025. *International Journal of Advanced*

Multidisciplinary Research and Studies, 4(4), 952–966.

Schürmann, M., Blömeke, S., & Kaiser, G. (2023). Implementing reform in the teacher education system: Concerns of teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 132, 104270.

Sulaiman, T., & Ismail, H. H. (2020). Teacher competence and 21st century skills in Transformation Schools 2025 (TS25). *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(8), 657–672.

Tondeur, J., van Braak, J., Ertmer, P. A., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. (2021). Understanding the ‘how’ of teachers’ technology integration: A CBAM approach. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 69(3), 1503–1519. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-021-09991-2>

Vela, G. (2023). An intrinsic case study on the implementation of project-based learning for emergent bilinguals and the role of teacher self-efficacy at a dual language campus on the U.S.-Mexico border (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Wang, Y. (2024). In-service teachers’ perceptions of technology integration in EFL classrooms in China: A multiple-case study. *ECNU Review of Education*, 7(2), 230–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311231193692>

Zhao, Y., & Zhang, W. (2022). Teacher concerns and instructional transformation in educational reform. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 50(4), 387–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2022.2031005>

Zheng He, Y., & Yusop, F. D. (2020). The dataset for the stages of concerns of public-school teachers towards the use of e-learning platform: Malaysian context. *Data in Brief*, 29, 105230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2020.105230>

### **Affiliations and Corresponding Information**

#### **Froilan O. Hernandez**

Juan E. Revolos National High School  
Department of Education – Philippines

#### **Dr. Kristopher M. Ngilangil**

Surigao Del Norte State University – Philippines