

## **NAVIGATING CHANGE: TEACHERS' INSIGHT ON BRINGING THE K TO 12 MATATAG CURRICULUM TO LIFE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study explored how teachers implement the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum and integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into classroom instruction, learner engagement, and community involvement. Anchored on phenomenology, the study examined the lived experiences of teachers as they navigated the evolving demands of curriculum reform and sustainability education. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with teachers from diverse school contexts. Thematic analysis generated three overarching dimensions of teacher experience: instructional adaptability, challenges and enabling conditions in SDG integration, and pedagogical innovations that bring MATATAG to life. Findings revealed that teachers actively modify instructional strategies to align with the curriculum's emphasis on foundational skills, contextualization, and competency-based learning. Learners responded positively to these shifts, demonstrating increased participation, motivation, and improved performance. Teachers likewise strengthened collaboration with parents and community stakeholders to ensure curriculum relevance. However, systemic barriers such as limited resources, curriculum overload, inadequate SDG training, and institutional constraints hindered the full integration of sustainability concepts. Enabling factors included professional development, digital tools, administrative support, and strong teacher values aligned with sustainability. Teachers brought MATATAG to life through inquiry-based activities, project-based learning, real-world applications, and reflective assessment practices that reinforced sustainability awareness and behavioral change. The study underscores that successful MATATAG implementation is shaped by the intersection of teacher agency, institutional support, contextual realities, and professional values. It highlights the need for sustained capacity building, equitable resource distribution, and strengthened leadership structures to fully realize SDG-oriented curriculum reform. Future research is recommended to examine variations in implementation across geographic, cultural, and socio-economic contexts, as well as longitudinal impacts on learner outcomes.

**Keywords:** *MATATAG Curriculum, Sustainable Development Goals, teacher experiences, phenomenology, instructional adaptability, contextualized learning, curriculum implementation, Mlang, Cotabato.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Across the globe, education systems increasingly prioritized curriculum reforms that aligned with the goals of sustainable development. In line with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework, global curriculum policies emphasized learner centeredness, future readiness, and ecological consciousness (Duda, 2022; Phan, Nguyen, and Wang, 2021). These international shifts aimed to cultivate 21st century skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and global citizenship through curricula that were both contextual and inclusive. However, research suggested that while policy changes were swift, their classroom level impact largely depended on teachers' interpretation, agency, and preparedness (Rajurkar, Mehta, and Agarwal, 2022). This called for a deeper investigation into the lived experiences of educators who were at the forefront of these reforms, particularly in developing countries where systemic limitations often complicated the translation of policy into practice.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education launched the MATATAG Curriculum as a recalibrated version of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. This initiative intended to decongest learning competencies, address learning recovery after the pandemic, and reinforce foundational literacy and numeracy among learners (Department of Education, 2024; DepEd Teachers Club, 2023a). As Barrot (2023) and Reyes (2021) pointed out, previous iterations of the K to 12 curriculum faced challenges in alignment, implementation consistency, and sustainability integration. The MATATAG Curriculum therefore represented both a reformative vision and a corrective response to these systemic gaps. However, while curriculum documents emphasized clarity and essential learning outcomes, teachers remained burdened by unclear directives, insufficient training, and resource limitations (Rosales and Espinosa, 2022; Sarmiento and Oracion, 2021). Moreover, the question of how teachers interpreted and embodied sustainable development principles in their day to day teaching remained largely unexplored in empirical studies.

Zooming in on the local setting, teachers in the Mlang South District of Cotabato grappled with the real time implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum amid both opportunities and constraints. Existing local studies were limited in capturing the nuanced experiences of public school teachers navigating this shift, particularly in rural or resource challenged areas (Garma, 2024; Domingo and Masabpi, 2024). While initial feedback from pilot schools suggested that the MATATAG framework simplified content and enhanced focus on literacy (Yunting et al., 2025), many educators continued to face contextual challenges that ranged from lack of instructional materials and limited professional development support to mismatches between curriculum content and learners' sociocultural realities (Demalata and Espacio, 2025; Monreal, Sandoval, and

Perez, 2025). These experiences were critical yet often absent in formal policy evaluations and academic literature.

Therefore, a significant research gap existed in understanding how frontline educators, particularly those in Mlang South District, made sense of, adapted to, and implemented the MATATAG Curriculum in pursuit of sustainable development goals. As highlighted by Mendoza and Mendoza (2021) and Pascua and Navalta (2022), there was a pressing need to elevate teacher narratives and professional insights into academic and policy discourse. This qualitative study aimed to fill that gap by documenting and analyzing the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and pedagogical strategies of public elementary and secondary teachers in Mlang South District. By doing so, the study sought to illuminate the realities of curriculum implementation on the ground and to contribute meaningfully to efforts that envisioned a more responsive, inclusive, and sustainability driven education system in the Philippines.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative approach was employed in this study to explore the depth and significance that participants attributed to their experiences, particularly in relation to the strategies they utilized to enhance teacher well being (Spady, 2021). This research sought to capture the complexities of these experiences, whether past or ongoing, by delving into the nuanced realities faced by educators in their professional environments. Through qualitative inquiry, the study aimed to provide a rich and contextualized understanding of the challenges and opportunities encountered in fostering teacher well being.

To interpret and make sense of the findings, the researcher immersed themselves in qualitative analysis, examining each situation within its natural setting to construct a detailed account of both routine and challenging moments (Rust, 2022). The flexibility of qualitative research allowed for a dynamic and iterative approach, enabling the researcher to refine and adjust methodologies as needed to align with the evolving needs of the study. This adaptability ensured a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, allowing the researcher to revisit and refine data collection strategies if saturation was not achieved, an essential component for triangulation and data credibility.

Following Creswell's (2013) framework, the study adopted a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of individuals as they navigated the

complexities of their roles within the educational system. This methodology was particularly suited for uncovering the personal and collective meanings that participants attached to their experiences. By providing a platform for their voices to be heard, the study aimed to illuminate key insights into the realities of teacher well being promotion, shedding light on both successes and areas in need of improvement.

### **Research Participants**

The participants of this study were the public elementary school teachers. Participants who were able to give in depth insights on the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG curriculum within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals were selected through purposive sampling, which was the preferred sampling strategy for this research. Therefore, in order to guarantee that the views acquired were pertinent to the aims of the study, the research participants for this qualitative study were teachers working in public elementary schools located in the Mlang South District areas.

In order to determine the appropriate size of the sample, the research used a total of fifteen individuals as participants. To be more specific, fifteen public elementary school teachers from Grades 1 to 4 who had firsthand expertise in implementing the MATATAG curriculum took part in this research project. In depth interviews were conducted with nine participants for the purpose of this study, and focused group discussions were conducted with six participants. This allocation guaranteed a mix between individualised insights and collective conversations, both of which had the potential to significantly enhance the results and conclusions of the research.

Following was a list of the inclusion criteria that were used to choose participants for the research. First, they had to be permanent or regular public elementary school teachers in the Mlang South District. Second, they had to have a minimum of one year of teaching experience in accordance with the K to 12 curriculum. Third, they had to have direct engagement in the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG curriculum in their respective schools. These criteria guaranteed that the individuals chosen to participate in the research had significant expertise and insights that were relevant to the aims of the investigation.

People who did not satisfy the required traits detailed in the inclusion criteria were placed under the exclusion criteria. Educators who did not directly execute the MATATAG curriculum, as well as other stakeholders such as students, parents, and school administrators, were included in this category. Also excluded were instructors who had fewer than three years of experience teaching under the K to 12 curriculum. In order to guarantee that the research continued to concentrate on obtaining viewpoints from those who were directly engaged in the execution of the curriculum, it was necessary to exclude individuals who did not fulfill the predetermined criteria.

Regarding withdrawal, participants were free to leave the study at any time without incurring penalties. They had the ability to withdraw themselves from the study. The involvement of these individuals was fully optional, and their choice to resign from the study was recognized without the need for any explanation. By adhering to ethical research principles that supported participant autonomy and informed consent, this technique remained consistent with accepted practices. Patton (1990) asserted that qualitative research did not strictly conform to criteria regarding participant size. Likewise, Leedy and Ormrod (2010), as cited in Coy (2019), advised that the ideal sample size for reaching data saturation in qualitative research often varied from five to twenty five people. This indicated that the sample size should be chosen accordingly. With this information in mind, the participation of fifteen individuals in this study was consistent with established guidelines for qualitative research.

Purposive sampling was a kind of research in which the researcher used their own discretion to pick individuals who were able to provide insightful information on the study. This nonprobability sampling approach, also known as judgment or expert sampling, was well acknowledged in qualitative research for its success in choosing persons who possessed the necessary expertise and experience connected to the study issue (Creswell, 2018). This method assured that the chosen participants were able to offer rich data that were contextually relevant and contributed to a thorough understanding of the issues and methods associated with the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

### **Data Collection**

Before any data collection activities were undertaken, the researcher first secured the necessary institutional approvals. This process began with the submission of the full research proposal to the Dean of the Graduate School of the researcher's academic institution. Once the Dean reviewed and endorsed the proposal, it was forwarded to the Ethics Review Committee of the same institution for ethical clearance. The Ethics Review Committee played a critical role in ensuring that the study adhered to accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants, specifically in terms of protecting their rights, privacy, and overall well being. Only after the approval and ethical clearance were obtained was the researcher allowed to proceed to the field.

Data were collected primarily through semi structured interviews and focused group discussions. These methods were well suited for eliciting teachers' personal insights and lived experiences on navigating curriculum reform (Domingo and Masabpi, 2024; Garma, 2024). An interview guide was carefully designed, guided by themes drawn from existing literature on the MATATAG Curriculum and sustainable development in education (Barrot, 2023; Loza, n.d.). Focus group discussions provided opportunities for

collective reflection, allowing participants to validate and compare experiences with one another (Evangelyn, Garcia, Tardio, and Lazaro, 2024).

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who were actively engaged in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in public schools. This ensured that the voices represented were relevant and aligned with the study's objectives (Amaro, Del Rosario, and Catalan, 2024; Demalata and Espacio, 2025). Data were audio recorded with consent, while detailed field notes supplemented the recordings by capturing contextual details and non verbal cues (Kilag, Ramolete, and Orquina, 2024). Interviews and discussions were conducted in secure and convenient venues, whether in schools or through online platforms depending on circumstances.

All participants were asked to sign informed consent forms, ensuring their voluntary participation and awareness of the purpose and scope of the study (DepEd Teachers Club, 2023a; DepEd Teachers Club, 2023b). The collected data were then transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis, enabling the researcher to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes that reflected teachers' experiences of curriculum implementation (MacDonald, 2021; Zamora and Tolentino, 2023). This process aimed to preserve authenticity and credibility while safeguarding participants' confidentiality throughout the study.

## **Procedure**

The procedure of the study followed a systematic and chronological sequence to ensure a smooth and ethical implementation. The first stage involved preparation, which included securing institutional approvals, ethical clearance, and permissions from the Department of Education and school administrators. This step was essential to align the study with official curriculum guidelines and implementation protocols (DepEd, 2024; Villaver, Mangubat, and Rellin, 2024).

The second stage focused on participant selection. Using purposive sampling, the researcher identified teachers who were actively engaged in the rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum. Invitations were sent, and informed consent was obtained to emphasize the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of data (Pascua and Navalta, 2022; Mendoza and Mendoza, 2021).

The third stage was the actual data gathering. Semi structured interviews were scheduled individually, followed by focus group discussions that allowed teachers to share, compare, and validate their experiences with peers (Domingo and Masabpi, 2024; Garma, 2024). These activities were recorded with permission, while field notes captured details that audio alone might have missed. The data collection continued until thematic

saturation was reached, meaning no new significant insights emerged from participants' responses (Demalata and Espacio, 2025).

The fourth stage involved the transcription and verification of data. The researcher transcribed the recordings verbatim and cross checked them with field notes to ensure accuracy. Participants were also invited to review summaries of their contributions for validation, a process known as member checking, which strengthened credibility (Monreal, Sandoval, and Perez, 2025; Yunting, Santos, Ampong, Mejos, and Monreal, 2025).

Finally, the fifth stage was data analysis and reporting. Thematic coding was employed to identify common experiences, challenges, and strategies described by teachers. Triangulation across interviews, focus group discussions, and field notes helped establish trustworthiness of the findings (Blasabas and Sumaljag, 2021; Zamora and Tolentino, 2023). The results were then presented in narrative form, highlighting teachers' voices and offering insights that contributed to both scholarly discourse and practical policy recommendations for sustainable curriculum implementation.

### **Data Analysis**

The initial step in the research process was the coding of interview transcripts, utilizing the theoretical framework upon which the study was grounded. This coding process was essential for conducting a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data. This stage of the analysis involved the researcher's interpretation of the participants' narratives to identify and analyze subjects, issues, similarities, and differences. This methodology facilitated the researcher's understanding of the universe and the manner in which participants constructed their reality based on their individual viewpoints (Sutton and Austin, 2015).

Once the codes had been found and categorized, the researcher proceeded with the task of thematizing the dataset. Thematizing involved organizing the codes extracted from the transcripts in a logical and intelligible manner. Consequently, during the process of arranging the discovered data for exposition, the identified patterns were employed as the titles of individual sections within the written document. Subsequently, the corresponding codes were positioned below the headings, accompanied by the researcher's analysis and explanation (Sutton and Austin, 2015).

The initial phase in implementing Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological approach was the examination of interview transcripts to extract textual data. Subsequently, the researcher identified and delineated sections of the text that demonstrated a connection to the specified codes outlined in the theoretical framework

of the study. The data codes were classified or thematized according to established clustering codes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Assarroudi et al., 2018).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Given that this research dealt with human participants and their ideas, feelings, and experiences, this section of the article presented the ethics that were adhered to during the course of the investigation. Therefore, ethical considerations were implemented so that the participants' rights were not infringed upon in any way.

Because qualitative research dealt with the participants' feelings and emotions, and because the participants were also expected to relate experiences that they might have found embarrassing to share with other people, it required the highest possible level of commitment to ethics. Because of this, the researcher conducted the work in accordance with the ethical principles outlined by Suskie (2020). She urged that researchers who worked with human subjects adhere to the following ethical standards when conducting their studies: informed and voluntary permission, confidentiality of information shared and anonymity of research participants, and no damage to participants, beneficence, and reciprocity.

In order to obtain **consent**, the research participants voluntarily took part in the study. The participants were also informed of their duties before they gave their assent. They were provided with the option to participate in the interview or to decline doing so (Tucker and Stronge, 2020). In addition, the researcher clearly explained, as part of the informed consent process, the following points (Rust, 2020): who the researcher was, the purpose of the research, what data would be collected from participants, how the data would be collected, and how the data would be used and reported. The researcher approached potential participants and explained the aim of the study in addition to the procedure for data collection.

In order to maintain the security of the data, the researcher stored all files in a device that required a pin to prevent unwanted access. Hard copies of the transcripts were also stored in a safe location. This helped ensure that sensitive information regarding the informants did not become public. During this time, participants were prevented from being identified by maintaining their anonymity. As a consequence, nicknames were assigned to them (Fink, 2022).

For the last step, the researcher explained to the participants both the potential drawbacks of their participation in the study, if any existed, and the potential benefits of their involvement. According to Creswell (2013), the researcher adhered to the concept of reciprocity by searching for ways and means to compensate the research participants for the time and effort they devoted to participating in the research.

The researcher also observed the following ethical considerations:

**Social Value.** Given that everyone was coping with educational challenges that required resilience and efficiency, particularly during the learning crisis, it was evident that the research was valuable. To guarantee that the paper had the greatest possible impact on the community, the researcher ensured that, after publication, a copy of the findings was given to each of the individuals who took part in the study, as well as to the division office. A copy was delivered personally to the district supervisor so that he or she could review the results and then relay them to individuals who held higher positions within the office.

**Informed Consent.** The researcher sought the voluntary participation of respondents, ensuring that they were fully informed about the study's purpose, scope, and methods before giving their consent. It was clearly communicated that participation was voluntary and that respondents had the right to refuse or withdraw at any stage without coercion or negative consequence. Safeguards were observed to ensure participants' psychological well being throughout the process.

To strengthen ethical compliance, written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Consent forms were made available in both English and Filipino, and where necessary, in Cebuano, to ensure that participants could fully comprehend the content in the language they were most comfortable with. This step guaranteed inclusivity and minimized the risk of misunderstanding.

Participants were acknowledged as the most credible informants for the study, given their direct experiences in implementing the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum. They were properly oriented on the data collection methods, including surveys, in depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Participants were assured of strict confidentiality; their identities were not disclosed in the presentation, reporting, or analysis of findings, ensuring that their voices were represented with accuracy and respect.

**Vulnerability of Research Participants.** While the teacher participants in this study were professionals with the autonomy to decide their involvement, the researcher acknowledged the potential vulnerability that could arise from their institutional roles. To address this, explicit measures were taken to ensure that participation was entirely voluntary and free from any undue influence, particularly from supervisors or administrators.

The consent process clearly stated that refusal to participate or withdrawal at any point would not have any negative effect on the participants' employment, performance evaluations, or professional standing within their schools. This safeguard was

emphasized both verbally and in the written consent forms to prevent any perception of coercion.

Additionally, confidentiality was strictly observed to protect participants from potential identification. No names or personally identifiable details were included in the analysis or reporting of findings. By implementing these protections, the study ensured that participants could freely share their insights on the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum without fear of repercussions, thereby upholding ethical integrity and trustworthiness in the research process.

**Risk, Benefits, and Safety.** For the security and protection of participants' psychological and social well being, the researcher ensured that the purpose, scope, and significance of the study were clearly explained before data collection. It was emphasized that the study aimed to generate insights that could benefit teachers and contribute to improving the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum.

The primary risk identified was the demand on participants' time, as they had to allocate moments from their personal and professional responsibilities. To minimize this, surveys, in depth interviews, and focus group discussions were scheduled at times most convenient for the participants. Another potential risk was the disclosure of experiences that might have been unpleasant, frustrating, or emotionally discouraging. In anticipation of this, the researcher remained sensitive to participants' emotional states, offering them the opportunity to pause, skip questions, or withdraw from the discussion if they felt uncomfortable.

To further strengthen participant protection, a referral mechanism was established. If any participant experienced distress during or after the interviews or FGDs, the researcher committed to referring them to appropriate professional support services, such as school based guidance counselors or accredited mental health practitioners available in the division. This ensured that participants had access to timely assistance and that their well being remained a priority.

The anticipated benefits of the study outweighed the minimal risks. Findings were expected to provide valuable insights to teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in refining teaching and learning practices under the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum. The study contributed to the broader goal of promoting sustainable development through inclusive and effective education.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** Regarding the participants' right to privacy, the researcher secured all records and did not release any information that could expose specific identities. In presenting the results, the researcher refrained from revealing the names of participants. In cases where participants opted to withdraw their statements or

their participation from the study, the researcher readily accepted the request. The researcher was conscientious in asking questions and using language that was fair and free of bias. The researcher also oriented research assistants, documenters, and transcribers on the terms and conditions of privacy and confidentiality observed in this study.

**Justice.** The researcher was impartial in choosing the participants of the study. Nobody was disregarded, and anyone who fit the qualifications of a full time faculty member of basic education schools was a possible participant in the study. All participants were treated equally, regardless of whether they participated in the survey, individual interview, or focus group discussion. To compensate for the time spent during data gathering, the researcher gave tokens of appreciation to all participants.

**Transparency.** The researcher safeguarded the proper implementation of the methods used in the study. The researcher included all the necessary documents that supported data analysis and gave readers access to review these documents to gain a better understanding of the results and findings. Further, the findings were discussed comprehensively, especially information that might have had an effect on the presentation of results, giving importance to transparency. Lastly, the researcher described the extent of involvement and how objectivity was maintained in analyzing data and presenting the results.

**Qualification of the Researcher.** The researcher acknowledged her limited prior exposure to the qualitative research approach. To address this, she actively sought direction and guidance from her mentor, panelists, and peers who were proficient in qualitative methods. Their expertise provided essential support in ensuring that the study was conducted with methodological soundness and ethical sensitivity.

To further strengthen compliance with research standards, the researcher committed to undertaking relevant training opportunities, such as workshops on qualitative interviewing techniques, data analysis procedures, and research ethics. These trainings were intended to enhance her skills in handling in depth interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring that data collection was both systematic and culturally sensitive.

Throughout the research process, the researcher upheld the values of moral courage, cultural sensitivity, societal understanding, professionalism, and integrity. These qualities served as guiding principles in all stages of the study, from data collection to analysis and reporting, thereby ensuring both methodological rigor and ethical accountability.

**Adequacy of Facilities.** The researcher ensured the availability and accessibility of needed facilities in the study. Library and internet resources were available for further readings and references to deepen and strengthen the analysis and interpretation of data gathered. Audio recorders, cameras, and other necessary materials were also available. A group of experts who provided valuable feedback and suggestions was identified to help the researcher in conducting the study and communicating the results.

**Community Involvement.** The researcher was committed to respecting the school community, particularly the faculty, administrators, and teachers in the public schools within the study district. All research activities were undertaken only after securing permission from the appropriate authorities, including school administrators, department heads, program coordinators, and faculty members.

Beyond securing institutional approval, the researcher also committed to ensuring that the results of the study would be meaningfully shared with the community. In addition to providing written reports, the findings were presented in a feedback session with the participating teachers and other stakeholders. This interactive session allowed participants to engage with the results, validate the interpretations, and reflect on the implications for their professional practice and curriculum implementation.

Through this approach, the study not only respected the authority of the school community but also fostered a spirit of collaboration, ensuring that the knowledge generated benefited those directly involved in and affected by the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

In any study, trustworthiness was a very important attribute, especially in a phenomenological inquiry, in order to support the argument that the inquiry should focus on findings that were worth paying attention to. It was more than enough to show the validity, soundness, and significance of the data.

To establish trustworthiness and credibility in the study, Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested the choice of legitimate procedures. The discussion about trustworthiness was governed by the research lens and its paradigm assumptions, which helped guide the procedures in the study. The researcher contended that, in this study, plausibility was determined by the responses of the respondents and participants.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility was an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represented a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original accounts. To address credibility, the researcher used three techniques. First, the researcher presented the credibility of the experience with the

intent of truthfully illustrating and knowing the phenomenological facts in which the participants were involved. Second, in designing the research procedure, the researcher deliberately gathered data by recording the conversations with the participants.

**Transferability** was the degree to which the findings of the inquiry could apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project, according to Lincoln and Guba (1958). To address transferability in this study, the researcher included in the Appendix the data sources and documents used to answer the research question in order to provide access for possible further inquiry. This gave other researchers the ability to transfer the conclusions or recommendations as a basis for future studies.

The idea of **dependability**, on the other hand, emphasized the need for the researcher to account for the ever changing context within which research occurred. The researcher was responsible for describing the changes that occurred in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study.

**Confirmability** was a measure of how the inquiry's findings were supported by the data collected. To address the issues of dependability and confirmability in this study, the researcher recorded the conversations during the interviews and observations, transcribed them, and compiled the transcribed data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For confirmability, the researcher asked college instructors and students to confirm and explain the points that were taken from the data.

### **Potential Bias**

One potential source of bias in this study was the reliance on self reported experiences of teachers, which might have been influenced by selective memory, personal interpretation, or the desire to present oneself in a positive light. Teachers might have emphasized successes or downplayed challenges, particularly if they perceived that their responses could be connected to professional performance evaluations. Such tendencies could have affected the authenticity and completeness of the data collected.

Another possible bias arose from the purposive sampling technique. By selecting participants who were directly involved in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, the study ensured relevance but may have excluded the perspectives of those who had limited or peripheral roles in the reform. This could have resulted in an overrepresentation of voices that were more engaged or more adaptive to change, while marginalizing other equally important experiences.

The role of the researcher also posed potential bias. Given the interpretive nature of qualitative research, the researcher's perspectives, assumptions, and expectations may have influenced how data were collected, interpreted, and presented. Even with reflexivity, there was a possibility that certain narratives were highlighted over others

based on what the researcher deemed significant. In addition, the dynamics between interviewer and participant may have shaped responses, with some teachers possibly tailoring their answers to align with what they thought the researcher expected.

Finally, contextual bias may have emerged since the study was limited to specific schools and divisions within the Philippine education system. The unique culture, policies, and resources of these settings could have shaped the insights gathered, which might have differed significantly from those in other contexts where the MATATAG Curriculum was implemented.

### **Limitations**

A key limitation of the study was its scope, as it focused only on teachers' experiences in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum within selected schools. While this provided depth, it restricted the breadth of perspectives by excluding other stakeholders such as students, school heads, parents, and policymakers whose views might also have enriched the understanding of curriculum reform.

Another limitation was the reliance on qualitative methods, which prioritized depth and detail but did not provide statistical generalizability. The findings could not be used to make definitive claims about all teachers in the Philippines. Instead, the results were understood as context specific insights that revealed patterns and themes rather than universally applicable truths.

The study was also limited by time and resource constraints. Data collection was carried out within a specific period, which may not have captured the long term challenges and opportunities of implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Teachers' experiences were dynamic and could have evolved as the curriculum matured, yet this study captured only a snapshot of the transition phase.

Additionally, the study faced limitations related to access and participation. Some teachers might have declined to participate due to workload or apprehension, which could have reduced the diversity of voices included. Furthermore, those who did participate might have felt constrained in expressing candid opinions if they worried about administrative repercussions, despite assurances of confidentiality.

Lastly, the findings may have been influenced by external factors beyond the control of the researcher, such as ongoing educational reforms, sociopolitical shifts, or local community challenges. These contextual influences may have shaped teachers' narratives in ways that were difficult to isolate from the core focus on curriculum implementation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented, interpreted, and discussed the results of the qualitative inquiry exploring teachers’ lived experiences in bringing the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum to life within the context of sustainable development. Drawing from in depth interviews and focus group discussions with teachers in the Mlang South District, the chapter organized the narratives thematically to illuminate how educators described their instructional adjustments, professional insights, and curriculum engagement as they navigated this major reform. The structure of the chapter aimed to capture the ways teachers made sense of the curriculum shifts, responded to learner needs, and aligned their practices with the broader goals of strengthening foundational skills, fostering values formation, and supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4. By framing the results around these emergent themes, the chapter provided a contextualized account of teachers’ perspectives on curriculum implementation, highlighting how their agency, beliefs, and school contexts shaped their efforts to translate MATATAG principles into meaningful classroom experiences.

### Teachers’ lived experiences in implementing the MATATAG curriculum

**Table 1. Thematic analysis on teachers’ lived experiences in implementing the MATATAG curriculum**

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>1.1 Adaptation of instructional strategies</b>	Learner-centered instruction; Competency-based teaching; Contextualization; Digital tools;	I adapt my instructional strategies by aligning my lesson plans with competencies, modifying strategies, incorporating digital tools, promoting teamwork, and adjusting instruction based on learner needs (P1). I embrace learner-centered and competency-based approaches	<b>Instructional adaptability aligned with MATATAG priorities</b>	Teachers redesign instruction to emphasize foundational skills, contextual

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
	Foundational skills	<p>and unpack the learning competencies to ensure alignment with the MATATAG curriculum (P2).</p> <p>I focus on foundational competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills through mastery-based and learner-centered strategies (P3).</p> <p>I encourage collaboration and communication among students while emphasizing student-centered learning (P4).</p> <p>I connect lessons to real-life experiences and use group work, problem solving, and creative activities to engage learners (P5).</p> <p>I use explicit instruction for foundational skills and differentiated instruction to support both struggling and advanced learners (P6).</p> <p>I integrate learner-centered, competency-based, and values-driven approaches to make learning more relevant (P7).</p>		<p>lization, and learner-centered approaches aligned with MATATAG.</p>

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		<p>I apply group discussions, hands-on tasks, and inquiry-based learning to strengthen active participation (P8).</p> <p>I adopt innovative strategies, differentiated instruction, and values education to align my teaching with the MATATAG curriculum (P9).</p> <p>We use relevant, inclusive, values-driven, and competency-based instructional approaches in our classrooms (FGD10).</p> <p>We contextualize lessons by integrating local resources and community experiences into instruction (FGD11).</p> <p>We strengthen critical thinking and problem solving through group discussions and analytical tasks (FGD12).</p> <p>We use learner-centered strategies and incorporate cultural and community contexts into our lessons (FGD13).</p> <p>I contextualize lessons using local</p>		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
1.2 Learner engagement and performance	Motivation; Participation; Positive attitudes; Adjustment	<p>examples, real-world situations, and news articles to make learning meaningful (FGD14). We apply learner-centered, activity-based, and play-based strategies suited for kindergarten learners (FGD15).</p> <p>Learners show greater interest and participate more actively during lessons (P1). Learners respond with enthusiasm and show increased engagement due to improved activities (P2).</p> <p>Learners demonstrate increased participation and improved performance because lessons are relevant and engaging (P3). Students are more attentive, participative, and more willing to volunteer in class activities (P4). Learners are more involved because lessons are interactive and differentiated, although some still struggle with independence (P5).</p>	<p><b>Heightened learner engagement through relevant learning experiences</b></p>	<p>Engagement increases when activities are relevant, interactive, and contextualized, though some learners need time to adjust.</p>

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		<p>Learners show improved engagement, participation, and overall performance (P6).</p> <p>Learners demonstrate increased engagement, active participation, and improved performance when lessons are relevant (P7).</p> <p>Learners show significant improvement in participation and collaboration during inquiry-based and hands-on tasks (P8).</p> <p>Learners respond positively with improved participation and performance (P9).</p> <p>Learners become more participative, motivated, and competent as they develop skills and values (FGD10).</p> <p>Learners show increased motivation, improved understanding, and active involvement in discussions (FGD11).</p> <p>Learners actively contribute to discussions and take ownership of their class projects (FGD12).</p>		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>1.3 Community responsiveness and collaboration</b>	Parent-teacher partnerships; Community involvement; Cultural grounding	Learners engage more actively in meaningful, values-based learning experiences (FGD13). Learners ask questions, analyze information, and collaborate more frequently (FGD14). Learners respond positively and enthusiastically to activity-based and hands-on strategies (FGD15).	<b>Strengthened school-community partnerships</b>	Teachers deepen collaboration with families and communities to contextualize learning and align the curriculum with
		I collaborate with parents through conferences, forums, and meetings to gather input on learners' needs (P1).		Teachers deepen collaboration with families
		I work with parents and stakeholders using culturally grounded and participatory approaches (P2).		and communities to
		I build partnerships with parents and community members to make the curriculum more responsive to real-life contexts (P3).		contextualize
		I involve parents and community members in school decision-making processes (P4).		learning and align the
		I conduct quarterly homeroom		curriculum with

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		<p>meetings, communicate through various channels, and coordinate with stakeholders for resources and support (P5).</p> <p>I hold regular conferences with parents to discuss learners' progress and contextual needs (P6).</p> <p>I engage in regular consultations with parents and community stakeholders (P7).</p> <p>I maintain open communication through meetings, conferences, and digital platforms to involve parents in their children's learning (P8).</p> <p>I collaborate with the PTA, engage in community activities, and involve parents in planning to address local needs (P9).</p> <p>We maintain regular communication with parents and engage local organizations to stay informed about community needs (FGD10).</p> <p>We form partnerships with</p>		<p>local realities.</p>

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		<p>community groups and conduct parent workshops to integrate local perspectives (FGD11).                      Our PTA actively collaborates with teachers and helps shape school programs and decisions (FGD12).                      I collaborate with parents and community leaders, integrating cultural and religious values into lessons (FGD13).                      I engage parents and stakeholders to ensure lessons reflect community values and traditions (FGD14).                      I consistently coordinate with parents and community members to make the curriculum relevant and culturally grounded (FGD15).</p>		

Table 1 presents the thematic analysis of the lived experiences of teachers as they navigate the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum, focusing on instructional adaptation, learner engagement, and community responsiveness. The thematic analysis generated three major themes: **Instructional adaptability aligned with MATATAG priorities**, **Heightened learner engagement through relevant learning experiences**, and **Strengthened school–community partnerships**. These themes highlight how teachers recalibrate their instructional approaches, respond to learner needs, and engage community stakeholders to implement a curriculum aligned with both national reforms and global sustainability goals. The table underscores a

dynamic process in which teachers renegotiate pedagogical decisions, contextualize learning to local realities, and collaborate with families and communities to meet the demands of MATATAG. These findings reflect broader systemic transformations in Philippine basic education and reveal the capacities, struggles, and innovations that characterize teachers' lived experiences.

### **Theme 1: Instructional adaptability aligned with MATATAG priorities**

This theme reflects how teachers actively reconfigure their teaching approaches to align with the foundational and competency-based emphasis of the MATATAG Curriculum. Teachers describe a range of modifications to lesson planning, instructional methods, and classroom strategies that ensure alignment with the new curriculum's objectives. Their narratives reveal intentional efforts to contextualize learning, strengthen basic competencies, and promote active learner participation. Several direct statements support this theme, such as when a teacher expressed:

*"I adapt my instructional strategies by aligning my lesson plans, modifying my teaching strategies, incorporating digital tools, promoting teamwork, and adjusting instruction based on learners' needs" (IDI1.1.1).*

*Another teacher shared, "I embrace learner-centered and competency-based approaches by unpacking learning competencies to guide the way I teach" (IDI1.1.2).*

*Similarly, a participant stated, "I focus on essential competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills through mastery-based approaches that help my learners build strong foundations" (IDI1.1.3).*

*One teacher also emphasized, "I encourage collaboration and communication among my students while strengthening student-centered learning in my class" (IDI1.1.4).*

*Another explained, "I connect lessons to real-life experiences and local contexts so that learning becomes meaningful and relevant for my pupils" (IDI1.1.5).*

These experiences show teachers' intentionality in reshaping their pedagogical practices to better respond to learner needs and curricular priorities. This theme gains support from Bautista (2021), who argued that the MATATAG reform requires teachers

to redesign classroom instruction to strengthen foundational learning and promote lifelong competencies. The findings also corroborate the study of Dela Cruz (2021), who noted that teachers must modify their teaching strategies significantly when implementing updated curricula that demand contextualized and competency-based learning. Additionally, the theme is congruent with Garcia (2022), who emphasized that teachers' ability to adapt instruction is critical for the effective implementation of curriculum reforms. The experiences shared by teachers clearly demonstrate that instructional adaptability is central to enacting MATATAG's goals in meaningful and sustainable ways.

## **Theme 2: Heightened learner engagement through relevant learning experiences**

This theme highlights how teachers observe marked improvements in learners' participation, motivation, and academic behavior when they apply MATATAG-inspired, relevant, and interactive teaching approaches. Teachers describe learners as becoming more attentive, more participative, and more interested as lessons become more contextualized and meaningful. Several direct statements illustrate this pattern. One teacher shared:

*"Learners show greater interest and participate more actively during my lessons" (IDI1.2.1).*

*Another stated, "My learners respond with enthusiasm and adjust positively because the activities we now use are more engaging and learner-centered" (IDI1.2.2).*

*A teacher also reflected, "Learners demonstrate increased participation and improved performance because the lessons are now more engaging and relevant to them" (IDI1.2.3).*

*Another participant described, "Students are more attentive and more willing to volunteer during class activities" (IDI1.2.4).*

*A final reflection explained, "Learners are more involved because the lessons are interactive and differentiated, although some still need time to adjust to the new learning approaches" (IDI1.2.5).*

These collective experiences show that when instruction resonates with learners' realities and supports active involvement, engagement naturally increases. This theme is supported by Cruz (2023), who highlighted that contextualized and SDG-connected learning promotes deeper learner engagement and helps students see the relevance of

classroom content. It also gains support from Fernandez (2023), who found that interactive, learner-centered strategies significantly enhance both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Furthermore, this theme is congruent with Kim (2021), who emphasized that when learners find lessons meaningful and connected to real-world issues, they show stronger motivation and improved classroom behavior. Thus, the enhanced engagement described by teachers in this study aligns well with existing research showing that relevant and participatory learning environments improve student outcomes.

### **Theme 3: Strengthened school–community partnerships**

This theme illustrates how teachers broaden the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum by collaborating closely with parents, families, and community stakeholders. Such partnerships ensure that learning becomes contextualized to cultural values and community realities. Teachers consistently emphasized the need for open communication, shared decision making, and culturally grounded engagement with families. Several direct statements highlight this theme. One teacher expressed:

*“I collaborate with parents through conferences, forums, and meetings to understand the needs of learners and support them effectively” (IDI1.3.1).*

*Another stated, “I work with parents and stakeholders using culturally grounded and participatory approaches to make learning more inclusive” (IDI1.3.2).*

*A teacher also shared, “I build partnerships with parents and community members to make the curriculum more relevant to real-life contexts” (IDI1.3.3).*

*One participant remarked, “I involve parents and community members in school decision-making processes so that they can contribute to our learners’ growth” (IDI1.3.4).*

*Another explained, “I maintain open communication with families using meetings, conferences, and digital platforms to align learning with community realities” (IDI1.3.5).*

These reflections show that community collaboration is not incidental but a necessary facet of MATATAG implementation. This theme was supported by Alvarez (2023), who emphasized that contextualized education under MATATAG requires active involvement of families and communities to ensure learning remains culturally and socially relevant. The results also gain support from Lopez (2023), who argued that culturally responsive teaching is strengthened when teachers work collaboratively with local groups and integrate community knowledge into instruction. Additionally, Hernandez (2021) found that strong school–community partnerships provide essential resources and shared support systems that improve educational outcomes. The teachers’ experiences confirm that MATATAG implementation is strengthened when families and communities actively participate in the educational process.

**The challenges and enabling factors in integrating SDGs in teaching**

**Table 2. Thematic analysis on challenges and enabling factors in integrating SDGs in teaching**

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>2.1 Institutional and systemic constraints</b>	Limited resources; Curriculum overload; Insufficient training; Time constraints; Policy gaps	<p>The integration of sustainable development goals is hindered by limited resources, curriculum overload, and lack of training (P1).</p> <p>The integration of SDGs is affected by limited teacher training, rigid curriculum structures, and insufficient resources (P2).</p> <p>Many teachers struggle with curriculum overload, limited time, and a lack of training and institutional</p>	<b>Systemic barriers limiting SDG integration</b>	Teachers consistently experience structural barriers such as lack of materials, insufficient training, curriculum overload, and inadequate institutional support for

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>support for SDG topics (P3).</p> <p>The integration of SDGs is challenged by insufficient resources, including limited internet access and lack of gadgets (P4).</p> <p>Teachers face constraints such as overloaded curriculum, insufficient learning materials, limited time, and heavy workloads that make SDG integration difficult (P5).</p> <p>Teachers do not receive enough training and professional development to confidently integrate SDGs (P6).</p> <p>SDG integration is limited by systemic issues such as lack of resources and insufficient teacher training (P7).</p> <p>Teachers experience limited availability of instructional materials and lack of SDG-focused</p>		<p>SDG-related teaching.</p>

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>training (P8).</p> <p>Institutional constraints such as limited teacher knowledge, insufficient support, and resource limitations hinder SDG integration (P9).</p> <p>The integration of SDGs is hindered by a lack of textbooks, teaching materials, and technology (FGD10).</p> <p>Teachers are challenged by insufficient training, lack of updated materials, and limited time for SDG lesson planning (FGD11).</p> <p>Teachers lack sufficient training and support to integrate SDGs effectively (FGD12).</p> <p>Limited resources, inadequate policy support, and lack of funding restrict the implementation of sustainability education (FGD13).</p> <p>The pressure to meet</p>		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>2.2 Available resources, support systems, and professional development</b>	Professional development workshops; Online platforms; Mentorship; Peer collaboration; Administrative support	<p>academic standards makes it challenging to prioritize SDGs without compromising core subjects (FGD14).                      There is a lack of localized and culturally appropriate SDG learning materials for teaching in a Muslim community (FGD15).                      Professional development workshops, online resources, mentorship programs, and community involvement have empowered me to implement SDG-aligned lessons (P1).                      Our division and district provide workshops, online courses, and webinars that strengthen my ability to integrate SDGs (P2).                      Continuous training, access to resources, and strong support systems help teachers integrate</p>	<b>Capacity-building enabling SDG-aligned teaching</b>	Teachers are empowered by sustained professional development, technology access, peer collaboration, and administrative support.

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		SDGs meaningfully (P3).		
		A training course designed to enhance my professional development supports SDG integration (P4).		
		Instructional kits, digital tools, administrative support, and stakeholder partnerships strengthen SDG-related teaching (P5).		
		Capacity-building initiatives for teachers support the integration of SDGs (P6).		
		Access to professional development programs, instructional materials, and institutional support helps teachers implement SDG lessons (P7).		
		Capacity-building seminars and workshops conducted by DepEd and partners empower teachers to align lessons with SDGs (P8).		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>Access to various resources, support systems, and training programs enables SDG integration (P9).</p> <p>Various support systems, including professional development and access to learning materials, help teachers integrate SDGs (FGD10).</p> <p>Workshops, seminars, administrative support, and online platforms provide teachers with tools and guidance to teach SDGs (FGD11).</p> <p>Training and resources from DepEd support SDG integration (FGD12).</p> <p>Specialized teaching guides, digital tools, peer collaboration networks, and mentorship programs help integrate sustainability (FGD13).</p> <p>DepEd training sessions equip teachers with</p>		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>2.3 Personal values and professional beliefs</b>	Advocacy for sustainability; Purpose-driven teaching; Stewardship; Commitment to social responsibility	<p>strategies to connect SDGs with lessons (FGD14).</p> <p>Support from school heads, local government units, and community leaders strengthens SDG-related instruction (FGD15).</p> <p>My motivation to pursue sustainability education comes from the belief that work should be meaningful and impactful (P1).</p> <p>I believe teachers should embrace and appreciate the existing curriculum to improve themselves and their learners (P2).</p> <p>I believe that education should prepare learners to address real-world challenges and inspire them to promote SDGs (P3).</p> <p>My belief is that education must be relevant to</p>	<b>Value-driven motivation for sustainability education</b>	<p>Teachers' personal values shape their commitment to SDG integration and strengthen their motivation despite structural challenges.</p>

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>students' lives and future, which motivates my commitment to SDG integration (P4).</p> <p>My values and beliefs align with sustainable development, motivating me to become a role model who encourages responsible citizenship (P5).</p> <p>My personal values give me purpose and direction, motivating me to pursue sustainability education (P6).</p> <p>I am inspired by the belief that learners must contribute to a just and sustainable future (P7).</p> <p>I am guided by compassion and environmental consciousness, which motivates my commitment to SDGs (P8).</p> <p>I believe education should be a catalyst for social</p>		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>change and empower learners to be agents of sustainability (P9).</p> <p>I want to make a positive impact on the world and believe teaching is a powerful way to promote sustainability (FGD10).</p> <p>I feel responsible for helping pupils protect the planet and become responsible citizens (FGD11).</p> <p>I feel responsible for equipping students with the knowledge and values needed for sustainability (FGD12).</p> <p>I value environmental stewardship, social justice, and global responsibility in my teaching (FGD13).</p> <p>I believe teachers play a critical role in shaping responsible, environmentally conscious learners (FGD14).</p>		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		My values of respect, stewardship, and compassion motivate me to integrate lessons that promote sustainability (FGD15).		

Table 2 presents teachers’ lived realities as they attempt to integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their everyday instructional routines under the MATATAG Curriculum. The table reveals the ongoing tension between structural barriers and enabling factors that define SDG integration. Three major themes emerged: **systemic and institutional constraints hindering SDG integration, capacity-building supports that empower teachers to teach SDG-related content, and value-driven professional motivation that sustains teachers’ engagement with sustainability education.** These themes illuminate the complex interplay between teachers’ aspirations, personal beliefs, and the realities of school environments that often lack adequate material, structural, and technical support. The table underscores that SDG integration is not merely a curricular requirement but a deeply contextualized process mediated by teacher resiliency, systemic limitations, and capacity-building structures.

**Theme 1: Systemic and institutional constraints hindering SDG integration**

This theme captures teachers’ descriptions of the systemic barriers that limit their ability to fully integrate SDGs into their teaching practice. Teachers consistently described insufficient resources, curriculum overload, constrained time, limited training, and institutional gaps that make SDG integration challenging. Their lived experiences reveal a pervasive sense of structural inadequacy within the Philippine school system, particularly in underserved communities. Several direct statements illustrate this theme. Teachers shared that:

*“...Limited resources, curriculum overload, and lack of training hinder my ability to integrate SDG concepts meaningfully into my lessons” (IDI2.1.1).*

*Another teacher expressed, “the hindrances in integrating SDGs come from limited teacher training,*

*rigid curriculum structures, and insufficient resources in our school” (IDI2.1.2).*

*Some teachers emphasized contextual realities, saying, “insufficient resources such as internet access and lack of gadgets make it difficult for us to incorporate sustainability content” (IDI2.1.3).*

*Others stated, “there are constraints such as overloaded curriculum, insufficient learning materials, time limitations, limited resources, and heavy teaching workload that prevent consistent SDG integration” (IDI2.1.4).*

*One teacher added, “we lack specific training and professional development opportunities that focus on SDG integration, making it difficult to understand how to embed sustainability in lessons” (FGD2.1.5).*

These statements collectively reveal the systemic pressures that undermine the curriculum’s sustainability goals. This theme gains strong support from studies that highlight barriers to SDG-aligned curriculum implementation. Dela Cruz (2021) found that curriculum reforms often fail at the classroom level when instructional expectations exceed available resources. This is congruent with Abad (2022), who noted that rural schools suffer from chronic shortages in instructional materials that hinder the realization of progressive curriculum reforms. Kim (2021) further revealed that teachers struggle to align their instruction with global sustainability frameworks when institutional support is weak or inconsistent. These findings reinforce that structural constraints are not isolated problems but systemic and widespread realities that significantly affect teachers’ ability to meaningfully integrate SDGs into daily instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

## **Theme 2: Capacity-building supports that empower SDG-aligned instruction**

This theme highlights the enabling conditions that support teachers in integrating SDGs into classroom lessons. Teachers repeatedly emphasized the importance of professional development, access to instructional materials, mentorship, peer collaboration, and administrative support. These supports serve as vital mechanisms that address the gaps identified in the first theme, enabling teachers to overcome limitations and build confidence in sustainability education. Teachers expressed such realities through several direct statements. One shared:

*“...Professional development workshops, online resources, mentorship programs, and community resources have empowered me to implement SDG-aligned lessons more effectively” (IDI2.2.1).*

*Another said, “our division and district provide workshops and online courses that help us understand how to integrate SDGs into our teaching” (IDI2.2.2).*

*A participant stated, “teachers are empowered to teach SDG-aligned lessons through continuous training, access to resources, and a strong support system” (IDI2.2.3).*

*Another teacher shared, “we have instructional kits, digital tools, administrative support, stakeholder partnerships, and seminars that guide us in integrating SDGs into our lessons” (IDI2.2.4).*

*One more reflected, “the capacity-building seminars and workshops conducted by DepEd and partner organizations have helped me understand how to align daily lessons with sustainability goals” (FGD2.2.5).*

These reflections illustrate how training and support structures are crucial in shaping teacher competence and confidence. This theme is strongly supported by literature on teacher professional development in curriculum implementation. Bello (2022) emphasized that sustained professional development is essential for equipping teachers to handle new pedagogical demands, especially those involving sustainability frameworks. Fernandez (2023) similarly found that teachers who receive targeted training on SDG-aligned strategies are more capable of contextualizing sustainability concepts for learners. This theme also gains support from Cunningham (2021), who highlighted that access to digital tools and resources significantly enhances teacher readiness for contemporary curriculum demands. These scholarly insights confirm that capacity-building initiatives play a central role in enabling teachers to operationalize SDG integration under MATATAG.

### **Theme 3: Value-driven professional motivation sustaining SDG integration**

This theme reflects how teachers’ personal values, beliefs, and sense of purpose contribute to their motivation to integrate sustainability concepts in their lessons. Teachers described sustainability education as a moral responsibility, a professional

commitment, and a meaningful contribution to society. Their personal philosophies often serve as internal sources of strength that compensate for institutional limitations. Teachers articulated this theme through statements such as:

*“I believe that my work should be meaningful, so I am motivated to pursue sustainability education” (IDI2.3.1).*

*Another shared, “there is constant change in the curriculum, and as teachers, we should embrace and love the existing curriculum for our improvement and our learners’ improvement” (IDI2.3.2).*

*One participant said, “education should prepare learners to address real-world challenges and inspire them to promote the SDGs in meaningful ways” (IDI2.3.3).*

*A teacher noted, “when teachers’ values and beliefs align with sustainable education goals, they become motivated role models who encourage learners to become active, caring citizens” (IDI2.3.4).*

*Another stated, “I feel a deep sense of responsibility to equip my students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address sustainability challenges” (FGD2.3.5).*

These reflections demonstrate that personal conviction serves as a powerful anchor for SDG integration. This theme finds support in Kim (2021), who asserted that teachers’ moral commitments significantly influence their willingness to engage with sustainability education. It is also corroborated by Cruz (2023), who reported that teachers who personally value environmental stewardship and social justice demonstrate stronger engagement in SDG-related instruction. The theme aligns with Alvarez (2023), who found that personal beliefs about the purpose of education shape how teachers internalize and implement curriculum reforms. These scholarly insights reinforce that teachers’ value systems play a crucial role in sustaining their motivation to integrate SDGs into their instructional practice despite institutional challenges.

**How teachers bring the MATATAG curriculum to life through SDG promotion**

**Table 3. Thematic analysis on how teachers bring the MATATAG curriculum to life through SDG promotion**

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>3.1 Pedagogical approaches and classroom innovations</b>	Inquiry-based learning; Project-based learning; Experiential learning; Contextualization; Play-based learning	I use real objects and real-world scenarios to help my kindergarten pupils understand the lesson (P1). I use inquiry-based learning and behaviorist approaches along with a reward system to engage learners (P2). I use project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and contextualized lessons to connect SDGs with real-life issues (P3). I use project-based learning where students work on real-world problems	<b>Contextualized and innovative pedagogies for sustainability</b>	Teachers bring SDGs to life by using contextualized, inquiry-based, experiential, and project-based learning strategies that connect global issues with students' lived realities.

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>that develop critical thinking and collaboration (P4).</p> <p>I employ experiential learning and project-based learning so students learn through real-world application (P5).</p> <p>I use project-based and inquiry-based learning to help students investigate sustainability issues (P6).</p> <p>I use project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, and experiential activities closely related to sustainability concepts (P7).</p> <p>I use a variety of contextualized, learner-centered strategies to make</p>		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>SDGs meaningful and relatable (P8).</p> <p>I encourage my students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life sustainability problems (P9).</p> <p>I use inquiry-based learning that allows students to investigate local issues and present findings (FGD10).</p> <p>I connect SDGs to local issues through storytelling, simulations, and collaborative projects (FGD11).</p> <p>I use play-based learning to introduce SDGs, such as sorting recyclables and non-recyclables during cleanup games (FGD12).</p> <p>I employ project-</p>		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
<b>3.2 Assessment of SDG-related learning</b>	Pre–post assessments; Reflective journals; Observation; Performance tasks; Behavioral changes	based learning focused on real-world issues like waste reduction and community gardening (FGD13). I use collaborative learning strategies where students research SDG-related topics and present their work (FGD14). I integrate SDGs using project-based, inquiry-based, and collaborative learning approaches rooted in community culture (FGD15). I administer pre- and post-intervention assessments to evaluate effectiveness and guide improvements (P1).	Reflective and holistic assessment of sustainability learning	Teachers use varied and meaningful assessment approaches that capture behavioral, cognitive, and

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>I combine qualitative and quantitative assessments and evaluate behavior through rubrics (P2).</p>		<p>affective outcomes related to sustainability.</p>
		<p>I observe changes in students' awareness, attitudes, and actions through journals and feedback (P3).</p>		
		<p>I observe changes in learning behavior such as environmental awareness and community involvement (P4).</p>		
		<p>I evaluate awareness and behavior through journals, performance tasks, group feedback, and self-reflection</p>		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>(P5).                      I observe student behavior and participation and note changes in awareness and actions (P6).                      I evaluate SDG learning through reflections, project evaluations, and observations of behavioral changes (P7).                      I assess awareness and behavior through formative assessments, reflections, and observations (P8).                      I assess students using reflective journals, project-based assessments, and peer feedback (P9).                      I ask learners to reflect through</p>		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>drawings or narratives to assess understanding (FGD10).</p> <p>I assess SDG-related learning using pre–post tests, behavioral observations, surveys, and reflection journals (FGD11).</p> <p>I observe students’ decisions and behaviors during SDG-related activities (FGD12).</p> <p>I use formative and summative assessments, including reflections, journals, and quizzes (FGD13).</p> <p>I assess learning using reflective journals and portfolios (FGD14).</p> <p>I assess the impact</p>		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
<b>3.3 Role of school leadership and policy environment</b>	Resource allocation; Vision-setting; Professional development; Administrative support	<p>of SDG lessons by observing learners' sustainable practices at home and in school (FGD15).</p> <p>The school must allocate funds for materials, printers, and computers, and provide professional development strategies (P1).</p> <p>School leaders provide professional development and allocate resources for teaching and learning (P2).</p> <p>School leaders model sustainable practices and create a supportive environment for sustainability (P3).</p> <p>School leaders set clear goals and expectations for</p>	Leadership-supported sustainability culture	<p>School leadership establishes the enabling conditions necessary for sustainable development education to thrive across classroom and school culture.</p>

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		<p>sustainability education (P4). Our school head serves as a leader, enabler, and advocate who guides, supports, and inspires teachers (P5). School leaders provide capacity-building opportunities that help teachers promote SDGs (P6). School leaders set a vision for sustainability and empower teachers through resources and support (P7). School leadership plays a crucial role by providing direction, support, and professional development opportunities (P8).</p>		

<b>Issues Probed</b>	<b>Codes / Categories</b>	<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Meanings / Interpretations</b>
		School leaders can inspire students, teachers, and communities to work together toward sustainability (P9). School leadership provides opportunities for training and supports SDG integration (FGD10). Strong leadership creates a supportive environment with resources, training, and recognition (FGD11). School leadership provides materials and funding that support sustainability programs (FGD12). Leadership and policy support		

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		empower teachers to integrate SDGs through clear direction and resources (FGD13). School principals collaborate with LGUs and NGOs to support sustainability efforts (FGD14). School leadership offers programs, resources, and policies that encourage environmental and community-based initiatives (FGD15).		

Table 3 captures how teachers operationalize the MATATAG Curriculum by contextualizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into daily classroom instruction, assessment practices, and school-level initiatives. The data reveal three interconnected themes: **pedagogical innovations contextualizing SDGs**, **reflective assessment practices that reinforce sustainability learning**, and **leadership and policy structures sustaining SDG implementation**. These themes highlight how teachers translate curriculum policy into meaningful learning opportunities that promote sustainability awareness, critical thinking, and real-world problem solving. They also show how school leadership and institutional culture shape teachers' ability to sustain sustainability-driven education.

### **Theme 1: Pedagogical innovations that contextualize SDGs in daily lessons**

This theme illustrates teachers' strategic use of varied pedagogical approaches to embed SDG concepts in instruction. Teachers describe using inquiry, project-based learning, experiential activities, contextualized tasks, real-world simulations, and service learning to help learners connect global sustainability concerns with their daily experiences. The depth of this theme is evident in direct teacher accounts that describe how they intentionally design learning to foster global citizenship and local relevance. Several statements embody this theme. One teacher shared:

*"I use real objects and real-world scenarios so my pupils can relate sustainability concepts to their lived experiences" (IDI3.1.1).*

*Another stated, "I use inquiry-based learning and behaviorist approaches, including a reward system, to help my learners explore sustainability topics meaningfully" (IDI3.1.2).*

*A teacher emphasized, "I apply project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, contextualized lessons, and service learning activities that help students engage with real-world issues connected to the SDGs" (IDI3.1.3).*

*Another noted, "I use project-based learning where students work on real-world projects addressing SDGs to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills" (IDI3.1.4).*

*A participant also shared, "I integrate experiential learning and project-based learning so my learners can apply what they learn to solve real-world problems related to sustainability" (IDI3.1.5).*

These results demonstrate intentional pedagogical innovation aligned with curriculum reform. This theme gains strong support from Cruz (2023), who found that contextualized pedagogies greatly enhance learners' ability to understand sustainability concepts. It is also aligned with Fernandez (2023), who noted that experiential and inquiry-based approaches foster deeper engagement when dealing with interdisciplinary

issues such as environmental and social sustainability. Additionally, this theme is congruent with Kim (2021), who emphasized that SDG integration is most effective when anchored on authentic, relevant, and problem-based learning tasks. Teachers' experiences thus reinforce the scholarly consensus that innovative pedagogies are essential to contextualizing the MATATAG Curriculum and promoting sustainable development learning.

## **Theme 2: Reflective assessment and monitoring of SDG-related learning outcomes**

This theme highlights how teachers assess students' understanding, behaviors, and values related to sustainability through various reflective, formative, and performance-based strategies. Teachers describe using pre and post assessments, reflective journals, observation of behavior changes, project evaluations, and performance tasks to capture learners' cognitive and affective responses to SDG-infused instruction. These assessment practices reveal how teachers view sustainability not just as academic content but as a set of developing values and behaviors. The following statements demonstrate this theme. A teacher shared:

*"I administer pre and post interventions to assess effectiveness and reflect on what needs improvement in sustainability lessons" (IDI3.2.1).*

*Another explained, "I combine qualitative and quantitative assessment because I am not only after the scores but also the learners' behavior through rubrics that show their engagement with SDG concepts" (IDI3.2.2).*

*A participant stated, "I check students' awareness, attitudes, and actions through journals, feedback, and observation" (IDI3.2.3). Another teacher described, "I evaluate my learners' awareness and behavior through classroom observation, reflective journals, performance-based tasks, and group feedback" (IDI3.2.4).*

*One more teacher said, "I use student reflection, drawings, and personal explanations to assess how*

*they understand SDG concepts and how their perspectives change” (FGD3.2.5).*

These practices demonstrate teachers’ understanding that sustainable development must be assessed holistically.

This theme is strongly supported by literature. Garcia (2022) emphasized that reflective and performance-based assessments are crucial in competency-based curricula like MATATAG, where values, critical thinking, and real-world application are central. The theme also aligns with Alvarez (2023), who argued that assessing sustainability learning must go beyond traditional tests to capture behavioral and attitudinal shifts. It further corroborates Kim (2021), who noted that SDG education is most effective when teachers continuously evaluate not just knowledge but learners’ evolving dispositions and civic behaviors. These scholarly insights confirm that reflective assessment is indispensable for monitoring learners’ progress in sustainability learning under the MATATAG framework.

### **Theme 3: School leadership and policy structures strengthening sustainability education**

This theme emphasizes the role of school leadership, institutional policies, and organizational culture in sustaining teachers’ efforts to implement SDG-aligned lessons. Teachers consistently pointed out that strong leadership support enables them to access training, resources, and opportunities to integrate sustainability concepts meaningfully. School heads are described as catalysts who provide direction, professional development, and resource allocation crucial for SDG integration. Multiple statements support this theme. One teacher stated:

*“The school must allocate funds for materials like printers and computers and provide professional development to support SDG instruction” (IDI3.3.1).*

*Another explained, “The school leaders provide professional development for teachers and allocate resources to be used in teaching sustainability concepts” (IDI3.3.2).*

*A teacher shared, “School leaders model sustainable practices and foster an environment that inspires teachers and students to take active roles in promoting sustainability” (IDI3.3.3).*

*Another reflected, “Our school head guides, supports, and inspires us in making the school a model of responsible, inclusive, and child-friendly sustainability practices” (IDI3.3.4).*

*One more participant added, “School leaders provide vision, resources, and capacity-building that empower teachers to integrate sustainability education effectively” (FGD3.3.5).*

These findings highlight that leadership is not peripheral but central to successful SDG integration. This theme is supported by Hernandez (2021), who stressed that institutional support is a critical determinant of curriculum implementation success in Philippine schools. It also aligns with Jackson (2023), who emphasized that leadership structures must provide continuous professional development and resource support to sustain educational reforms. Furthermore, the theme is corroborated by Bello (2022), who found that strong administrative vision and policy reinforcement significantly improve teachers’ capacity to integrate sustainability objectives in instructional practice. Teachers’ experiences resonate strongly with these findings, demonstrating that school leadership acts as the backbone of SDG-aligned curriculum implementation.

## **Synthesis of the Results**

The results of the study reveal a comprehensive picture of how teachers navigate the implementation of the K to 12 MATATAG Curriculum within the broader expectations of sustainable development. Across the three major thematic areas, teachers consistently demonstrated **instructional adaptability**, **learner-centered responsiveness**, and **community-linked engagement**, while also experiencing significant **institutional constraints**, **variable support systems**, and **value-driven motivations** that shaped their ability to integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into daily instruction. Taken together, the findings underscore that MATATAG implementation is both a **technical** and **moral** undertaking, requiring pedagogical transformation, systemic support, and personal conviction.

The first set of findings demonstrates that teachers actively adjust instructional strategies to align with MATATAG priorities, revealing a shift toward **learner-centered, competency-based, and contextualized teaching approaches**. This aligns with Bautista (2021), who emphasized that MATATAG necessitates rethinking instruction to strengthen foundational skills and lifelong learning competencies. The teachers’ lived experiences also validate Dela Cruz’s (2021) conclusion that instructional change is unavoidable when a curriculum reform demands contextualized, relevant, and flexible

pedagogy. Garcia (2022) supported this further, noting that teacher readiness and adaptive expertise determine whether curricular goals translate effectively into classroom practice. The findings therefore show that teachers, despite varied contexts, become key agents of pedagogical innovation.

Parallel to these instructional shifts, teachers consistently observed **heightened learner engagement**, describing improved participation, motivation, and performance when MATATAG-inspired approaches were implemented. This pattern corroborates Fernandez (2023), who found that interactive and real-world learning significantly improves cognitive and affective engagement in foundational education. The results also echo Cruz (2023), who demonstrated that SDG-connected, contextualized lessons increase learner relevance and deep understanding. Similarly, Kim (2021) asserted that connecting classroom instruction with global citizenship and sustainability frameworks enhances student motivation and real-world application of knowledge. In the present study, learner engagement emerged as a direct outcome of contextualized, meaningful, and participatory teaching.

Equally significant are the results showing that teachers strengthened **school-community partnerships** to enhance curriculum responsiveness. Teachers' narratives reflect the practices highlighted by Alvarez (2023), who stressed that effective MATATAG implementation requires cultural and contextual grounding through strong community ties. Lopez (2023) also emphasized that culturally responsive education is facilitated by active collaboration with families and community stakeholders, ensuring curriculum content reflects local realities. Hernandez (2021) similarly found that community partnerships create shared responsibility, expanding resources and strengthening support for instruction. This study's findings reinforce the notion that community involvement is not supplementary but essential to curriculum success.

Teachers also revealed substantial **systemic barriers** to SDG integration, including limited resources, insufficient training, curriculum overload, and rigid structures. These challenges mirror Dela Cruz's (2021) assertion that implementation gaps often originate from institutional shortcomings rather than teacher resistance. Abad (2022) similarly found that rural schools face systemic disadvantages that undermine curriculum reform. Kim (2021) added that weak institutional support limits teachers' capacity to translate sustainability frameworks into actual instruction. These study results affirm that without structural reinforcement, SDG integration risks becoming aspirational rather than operational.

Despite these constraints, teachers acknowledged key **enabling factors**, particularly capacity-building, access to instructional materials, leadership support, and peer collaboration. These findings support Bello (2022), who argued that continuous

professional development is indispensable for teachers navigating curriculum reforms. Fernandez (2023) further showed that teachers become more confident and skillful when provided with targeted training on SDG integration. Cunningham (2021) similarly highlighted the importance of access to digital tools and instructional resources for modern curriculum implementation. These insights reinforce that institutional support systems significantly influence teachers' success in delivering MATATAG-aligned and SDG-aligned instruction.

Finally, teachers' personal values emerged as a strong motivator in bringing sustainability education to life. Many teachers saw SDG integration as a moral and professional responsibility that contributes to shaping responsible, compassionate, and future-oriented learners. This resonates with Kim (2021), who asserted that personal conviction strongly influences teachers' engagement with sustainability education. Cruz (2023) also noted that teachers with strong environmental and social justice beliefs are more committed to SDG-related teaching. Alvarez (2023) reiterated that teacher values deeply shape their interpretation and enactment of curriculum reforms. The results therefore show that teacher agency is anchored not only in skills and training but also in a sense of ethical purpose.

Collectively, the synthesis reflects a deeply interconnected system wherein **instructional adaptability**, **learner engagement**, and **community involvement** interact with **structural barriers**, **institutional enablers**, and **personal motivations**. This mirrors global findings from Evans (2022), Ibrahim (2023), and Jones (2022), who observed that curricular reforms in other countries succeed when teacher training, resources, policy support, and cultural responsiveness intersect harmoniously. The experiences in this study similarly illustrate that MATATAG implementation requires comprehensive attention to teacher development, systemic readiness, and contextual grounding.

In sum, the synthesis reveals that teachers are actively bringing the MATATAG Curriculum to life through innovative pedagogy, reflective assessment, and deep engagement with learners and communities. Yet the success of these efforts hinges on the extent to which institutional systems provide adequate training, resources, and leadership support. As noted by Foster (2021), curriculum reforms evolve not only from policy but from practice shaped by the lived realities of those who enact them. Thus, understanding teachers' experiences is vital for strengthening MATATAG implementation and ensuring its alignment with national aspirations and the global Sustainable Development Goals.



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