



Teacher Adaptation to MATATAG Curriculum Reform in Diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics

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Abstract

The MATATAG Curriculum, introduced as a national reform initiative to strengthen foundational skills and streamline competencies across Grades 1-10, represents a significant shift in Philippine basic education, particularly in secondary mathematics. This study explores the experiences of diocesan Mathematics teachers during the pilot implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in Grade 7, focusing on the challenges they faced, the adjustments they made, and the support they received. Employing exploratory descriptive qualitative multiple-case study design, the findings revealed the themes under each five constructs from the Statement of the Problem: Preparations for the Implementation included participation in training, lesson and resources preparation, use of technological platforms, self-directed learning and collaboration; Major Changes in the Curriculum involved revisions in learning competencies, reorganization and content sequencing, shifts in teaching and assessment focus, and lack of updated instructional resources; Challenges Encountered comprises students' learning gaps, limited instructional resources, technological connectivity issues, and teachers' emotional fatigue; Adjustments Made by Teachers included reteaching strategies, creative resource development, flexible teaching approaches, and professional reflective practice; and Support Received During the Transition encompassed institutional support, peer collaboration and mentoring, material and technological support, emotional and moral support. The study concludes that diocesan Mathematics teachers demonstrated notable adaptability throughout the reform process. Its findings contribute to understanding teacher experiences during curriculum transition and offer insights for strengthening support systems and implementation strategies in secondary mathematics education. Continuous professional development, adequate instructional resources, and sustained administrative support are recommended to ensure meaningful and lasting curriculum reform.

Keywords: *Math 7, MATATAG Curriculum, Challenges, Adjustments*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine education system continues to implement reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes and addressing gaps identified under the K-12 program. In response to persistent deficiencies revealed by national and international assessments, including reports from the [World Bank \(2022\)](#) and the Programme for International Student Assessment ([OECD, 2019](#)), the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum in 2023. This reform emphasizes foundational skills, learner well-being, and curriculum coherence by reducing contents and prioritizing essential competencies ([Department of Education \[DepEd\], 2023](#)). Designed to address limitations of the previous K-12 curriculum, which was often congested and fragmented, MATATAG provides a more focused and developed sequence structure to strengthen literacy and numeracy while ensuring continuity across grade levels.

Implementation began in School Year 2024-2025 under DepEd Orders No. 10 and 12, s. 2024, covering Kinder, Grade 1, Grade 4, and Grade 7. Among affected learning areas, Mathematics 7 underwent significant changes in competency sequencing, content organization, instructional

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approaches, and assessment practices. These adjustments present both opportunities and challenges for teachers responsible for translating curriculum goals into classroom practice. Diocesan schools, which operate within private-based governance structures while adhering to national standards, face the dual task of upholding national standards while navigating institutional constraints, resource limitations, and varying levels of technological support. Understanding how they adapt, manage challenges, and adjust instruction is critical to evaluating the curriculum's effectiveness.

Teachers are central to the success of curriculum reform, as meaningful change depends on their professional judgment, adaptability, and classroom practices (Ancho and Bongco, 2019). Under MATATAG, they are expected to redesign lesson plans, modify assessments, and select instructional materials aligned with revised competencies, particularly in Mathematics 7, where restructured content requires careful pedagogical planning. Professional development programs, such as those provided by the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC), support teacher readiness; however, variations in access to training and resources affect implementation.

Empirical studies on curriculum reform in secondary mathematics indicate that teacher readiness, sustained professional learning, access to aligned instructional materials, and coherence in curriculum sequencing significantly influence implementation outcomes (Bautista & Ocampo, 2018; Dela Cruz, 2021). Research further suggests that teachers often negotiate tensions between implementation fidelity and contextual adaptation, particularly when confronted with sequencing inconsistencies, assessment transitions, and resource constraints. However, most Philippine-based studies have focused primarily on public-school settings, leaving limited empirical evidence on the private or faith-based secondary schools' experience and enactment of national curriculum reforms (Abinal and Lomong-oy, 2025).

The study offers both practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, the findings provide evidence-based insights for diocesan administrators, mathematics coordinators, DepEd policymakers, and Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) trainers regarding professional development design, resource allocation, and support mechanisms necessary for effective reform implementation. Theoretically, the study contributes to scholarship on teacher adaptation and curriculum implementation fidelity and contextual adaptation within a faith-based secondary school system, viewed through the lens of change management theory.

Mathematics 7 is a foundational subject, essential for developing skills in algebra, geometry, and number theory, and for fostering real-world problem-solving. Its effective delivery is crucial, as it often serves as a measure of academic performance nationally and internationally (Galaura and Simpal, 2025). Challenges such as gaps in prior knowledge, misaligned resources, and diverse learner abilities underscore the importance of teacher adaptability.

This gap is particularly significant in the context of MATATAG implementation. While policy documents articulate curriculum intentions, there remains limited research examining how diocesan Mathematics teachers make instructional decisions related to lesson sequencing, resource adaptation, assessment transitions, and technology integration during the initial rollout. Specifically, there is insufficient evidence to inform how training design, material provision, administrative practices in private secondary schools.

To address this practice gap, this study aims to generate actionable evidence on how diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers adapt to the MATATAG Curriculum reform during its first year of implementation in School Year 2024-2025. Thus, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What preparations did diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers undertake prior to MATATAG implementation?

2. What major instructional and structural changes were introduced in the MATATAG Grade 7 Mathematics curriculum?
3. What challenges did teachers encounter during the implementation process?
4. How did teachers adjust their instructional and assessment practices in response to these challenges?
5. What forms of institutional and peer support were received during the transition?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum reform implementation in basic education is widely recognized as a complex and content -dependent process (Abushpap and Lai, 2025). Empirical studies indicate that policy shifts often encounter challenges during classroom enactment, particularly when reforms involve restructuring competencies, revising sequencing, and introducing new assessments frameworks. In secondary mathematics contexts, alignment between curriculum design, instructional materials, and teacher preparedness significantly influences implementation outcomes (Bautistia & Ocampo, 2018; Dela Cruz, 2021). While reforms frequently aim to reduce content congestion and promote mastery, evidence suggests that reduced competencies may still generate coherence challenges when sequencing lacks of conceptual continuity.

Research further demonstrates variation in implementation fidelity across school, with implementation quality significantly affecting reform outcomes and sustainability (Durlak and Dupre, 2008). Some studies emphasize strict adherence to curriculum guides, whereas others highlight adaptive enactment, wherein teachers modify instruction to respond to contextual constraints and learner needs. This tension between fidelity and adaptation remains a central debate in curriculum implementation literature. However, most Philippine-based research has concentrated on public-school systems, leaving limited empirical understanding of how private or faith-based secondary schools enact national reforms.

Teachers play a pivotal role in translating policy into classroom practice. Studies on teacher sensemaking suggest that educators interpret reform directives through prior experience, professional beliefs, and institutional contexts., often co-constructing meaning within professional communities (Coburn, 2001). In mathematics education, where conceptual progression and sequencing are critical, teachers frequently adjust pacing, reteach foundational skills, and supplement instructional materials to maintain coherence. Empirical evidence indicates that teacher adaptation often occurs when sequencing inconsistencies, assessment transitions, and student learning gaps emerge during reform implementation. While adaptation may enhance contextual responsiveness, excessive modification can risk weakening policy coherence. What remains insufficiently explored is how teachers in private diocesan secondary schools negotiate these tensions during the early stages of reform rollout.

Sustained, subject-specific professional development has been consistently identified as a determinant of successful curriculum reform. Research suggests that brief orientations or generalized seminars may increase awareness but are insufficient to support deep pedagogical transformation. Effective models of professional learning emphasize collaborative inquiry, mentoring systems, and continuous feedback mechanisms, and content-focused engagement (Darling-Hammond et al, 2017). In lower secondary mathematics, professional development that addresses sequencing, conceptual progression, and assessment redesign is particularly critical. However, disparities in access to training, follow-up support, and instructional resources often result in uneven implementation experiences. Limited scholarship has examined how private or diocesan schools structure professional development and internal support mechanisms during national curriculum transitions.

Access to aligned instructional materials and reliable technological infrastructure significantly affects reform enactment. Studies conducted in resource-constrained environments highlight challenges such as delayed textbook distribution, reliance on legacy materials, and limited availability of manipulatives and visual aids (Matrani et al., 2022). In mathematics education, such constraints may disrupt conceptual continuity and require teachers to improvise learning resources. Technology integration introduces additional equity considerations. While learning management systems and digital tools can enhance engagement, uneven internet connectivity and device access may widen disparities between urban and rural schools (Mustafa et al., 2024). These contextual realities often compel teachers to adopt hybrid or improvised instructional strategies. Despite growing attention to digital learning, empirical research examining technology constraints in private secondary school reform contexts remains limited.

Private and faith-based schools operate within distinct governance and funding structures while adhering to national curriculum mandates. Institutional autonomy, leadership practices, and resource allocation patterns may shape reform experiences differently from public-school environments. However, empirical research focusing specifically on curriculum implementation within diocesan secondary schools remains scarce. This gap underscores the need to examine how institutional culture, administrative guidance, and peer collaboration networks influence teacher adaptation processes in private faith-based educational systems.

This study is anchored in Change Management Theory, which provides a structured framework to examine how diocesan school teachers experience and navigate the first-year implementation of the MATATAG Mathematics 7 Curriculum (Lewin, 1947; Kotter, 1996; Fullan, 2007). Lewin's three-stage model has been widely discussed and reappraised in organizational change scholarship, emphasizing both its utility and its contextual limitations (Burnes, 2004). Rather than serving solely as a descriptive framework, Change Management Theory is operationalized analytically in this study. Lewin's three-stage model—Unfreezing, Change, and Refreezing—guides the interpretation of teacher narratives and thematic findings. The Unfreezing stage involves recognizing the need for change and preparing for new expectations. In this study, indicators of unfreezing include teacher participation in training, awareness of revised competencies, acknowledgment of sequencing changes, and expressed uncertainty or hesitation regarding implementation demands. The Change stage addresses instructional experimentation and adaptation. Evidence of this stage is reflected in reported instructional adjustments, reteaching strategies, resource modification, assessment redesign, and collaborative problem-solving in response to curriculum challenges. The Refreezing stage corresponds to stabilization and integration of new practices. Indicators include sustained collaboration, routinization of adjusted teaching approaches, establishment of internal support systems, and expressions of confidence in navigating revised competencies.

Overall, Change Management Theory provides a coherent lens to analyze teacher experiences across preparation, adaptation, and sustainability, while recognizing that movement across stages is influenced by contextual factors such as resource availability, administrative support, professional development access, and technological infrastructure.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed an exploratory descriptive qualitative multiple-case study design to examine how diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers navigated the first-year implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum during School Year 2024–2025. Guided by Merriam's (1998) case study framework, each participating diocesan secondary school was treated as a bounded case within the broader institutional context of the Diocese of Pagadian. This design enabled in-depth exploration

of teacher experiences within individual schools while allowing cross-case comparison across cases.

Prior to data collection, the researcher formally sought and obtained approval from the Diocesan School Superintendent to conduct the study across twelve diocesan secondary schools. Using purposive sampling, twelve (12) Grade 7 Mathematics teachers were selected based on two criteria: (1) active involvement in MATATAG implementation and (2) attendance in MATATAG training conducted by the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC). To ensure equitable representation across cases, one teacher was selected from each school. This approach maintained fairness in participation, particularly since some schools had teachers who had not attended PEAC seminars, some had newly hired mathematics teachers, and others were small institutions with only one mathematics teacher assigned to Grade 7. The sample size was considered sufficient based on information power, as participants shared focused, experience-rich insights within a clearly defined reform context. Participants were provided with informed consent forms prior to participation, and confidentiality was maintained through assigned codes (P1–P12).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews supplemented by document analysis to enhance methodological triangulation. The researcher developed the interview guide based on Change Management Theory and literature on curriculum implementation and teacher adaptation. The instrument was reviewed and validated by institutional validators to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research questions. Interviews were conducted online, lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participant consent before being transcribed verbatim. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences and share additional insights relevant to the study.

Relevant documents were also analyzed to contextualize teacher narratives and examine alignment between policy and practice. These included DepEd Orders related to MATATAG implementation, Grade 7 Mathematics curriculum guides, lesson plans, assessment tools, and PEAC training materials applicable to SY 2024–2025.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2017) following a hybrid inductive–deductive approach. Transcribed interviews were initially coded through open coding to identify recurring patterns aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework. Codes were grouped into broader categories and refined into themes representing preparations, curriculum changes, challenges encountered, instructional adjustments, and support systems. Cross-case synthesis was conducted to compare patterns and variations across participating schools.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study employed methodological triangulation through interviews and document analysis, member checking with selected participants to validate interpretations, and consultation with the research adviser for review of coding decisions and thematic development (Jalaludin and Shivihi, 2025). An audit trail documenting analytic procedures and theme refinement was also maintained to ensure transparency and consistency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter illustrates, analyzes, and interprets data gathered from the selected diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers. The participants are proficient teachers with an active involvement in MATATAG Math 7 implementation and have attended trainings conducted by the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC). To ensure confidentiality, each participant was designated a code P01, P02, P03, P04, P05, P06, P07, P08, P09, P10, P11, and P12 to maintain confidentiality of their profiles below.

Table 1. Profile of Diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics Teachers (n = 12)

| Code | Gender | Years of Teaching | Educational Attainment | School Location | PEAC Training |
|------|--------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| P01 | F | 4 | MA Units | Rural | Yes |
| P02 | F | 5 | MA Units | Urban | Yes |
| P03 | M | 2 | BS Math Graduate | Rural | Yes |
| P04 | M | 3 | BS Math Graduate | Urban | Yes |
| P05 | M | 6 | MA Units | Rural | Yes |
| P06 | F | 4 | BS Math Graduate | Rural | Yes |
| P07 | F | 7 | MA Units | Rural | Yes |
| P08 | F | 2 | BS Math Graduate | Rural | Yes |
| P09 | M | 5 | MA Units | Rural | Yes |
| P10 | F | 3 | BS Math Graduate | Rural | Yes |
| P11 | M | 4 | MA Units | Rural | Yes |
| P12 | F | 2 | BS Math Graduate | Rural | Yes |

Preparations for the Implementation

This construct examines how diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers prepared for the first-year implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Four themes emerged: (1) Participation in Trainings, (2) Lesson and Resource Preparation, (3) Use of Technological Platforms, and (4) Self-Directed Learning and Collaboration.

Participation in Trainings

Teachers identified PEAC INSET sessions, Quipper orientations, and school-based re-echo seminars as their primary formal preparation mechanisms.

“Since we are now aligned with the new curriculum, I attended INSET-PEAC and Quipper seminars, and through these, my lesson plans and activities became aligned, giving me a strong foundation in teaching.” – P02

“I attended seminars and re-echo sessions with my co-teachers, and that’s where I understood the flow of the MATATAG Curriculum.” – P09

“We had PEAC INSET, publishing house orientation, and sharing sessions with co-teachers. It is a big help for the alignment of our lesson plans.” – P08

“Through the training, I became more familiar with the learning competencies and new standards for Math 7.” – P10

Teachers described PEAC trainings and orientations as foundational but largely general. While these sessions introduced revised competencies, participants, particularly early-career teachers, still reported instructional uncertainty. This suggests that exposure did not equate to mastery. Consistent with [Darling-Hammond et al. \(2017\)](#), professional development that is short-term and orientation-based often increases awareness but does not fully support pedagogical transformation. However, unlike contexts where ongoing coaching structures are institutionalized, diocesan schools in this study relied on follow-up self-directed effort rather than formal mentoring

systems.

The rural–urban distinction also mattered. Urban participants (P02, P04) appeared to describe smoother alignment processes compared to rural teachers who lacked sustained technical support. Thus, preparation depth was mediated not only by training attendance (all had PEAC training) but by contextual infrastructure. Reform implementation in diocesan contexts may require sustained, subject-specific coaching beyond initial orientation sessions. Without structured follow-up mechanisms, preparedness becomes dependent on teacher initiative rather than systemic scaffolding.

Lesson and Resource Preparation

Teachers described extensive pre-class revisions of lesson plans and instructional materials.

“Before classes begin, we apply what was discussed in the PEAC Seminar to our lesson planning. We prepare interactive lessons using PowerPoint and Quipper LMS.” – P03

“We didn’t have MATATAG books since it’s new, so I searched for online resources and YouTube materials. It’s difficult for students since competencies are scattered.” – P04

“I make new lesson plans based on the MATATAG guide and competency list from DepEd. I revised my old modules to match the updated content.” – P05

“I tried to make my activities more real-life and problem-based so that they’re more relatable to students.” – P11

The absence of MATATAG textbooks shifted the burden of alignment to teachers. Participants reconstructed lesson flow using old K–12 materials and online resources. This demonstrates what [Coburn \(2001\)](#) describes as teacher sensemaking: teachers actively interpreting reform expectations within their contextual realities. However, unlike reform settings with centralized instructional material distribution, diocesan teachers functioned as curriculum interpreters rather than implementers. This differs from ideal fidelity models ([Durlak & DuPre, 2008](#)), where implementation quality depends on clear structural supports. In this case, adaptation emerged not as a pedagogical preference but as a structural necessity. Variation was also visible across locations. Rural schools experienced greater material scarcity, intensifying improvisation demands. Policy rollout that precedes material readiness increases variability across schools. Timely provision of aligned modules may reduce teacher-level improvisation and promote equitable implementation.

Use of Technological Platforms

Technology played a strategic but uneven role in preparation.

“All materials were prepared through the Quipper LMS, making it less burdensome since all activities were already provided.” – P01

“I use the LMS because it’s more organized and easier to present, but sometimes we encounter internet problems.” – P06

"I use my cellphone and a projector to show interactive games related to the topic. The students also find it enjoyable." – P10

Digital platforms supported lesson organization but were unevenly usable due to connectivity limitations. With ten participants assigned to rural schools, technology became conditional rather than foundational. This aligns with digital divide literature (Mathrani et al., 2022), which emphasizes that technology integration reforms often assume infrastructure stability that rural contexts may lack. Unlike technology-ready environments described in urban implementation studies, MATATAG enactment in diocesan rural schools required contingency planning (printing alternatives, downloading in advance). Technology-integrated reform must consider infrastructural disparities. Offline-accessible materials and hybrid design models may better support rural secondary schools.

Self-Directed Learning and Collaboration

Peer collaboration emerged as the most consistent preparation mechanism across cases.

"When there is no clear guide, I just read and check online sample lessons to understand how to present the topics." – P05

"It helped that we shared materials and activities with co-teachers to maintain a consistent flow of lessons." – P07

"I personally studied the Grade 7 Math content since there was no available module yet." – P12

Peer collaboration emerged as the strongest preparation mechanism. Unlike vertically structured mentoring systems documented in professional learning community research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), collaboration here was teacher-initiated and horizontal. This finding supports Spillane's (2002) argument that reform implementation is socially mediated. However, it also reveals a structural gap: collegial networks compensated for limited institutionalized coaching. In diocesan governance structures, where autonomy is high but centralized technical units may be limited, peer reliance becomes critical. Formalizing peer collaboration into structured professional learning communities may strengthen sustainability beyond informal sharing practices.

Preparation combined formal orientation, resource improvisation, technological adaptation, and peer collaboration. The predominance of rural and early-career teachers likely intensified reliance on collective problem-solving and self-directed study. Rather than passive recipients, teachers acted as adaptive agents compensating for structural and material limitations. This suggests reform readiness depended more on professional initiative and collaborative resilience than on complete systemic support. However, such reliance may not be sustainable without continued institutional reinforcement, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

Major Changes in the Curriculum

This construct examines the key instructional and structural shifts experienced by diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers during the first year of MATATAG implementation. Four themes emerged: (1) Revisions in Learning Competencies, (2) Reorganization of Content and Sequencing, (3) Shifts in Teaching and Assessment Focus, and (4) Lack of Updated Instructional Resources.

Revisions in Learning Competencies

Teachers identified the reduction and modification of competencies as one of the most visible reforms under MATATAG.

“There are advantages and disadvantages in the change of competencies, some topics were skipped, and lessons jump from one branch of math to another.” – P01

“Some topics are advanced for Grade 7, so they need to be simplified for students to understand.” – P02

“There are fewer competencies now, but the contents are not in sequence, making it hard for students to connect lessons” – P05

“The competencies were reduced but not arranged properly. Some lessons became too advanced for Grade 7.” – P09

A key tension emerged: teachers appreciated reduced competencies but criticized sequencing fragmentation. This contradiction reveals that simplification does not automatically ensure coherence. Curriculum coherence literature in mathematics ([Bautista and Ocampo, 2018](#)) emphasizes vertical alignment across strands. When competencies are reduced without explicit sequencing maps, teachers must reconstruct progression themselves. Consistent with [Durlak and DuPre \(2008\)](#), implementation quality depends not only on design clarity but also on coherence between components. In this case, scope reduction succeeded in principle but sequencing clarity appeared insufficient in practice. Not all participants viewed changes negatively. Some (e.g., P02) appreciated simplification benefits. However, rural teachers dealing with foundational gaps experienced sequencing disruption more acutely, suggesting contextual interaction between curriculum design and learner readiness. Competency reduction should be accompanied by explicit cross-strand mapping to preserve cumulative learning logic.

Reorganization of Content and Sequencing

Teachers consistently reported confusion regarding content reallocation across quarters.

“Before, lessons were divided per quarter according to each branch of mathematics, but now the topics are literally scattered because of MATATAG.” – P02

“For the changes in the curriculum guide, there are topics that used to be in the first quarter but are now placed in the third quarter. The sequence is no longer followed.” – P03

“It’s difficult because some first-quarter competencies were supposed to be in the last quarter of K to 12. The pacing really changed.” – P09

“We got confused with the sequencing because the next lesson was not connected to the previous one, so we needed to review again.” – P10

Sequencing confusion occurred because revised pacing did not consistently align with prerequisite knowledge. Teachers inserted review sessions, indicating a negotiation between fidelity and responsiveness. [Remillard \(2005\)](#) argues that teachers mediate curriculum guides

rather than enact them mechanically. In this study, adaptation was necessary to restore conceptual continuity. Unlike centralized public-school reform systems where pacing may be tightly monitored, diocesan schools appeared to allow greater instructional flexibility. This autonomy enabled adaptive pacing but also increased teacher-level decision-making burden. Reform guidance should clarify prerequisite dependencies to reduce cognitive load on teachers during early implementation.

Changes in Teaching and Assessment Focus

Another significant change involved the increased emphasis on performance-based assessment and application-oriented learning.

“The grading now focuses more on application than theory, but it needs to be balanced so it’s not too heavy for students.” – P04

“Before, it was very exam-based. Now there are so many performance tasks and outputs to check.” – P07

“The performance-based approach helps students become active, but it needs clear rubrics and more preparation time.” – P09

“The new curriculum wants students to apply what they learn, not just memorize, which is good but also time-consuming for teachers.” – P12

Teachers viewed performance-based assessment positively yet reported increased workload. This reflects a known reform paradox: authentic assessment improves engagement but expands documentation labor (Black and Wiliam, 2009). Unlike fully supported assessment reform contexts described in larger public systems, diocesan schools lacked clerical or digital automation support. Thus, pedagogical innovation translated into intensified teacher labor. Urban teachers with slightly better digital access appeared to experience less strain in documentation compared to rural participants. Assessment reform should integrate workload management strategies, such as shared rubrics and task banks.

Lack of Updated Instructional Resources

A recurring concern across cases was the absence of officially released MATATAG textbooks and standardized modules.

“We are using the old K to 12 materials while waiting for MATATAG modules from DepEd.” – P03

“I got some activities from Quipper and the internet since printed resources are not yet available.” – P10

“Sometimes we just share among co-teachers the PowerPoint we made because we have no official guide yet.” – P11

Policy rollout preceded material readiness. Teachers relied on legacy materials, indicating implementation lag. Fullan (2007) emphasizes that structural supports must accompany reform to

prevent teacher overload. In this study, material delays shifted alignment responsibility downward to teachers. Variation across schools likely widened instructional differences, as resource access differed between urban and rural contexts. Synchronizing policy launch with resource distribution is critical for equitable reform enactment.

The MATATAG Curriculum introduced substantial structural shifts in competency scope, sequencing, and assessment orientation. While teachers appreciated the intent to promote mastery and application-based learning, their experiences reveal tensions between simplification and coherence, innovation and workload, and policy intent and material readiness. For predominantly rural and early-career teachers, these changes required ongoing negotiation between curriculum fidelity and contextual adaptation. The findings suggest that effective reform in mathematics depends not only on reducing competencies but also on ensuring vertical alignment, timely resource provision, and sustained pedagogical support. Without these elements, structural reform may inadvertently increase reliance on teacher agency to maintain instructional stability.

Challenges Encountered

This construct examines the primary difficulties diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers faced during the first year of MATATAG implementation. Four themes emerged: (1) Students' Learning Gaps, (2) Limited Instructional Resources, (3) Technological Connectivity Issues, and (4) Teachers' Emotional Fatigue.

Students' Learning Gaps

One of the most frequently reported challenges was students' weak foundational knowledge in mathematics.

"It's very difficult because it seems like they don't have any prior knowledge in basic math, so I have to repeat the lessons." – P03

"The students have a very weak math foundation. Even with integers, many already struggle" – P04

"It's really difficult to teach algebraic expressions when there are students who still don't know how to multiply and divide properly." – P10

"Some students can't understand even simple equations because they were not able to learn them during the pandemic years." – P12

Teachers consistently reported weak foundational skills in arithmetic and pre-algebra. These gaps were attributed to pandemic-era modular learning disruptions. This indicates that MATATAG reform was layered onto an already fragile academic recovery context. Recent international evidence confirms significant post-pandemic regression in mathematics performance, particularly at lower secondary levels (Bakker & de Vries, 2023). Thus, the difficulty described by participants aligns with broader recovery-phase challenges rather than unique curriculum failure. However, unlike large public systems where structured remediation programs may accompany reform rollout, diocesan schools appeared to rely primarily on classroom-level reteaching strategies. Rural schools experienced these effects more intensely. With fewer access points to private tutoring or enrichment programs, foundational gaps were amplified. Curriculum restructuring during recovery periods should integrate diagnostic assessment and structured

remediation support. Without parallel academic recovery strategies, reform may increase pacing strain on teachers and learners alike.

Limited Instructional Resources

Participants consistently cited the absence of updated textbooks, manipulatives, and standardized modules.

"We still don't have any updated books or modules yet, so we just adjusted the old materials instead." – P04

"Visuals and manipulatives are very limited, especially for geometry and measurement topics." – P05

"Printing resources are limited, so we shared one module between two classes." – P06

"It's hard because there's no uniform reference. We just depend on the PowerPoints that we make or share among ourselves" – P08

Teachers described the absence of updated textbooks, manipulatives, and standardized modules as a persistent constraint. This reveals a structural lag between policy adoption and material distribution. Implementation research emphasizes that resource availability significantly influences reform quality (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). When instructional materials are not aligned with revised competencies, teachers must reconstruct alignment independently. In this study, teachers did not resist reform; rather, they compensated for incomplete material readiness. Compared to studies in centralized public-school reform contexts where instructional packages are distributed simultaneously with policy rollout, diocesan schools experienced greater dependence on teacher-generated resources. Rural schools, facing limited printing and supply access, reported more pronounced material strain. Effective reform requires synchronized curriculum design and material provision. Early distribution of aligned textbooks and manipulatives can reduce inequitable improvisation across schools.

Technological Connectivity Issues

Connectivity challenges were especially prominent among rural participants.

"Not all students have phones, so I just prepare printed activities to make sure everyone is included." – P08

"Quipper keeps loading, so I just go back to manual lesson planning and paper activities." – P11

"Sometimes the internet is slow, so I can't upload the lesson on time." – P12

Although digital platforms such as Quipper supported instruction, inconsistent internet access limited full utilization. Teachers frequently prepared printed alternatives, suggesting that technology was conditional rather than foundational. Digital divide research consistently shows that infrastructure disparities mediate reform effectiveness (Mathrani et al, 2022). In rural settings, unstable connectivity transforms LMS tools into supplementary rather than central

instructional mechanisms. Urban participants appeared to encounter fewer digital barriers, highlighting contextual variation within the same diocesan system (Washington, 2025). Thus, MATATAG's integration of digital tools produced uneven experiences depending on school location. Technology-integrated curriculum reforms should include offline-accessible versions of materials and infrastructure assessments before rollout. Equity-focused design can mitigate disparities between urban and rural schools.

Teachers' Emotional Fatigue

Beyond instructional and material challenges, teachers described emotional strain.

"It's hard to balance paperwork and teaching time. Sometimes it just gets really overwhelming." – P02

"Sometimes I feel burned out because you have to adjust to new competencies while doing so many forms and reports." – P06

"It's really tiring because there are so many performance tasks to record and prepare." – P07

"It's pressuring because the curriculum is new and there are many expectations from both the administration and parents." – P08

"Time management is difficult because of the new approach and numerous requirements." – P09

Teachers described emotional strain arising from increased documentation, performance-task grading, and constant adjustment to new competencies. Fatigue reflected cumulative workload expansion rather than opposition to reform goals. Professional capital literature argues that reform sustainability depends on protecting teacher well-being (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). When innovation increases instructional labor without parallel administrative support, teacher strain intensifies. In this diocesan context, where clerical and digital automation support appeared limited, documentation responsibilities fell directly on classroom teachers. Early-career status may have further intensified stress, as less experienced teachers navigated structural change while consolidating foundational teaching routines. Reform initiatives should incorporate workload audits and administrative streamlining to prevent burnout. Sustained implementation requires balancing innovation with teacher capacity.

The challenges were multidimensional and interconnected: learning gaps slowed pacing, sequencing shifts intensified remediation, resource delays required improvisation, and connectivity limits restricted digital integration. These factors interacted most strongly in rural contexts, where infrastructural and academic constraints were already present. Rather than signaling reform failure, these findings illustrate transitional strain during early implementation. Teachers did not reject MATATAG; instead, they absorbed structural pressures through adaptive professionalism. However, continued reliance on teacher resilience may not be sustainable without stronger institutional scaffolding. For MATATAG to achieve long-term coherence in diocesan secondary schools, reform must align curriculum design, material readiness, infrastructure capacity, and teacher workload protection. Implementation success depends not only on policy intent but on contextual feasibility.

Adjustments Made by Teachers

This construct examines how diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers responded to the instructional, structural, and contextual challenges of MATATAG implementation. Four themes emerged: (1) Reteaching Strategies, (2) Creative Resource Development, (3) Flexible Teaching Approaches, and (4) Professional Reflective Practice.

Reteaching Strategies

Teachers frequently revisited foundational concepts before introducing new lessons.

“After I identified the gaps and problems, I needed to conduct reviews. I grouped them and implemented peer-tutoring; the ones who already understood became group leaders. When I entered the class, they already had some learning.” – P01

“I use peer teaching, pairing fast learners with slower ones so others can understand better. It’s very engaging when classmates teach each other.” – P04

“I have a weekly remedial time for those who didn’t understand because not everyone learns at the same pace.” – P06

“At the start of every lesson, I review the previous topic so they can understand the next one. You can’t proceed directly to new lessons.” – P09

Teachers frequently inserted review sessions, peer tutoring, and remedial time before proceeding with new competencies. This indicates that pacing under MATATAG was mediated by student readiness rather than strictly by curriculum sequencing. Such negotiated pacing aligns with research on curriculum enactment, which suggests that teachers balance fidelity to reform with pedagogical judgment (Remillard, 2005). Rather than deviating from the curriculum, participants adjusted instruction to restore conceptual coherence. This reflects what Spillane et al. (2002) describe as implementation sensemaking, teachers interpreting reform in light of classroom realities. Unlike contexts where structured remediation programs accompany reform, diocesan teachers independently integrated reteaching mechanisms into daily practice. Rural schools, facing more pronounced foundational gaps, relied heavily on peer tutoring and grouping strategies to manage heterogeneous readiness levels. When reteaching becomes a consistent necessity, it should be institutionally supported rather than informally absorbed by teachers.

Creative Resource Development

In response to limited updated materials, teachers improvised and modified instructional resources.

“Since there are still no official modules, I just made worksheets based on the MATATAG guide.” – P02

“I personally designed PowerPoints and activity sheets to fit the new competencies.” – P05

“Since we don’t have books, we collaborated with our co-teachers to make shared materials.” – P08

"In geometry, I let the students use improvised materials they created for the activity."

– P09

"I downloaded sample learning tasks from DepEd Commons and modified them for my class." – P10

Teachers designed worksheets, modified legacy modules, and collaborated on shared materials to compensate for the absence of updated textbooks. This pattern reflects adaptive professionalism rather than mere improvisation. Fullan (2007) emphasizes that teacher agency plays a crucial role in sustaining reform during transitional phases. However, Durlak and DuPre (2008) caution that high-quality implementation depends on structural supports, not solely individual initiative. In this study, resource creation was teacher-driven rather than system-supported. Variation likely existed across school locations. Rural teachers, with limited access to printing services and instructional repositories, may have experienced a greater resource-creation burden than their urban counterparts. While teacher creativity strengthens reform resilience, long-term sustainability requires reducing reliance on individually generated materials through the timely distribution of aligned instructional resources.

Flexible Teaching Approaches

To address connectivity limitations and device inequity, teachers adopted blended and adaptive delivery strategies.

"When the internet is slow, I just print the activities and distribute them to the students. Sometimes, I download the lessons in advance so that even if the signal is lost, I still have something to give. It's difficult to depend solely on the internet because it delays classes, so I make sure to be prepared." – P03

"Not all students have cellphones or Wi-Fi, so I prepare printed outputs so they can still keep up. I make sure the printed and online materials have the same content so everyone has equal access. I even text some of their parents individually to remind them about their activities." – P08

"If students can't access online lessons, I print them and send them as modules. Sometimes, I personally deliver them if I have time because not everyone can travel to school. I just want to make sure no one is left behind in the lessons." – P12

Teachers adopted blended approaches, printed alternatives, deadline extensions, and even personal module delivery to address connectivity inequities. These strategies reflect equity-oriented adaptation rather than technological resistance. Digital divide literature confirms that infrastructure disparities shape reform outcomes more strongly than policy intent (Mathrani et al., 2022). In rural diocesan schools, flexibility became essential to prevent the exclusion of students without devices or stable internet. Unlike fully digital reform contexts described in technology-rich systems, MATATAG implementation here required hybrid contingency planning. Teachers acted as mediators between curriculum expectations and infrastructural realities. Technology-integrated reforms should institutionalize offline-compatible instructional pathways. Flexible delivery models should be recognized as legitimate implementation strategies rather than temporary adjustments.

Professional Reflective Practice

Participants described gradual refinement of strategies based on classroom experience.

"I prepare lessons ahead of time so I won't cram. I do my best for the students since they have different capacities." – P03

"It's difficult but rewarding when you see students improve because of the approach you adjusted." – P07

"I make it a practice to write notes after each class about what I need to improve next time." – P09

"I adjust little by little. I don't apply a new strategy immediately I observe first if it's effective." – P10

"If a strategy doesn't work, I don't insist on it. I will find effective way." – P12

Teachers described incremental refinement of strategies through observation, note-taking, and gradual experimentation. Implementation was iterative rather than immediate. This pattern aligns with reflective practice theory (Wilson, 2008), which views teacher learning as experiential and cyclical. Rather than mastering reform instantly, participants evolved their practices over time. This developmental enactment reflects what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) term professional capital, teachers investing effort to refine practice under pressure. However, reliance on individual reflection without structured mentoring may slow coherence-building across schools. In diocesan contexts with decentralized governance, reflective practice remained personal rather than systematically guided. Embedding structured reflective dialogue sessions or lesson-study models may transform individual reflection into collective instructional growth

The adjustments made by diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers reveal strong adaptive agency. Reteaching addressed foundational gaps, creative resource development compensated for material delays, flexible approaches mitigated infrastructural inequities, and reflective practice refined instructional strategies over time. However, these adjustments were largely compensatory rather than enhancement-oriented. Teacher agency sustained reform stability during early rollout, but systemic gaps in materials, infrastructure, and structured coaching shifted responsibility downward to classroom practitioners. Consistent with implementation literature (Spillane et al., 2002; Fullan, 2007), reform success depended less on policy design and more on local capacity. In predominantly rural diocesan schools, teacher resilience functioned as the primary stabilizing force. For MATATAG reform to move from adaptive survival to sustainable coherence, institutional scaffolding must complement teacher agency. Reform durability depends on balancing professional initiative with structural support.

Support Received During the Transition

This construct explores the forms of support available to diocesan Mathematics teachers during MATATAG implementation. Four themes emerged: (1) Institutional Support, (2) Peer Collaboration and Mentoring, (3) Material and Technological Support, and (4) Emotional and Moral Support.

Institutional Support

Teachers acknowledged administrative efforts such as orientations and coordination meetings.

“The principal is supportive, and we have meetings to get updates on the implementation. But there’s still a lack of actual guidance.” – P03

“My immediate head conducted meetings for the transition. Though not regular, there were at least updates and moral support.” – P07

“We had an orientation, but after that, there was no follow-up. So we just adjusted on our own.” – P08

“We had PEAC INSET, publishing house orientation, ug short briefing from the principal. It helped us understand what to expect from MATATAG.” – P09

“The school administration reminded us to coordinate and report challenges so they could assist us.” – P11

“We received support through orientations, seminars, and re-echo sessions with our co-teachers. The school also provided access to Quipper.” – P12

Teachers acknowledged orientations, meetings, and briefings initiated by school administrators. However, support was described as episodic rather than sustained. Initial direction was provided, but ongoing subject-specific coaching appeared limited. Implementation literature emphasizes that leadership support significantly influences reform coherence (Honig, 2006). In well-scaffolded systems, reform leadership includes structured follow-up, classroom observation, and technical mentoring. In contrast, diocesan schools in this study appeared to rely on administrative coordination rather than instructional coaching. This pattern may reflect governance structure differences. Private diocesan schools operate with relative autonomy but may lack centralized curriculum technical units comparable to larger public systems. Urban participants appeared to experience slightly stronger institutional coordination compared to rural teachers, suggesting variation in administrative capacity across schools. Institutional support should extend beyond orientation sessions to include structured mentoring, classroom-level feedback, and sustained subject-specific coaching to enhance long-term reform coherence.

Peer Collaboration and Mentoring

Peer support emerged as the strongest and most consistent form of assistance.

“The biggest support for me was our math department; it’s easy to ask for help if you’re confused about a topic.” – P03

“Support came from co-teachers, we helped each other and shared lesson plans and PowerPoints to manage the workload.” – P04

“Our co-teacher sharing sessions really helped the most. It felt like a support group that strengthened our morale.” – P08

"If we're confused about something, we can easily message a co-teacher and ask for a sample output." – P10

Peer collaboration emerged as the most consistent and impactful form of support. Teachers relied on lesson sharing, pacing discussions, and informal consultation through departmental networks. This aligns with research on professional learning communities, which highlights collegial collaboration as a powerful driver of instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, unlike formal PLC models embedded within structured reform systems, collaboration here was largely informal and teacher-initiated. Spillane et al. (2002) argue that policy implementation is socially constructed within professional networks. This finding partially contrasts with implementation studies in centralized systems, where institutional coaching leads reform sustainability. In diocesan contexts, horizontal networks appeared stronger than vertical guidance. Formalizing peer collaboration into structured professional learning communities may strengthen coherence and reduce variability across schools.

Material and Technological Support

Some schools provided access to LMS platforms, templates, and limited technical assistance.

"There was support in terms of materials like modules, PowerPoint templates, and Quipper usage. It's easier because lessons are already there." – P01

"My school offered internet assistance for teachers when uploading to the LMS. It was a big help." – P08

"They provided templates, and DepEd online resources helped because they clarified what we needed to do." – P10

Some participants reported access to LMS platforms, templates, and limited internet assistance. However, these supports were unevenly distributed, with rural schools experiencing more frequent connectivity limitations. Durlak and DuPre (2008) emphasize that implementation quality depends on resource adequacy. When technological infrastructure is inconsistent, reform outcomes vary across contexts. In this study, material and digital support partially facilitated alignment but did not fully eliminate inequities. Urban schools appeared to benefit from relatively smoother digital access, whereas rural teachers described greater reliance on printed alternatives. This suggests that support effectiveness was mediated by location rather than being uniformly guaranteed. Reform implementation should include infrastructure assessments and resource equalization strategies to ensure consistent material and technological support across schools.

Emotional and Moral Support

Participants emphasized encouragement from colleagues, administrators, parents, and students.

"There was moral support from the principal and parents who appreciated my efforts." – P02

“Encouragement from colleagues really keeps me going. When someone tells you it’s manageable, it truly motivates me.” – P07

“Support also came in the form of encouragement from co-teachers. It makes me feel that I am not alone in the struggle.” – P10

“Our students were also cooperative, which motivated us even when we were tired.” – P11

Teachers emphasized encouragement from colleagues, administrators, parents, and students as critical to sustaining morale. Emotional reinforcement appeared to buffer workload strain and uncertainty. Professional capital theory highlights relational trust and collegial affirmation as essential components of sustainable reform (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In this study, relational support played a stabilizing role, particularly for early-career teachers navigating structural change. Unlike highly structured reform systems that rely heavily on formal monitoring, diocesan schools appeared to depend on relational cohesion and community culture to sustain motivation. Emotional support did not replace structural gaps but helped mitigate their psychological effects. Reform sustainability requires attention to teacher well-being and relational climate alongside structural scaffolding. Emotional reinforcement should complement, not substitute for, systemic support.

Support during MATATAG implementation was multidimensional but uneven. Institutional leadership-initiated reform, peer collaboration sustained daily adaptation, material and technological support partially facilitated alignment, and emotional encouragement reinforced resilience. However, a clear pattern emerged: reform stability relied more heavily on collegial networks than on structured institutional scaffolding. In predominantly rural diocesan schools, peer collaboration and relational culture functioned as primary stabilizers. This partially aligns with collaborative reform literature but diverges from models emphasizing centralized instructional coaching. The diocesan governance context, characterized by school-level autonomy, shaped the form and depth of support structures. For MATATAG reform to move from adaptive survival to systemic coherence, diocesan schools may benefit from strengthening structured instructional leadership while preserving a strong collegial culture. Sustainable implementation requires balancing relational support with formal scaffolding mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how diocesan Grade 7 Mathematics teachers experienced and navigated the first-year implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. The findings directly address the five research questions. Findings indicate that teachers prepared through PEAC trainings, lesson reconstruction, technology use, and strong peer collaboration. While formal orientations introduced the reform, deeper readiness relied heavily on teacher initiative, particularly in rural contexts. The teachers identified reduced competencies, restructured sequencing, increased performance-based assessment, and delayed instructional materials. Although competency reduction was viewed positively, sequencing fragmentation created instructional challenges, highlighting a tension between simplification and coherence. They reported students’ learning gaps, limited resources, connectivity constraints, and emotional fatigue. These challenges were intensified in rural schools and in the post-pandemic recovery context, where foundational gaps slowed curriculum pacing and demonstrated adaptive methodologies through reteaching strategies, creative resource development, flexible delivery methods, and reflective practice. These

adjustments sustained instructional continuity but were largely compensatory, filling systemic gaps in materials and infrastructure. Finally, institutional support provided initial guidance, but sustained subject-specific coaching was limited. Peer collaboration emerged as the most consistent stabilizing force, with relational and moral support reinforcing teacher resilience.

Theoretically, while teachers experienced Lewin's stages of unfreezing and changing, the refreezing stage appears provisional rather than fully stabilized. Continued reliance on teacher improvisation suggests that reform structures remain in transition. This refines change theory by demonstrating that stabilization in decentralized, resource-constrained contexts is iterative rather than fixed. Practically, the findings suggest the need for sustained subject-specific professional development, clearer sequencing guides, synchronized material distribution, technology equity planning, and structured teacher well-being support. Curriculum reform in diocesan secondary schools requires not only strong design but consistent institutional scaffolding. Overall, MATATAG implementation during its pilot year reflects adaptive professionalism under constraint. Long-term coherence depends on balancing teacher agency with systemic support.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the conclusions drawn, it was recommended that DepEd provide continuous training, distribute updated instructional materials, and gather feedback to strengthen teachers' implementation of MATATAG competencies. School administrators and principals should facilitate peer mentoring, monitor instructional practices, and extend appropriate support during the transition period. Teachers are encouraged to engage in reflective practice, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt materials to effectively address diverse learner needs. Stakeholders and policymakers should allocate sufficient funding and involve teachers in planning and evaluating educational reforms to ensure their relevance and practicality. Lastly, future researchers may explore long-term teacher adaptation and how these adjustments influence student learning outcomes in Mathematics.

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