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Rechie C. Bejasa

ABSTRACT

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a significant reform in the Philippine education system, aiming to enhance the K to 12 Basic Education Program by addressing persistent challenges. This study aims to explore lived experiences of the nine (9) public-school teachers in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum in the Department of Education Cebu Province for the academic year 2024-2025. The focused of this study centered on the qualitative study with which methodology was associated with Husserl's philosophy of descriptive phenomenological research on the lived experiences of the public-school teachers representing three teachers per grade level in DepEd Cebu Province. The use of thematic analysis was utilized based on the experiences of the participants to generate emergent themes. The Positive Experiences are as follows: Relevant and well-aligned to expected outcomes, Student-centered approach, Striving to stay motivated despite resource constraints, Training is helpful for implementation and Adapting teaching strategies to suit changing needs while for the Negative Experiences are Limited materials and resources hindering effective teaching, Slow internet connectivity and struggles with accessing materials, Limited 10-day training perceived as inadequate for practical application, Decreased motivation due to lack of readiness and resource constraints, and Content not suitable for learners in upland.

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Keywords: matatag curriculum, lived experiences, upland areas, implementation, public-school teachers.

I. RATIONALE

The MATATAG Curriculum was launched on August 10, 2023 and On October 2023, the Department of Education (DepEd) indicated plan to evaluate the implementation of the DM 54, s. 2023 which is "The Pilot Implementation of MATATAG Curriculum. This is being done before 2024-2025, which is when the phased roll out starts of the curriculum. This MATATAG explains the development in the education of Philippines and aims for better comprehensions. It starts from kindergarten and goes up to tenth grade while essentially paying attention towards reading, math and life skills.

The MATATAG focus is on core competencies that students ought to be able to master such as reading, numeracy, and life and work skills. The new curriculum is the very first step for resolving the issues that were there in the Philippine educational institutes (Singh, 2024). Moreover, this change in the MATATAG curriculum implementation has changed the educational scene of the Philippines which caused educational change in the approach of teaching and the curriculum structure. The students for the Education program had to undergo deep transformation, therefore teachers as the implementers encountered challenges in such problem students.

Several studies conducted on MATATAG Curriculum. Saro et al. (2024) revealed that participants perceived the MATATAG Curriculum as having the potential to significantly enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Bentayao et al. (2024)' results showed similar claims to Lewin's change management theory, which involves unfreezing, changing, and freezing as one example of school management practices in implementing new policies such as the MATATAG curriculum. Olipas (2024) highlight substantial positive changes attributed to the MATATAG curriculum compared to its predecessor, as outlined in the curriculum guides issued by the Department of Education. Noteworthy is the curriculum's provision of opportunities for the localization and contextualization of history and geography lessons.

From the abovementioned and other studies, it is reflected that there are no studies revealed locally relative to everyday experience of the teachers in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum. As such it is important to understand and describe the experiences of Grades 1, 4, and 7 teachers regarding the implementation of this curriculum as these teachers are actively involved in teaching such students who have undergone this tremendously structural educational change. Their experiences might inform and ensure real understanding of the changes brought about by the new approaches to curriculum and change both what worked well and issues that remained un resolved.

II.   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore lived experiences of the public-school teachers in the implementation of MATATAG curriculum in the Department of Education Cebu Province for the academic year 2024-2025.

- What are the experiences of public-school teachers regarding the goals and objectives of the MATATAG Curriculum?
- What challenges do public school teachers face in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, and how do these challenges affect their teaching practices and student engagement?
- How do public school teachers adapt their teaching strategies and methodologies in response to the requirements of the MATATAG Curriculum?

III.   REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Recent studies indicate that the success of the MATATAG curriculum pivots on several factors, including teachers' readiness and the support systems in place to assist them. Challenges such as heavy workloads and insufficient preparation time have also been noted, which can hinder effective implementation.

Olipas (2024) presents a qualitative examination of the influence of the MATATAG curriculum on history and geography education for the academic year 2024-2025. Through the utilization of Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and interviews involving stakeholders in social studies education, a systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of participant responses were conducted. FGD outcomes uncovered diverse themes regarding the perceived impact of the MATATAG curriculum on the teaching of history and geography. These themes encompass heightened awareness of contemporary and critical issues, deepened understanding with expanded perspectives, varied outcomes based on implementation, early exposure to history and geography, addressing knowledge gaps and fostering patriotism, impact on discipline and awareness, intensified focus on geography and history, and the teacher's perspective and meaningful learning. The results highlight substantial positive changes attributed to the MATATAG curriculum compared to its predecessor, as outlined in the curriculum guides issued by the Department of Education.

Moreover, a qualitative study examined teachers' preparedness for implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, highlighting the complexity of their roles and the various challenges they encountered in adapting to new teaching methods. The findings indicate that many teachers felt underprepared and expressed concerns about the

adequacy of their training. This study illustrates the need for structured professional development to support educators in effectively delivering the new curriculum (Department of Education, 2023). Another phenomenological study focused on the coping strategies employed by teachers during blended learning amid the MATATAG Curriculum implementation. The research revealed that teachers adapted by leveraging digital tools and collaborative methods, but also faced significant challenges, such as managing increased workloads and addressing diverse student needs. This study highlights the resilience of teachers but emphasizes the necessity of providing better support systems for their professional growth (Paz, 2024).

A case study published recently emphasized the importance of administrative support in the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. It found that teachers who received sufficient guidance and resources from school administration reported more positive experiences and better student engagement. The study calls for enhanced communication between decision-makers and educators to assess challenges and provide timely interventions (Magsambol. 2024). Interestingly, research has shown that students' perceptions of the MATATAG Curriculum also significantly impact teachers' experiences. Teachers noted that when students embraced the new curriculum, it motivated them to adapt and innovate their teaching practices. This mutual influence highlights the interconnectedness of teacher and student experiences in educational reforms. Lastly, a comprehensive assessment of teachers' perceptions regarding resource availability underscored the critical factor of adequate instructional materials. Teachers reported varied experiences based on their access to teaching aids and resources, which ultimately affected their ability to implement the curriculum effectively. This study advocates for more focused efforts to ensure that all teachers have the necessary tools for successful implementation (Research on MATATAG CURRICULUM, 2024).

Utilizing a phenomenological design allows for an in-depth exploration of these lived experiences, providing insights into how Grade 7 teachers perceive and adapt to the complexities of this curriculum shift. This approach facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the emotional and psychological impact of educational reforms on teaching professionals, thereby informing future policy decisions.

IV.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design. The focused of this study centered on the qualitative study with which methodology was associated with Husserl's philosophy of descriptive phenomenological research on the lived experiences of the public-school teachers in DepEd Cebu Province. This holistic view strengthens the understanding of how teachers perceive and respond to the MATATAG Curriculum.

Participants. Prior to the phased implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum starting SY 2024-2025, the Department of Education (DepEd) is conducting the pilot implementation in the MATATAG Curriculum Guides (CGs) for Grades 1, 4, and 7. Choosing three participants per grade level stems from the need for a balance between practical sample sizes and the depth of information collected. By limiting the sample to two participants, researchers can focus on obtaining detailed accounts from individuals while ensuring representation from various grade levels. This can provide a mix of perspectives that are crucial for thematic analysis in educational settings.

Environment. The environment is located in DepEd Cebu Province, serves as a vital context for conducting a study on the lived experiences of public school teachers regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. This locale provides a unique backdrop that influences educational practices, resource availability, and teacher-student dynamics, ultimately shaping the overall responses of educators to the curriculum changes.

Instrument. This study used a researcher-made interview guide having three parts. Part 1 composed of the perceptions of public-school

teachers regarding the goals and objectives of the MATATAG Curriculum, and how do these perceptions shape their approach to teaching. Part 2 comprised of the challenges do public school teachers face in the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, and how do these challenges affect their teaching practices and student engagement. Part 3 consisted of do public school teachers adapt their teaching strategies and methodologies in response to the requirements of the MATATAG Curriculum, and what support systems do they perceive as essential for this adaptation.

Data gathering procedure. The main instrument utilized in data collection will be a researcher-made interview guide. Prior to the conduct of interview to the key informants with direct experience the MATATAG Curriculum, the researcher explores and reflect personal and collective experiences to understand the informant's perceptions and viewpoints. To gather more data on the interview, the researcher employed probing where the researcher is asking follow up questions when the researcher need more clarifications on a response, informants answers are vague or ambiguous or the proponent wanted a more specific or in dept information.

Other instruments will be utilized are the informants recorded interview classified as an internal data source of this study through the use of semi-structured questions. Semi-structured question will be focused on the participants experiences and literature reviews as sources of data collection.

For data gathering procedures, the researcher followed research phases for data gathering in this study. Each phase consists of steps that ensure the realization of the whole data gathering procedure. The research phases are as follows:

Pre–Gathering Phase. The researcher is required to submit the research manuscript containing content, methodology, ethical and technical dimensions of research to the adviser for a thorough review, evaluation, and proper endorsement by the panel of experts. The title and pre-oral defense will be made up of four panel experts including the research adviser. The panel of experts will be tasked to evaluate the research agenda, research framework, extent of feasibility and sufficiency inform and substance of the manuscript. In the event of revision required by the committee, the researcher will undergo again a pre-oral dissertation hearing prior the dean issued an endorsement letter for Research Ethics review and evaluate the proposed study.

Upon receiving the endorsement letter from the Dean of the Graduate School, the RE undertakes the preliminary evaluation of the proposed study. The RERB designated full responsibility for deciding whether the proposed study will be exempted, expedited, or subjected to a full board review. Prior the researcher will proceed with the collection of data; the researcher will be required to satisfactorily complied the recommendations by the RE before the issuance Notice to Proceed to the researcher.

Gathering Phase. The researcher will secure permission to conduct this study that will be sought from the school head of the Tuburan National High School in the Municipality of Tuburan. After granting the approval to conduct data collection, the researcher will forward an invitation letter to the identified teachers accompanied with the Informed Consent document confirming the informant participation in the study. The researcher will schedule a meeting to the informants to explain the nature and purpose of the research study as well as the privacy act, terms and conditions of the Informed Consent document. After collecting the Informed Consent document from the informants, the researcher and participants will agree on the schedule of the recorded interview which will take 2 hours, after which the interview takes place.

Post Gathering Phase. It will take place after the needed data were obtained, the next step will be to analyze the gathered data, the analysis will be based on the thematic arrangement where meanings follow based on experiences. The participants' names will be hidden but will assigned to code names such as Participant 1 (P1) to Participant 9 (P9).

Data analysis. In qualitative method, the use of thematic analysis will be utilized based on the experiences of the participants explain in the quantitative findings. Thematic analysis also involves (usually inductive) coding of qualitative data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories and the identification of consistent patterns and relationships between themes, so as to come up with a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under study (Figgou and Pavlopoulos, 2015).

Ethical considerations. Trustworthiness of Research focuses on confirmability, dependability and transferability.

4.1 Confirmability

A fourth perspective on trustworthiness is confirmability, or getting as close to objective reality as qualitative research can get. Only some forms of qualitative research go there (e.g., emergent design positivism as described by Bogdan and Biklen [2003]). In order to subject one's research to auditing, there must be some objective reality present. Rather than constructing a reality in findings, qualitative researchers who believe and pursue objectivity, rely on constructs like precision and accuracy in their research practice and the involvement of other researchers. In these qualitative circumstances it makes sense to aim for non-involvement, least researchers contaminate pristine, natural environments. As such, the use of confirmability is a small, circumscribed intent within qualitative research, especially concerning emergent design positivism (Stahl & Kin, 2020).

4.2 Dependability

A third perspective on trustworthiness offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is dependability, or the trust in trustworthy. In qualitative research in which researchers, both producers and consumers, actively build their trust in the events as they unfold, there are a few concrete research practices that not only produce trust but also feel trustworthy when they are executed. Peer debriefing or peer scrutiny are solid communication habits that create trust. Using another researcher to read and react to field notes, with their embedded researcher interpretations, is a confirmation that creates a tacit reality for the researcher (Stahl & Kin, 2020).

4.3 Transferability

A second factor for trustworthiness offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is transferability. This proposition is somewhat tricky, given that by design qualitative research does not (cannot) aim for replicability. Yet, qualitative researchers maintain that patterns and descriptions from one context may be applicable to another. After all, if one cannot learn from study extensions that might fit with a subsequent set of circumstances, the impact from the original study is limited. Just as it is valid and important to create new knowledge from emergent discovery oriented qualitative research, it is also productive to seek understanding from others' systematic qualitative inquiry. It is with such intentions that an analogy to both external validity and generalizability in quantitative research might be productive.

4.4 Rigor of the Study

Rigor in qualitative research refers to the strength of the research design and its appropriateness in answering the established research questions. It is critical for qualitative studies to be conducted with extreme rigor due to the subjectivity that is inherently involved in these inquiries. The assessment of rigor is not merely a post-completion evaluation but should be integrated throughout the research process. Criteria for rigor often encompass credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which together ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Employing these criteria allows researchers to navigate the complexities and nuances of qualitative inquiry, ensuring that the results are both meaningful and reliable (Cypress, 2017).

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The identified public-school teachers in an upland school imparted their positive and negative experiences in the implementation towards MATATAG Curriculum. The emergent themes after the focus group discussion and the subsequent tables and discussions are presented below.

Table 1: Summary of the Educators' Experiences towards MATATAG Curriculum

Positive Experiences	Challenging Experiences
Relevant and well-aligned to expected outcomes	Limited materials and resources hindering effective teaching
Student-centered approach	Slow internet connectivity and struggles with accessing materials
Striving to stay motivated despite resource constraints	Limited 10-day training perceived as inadequate for practical application
Training is helpful for implementation	Decreased motivation due to lack of readiness and resource constraints
Adapting teaching strategies to suit changing needs	Content not suitable for learners in upland

The above table is the summary of the Educators' Experiences towards MATATAG Curriculum categorized into two. Positive Experiences and Challenging Experiences.

Since the introduction of MATATAG Curriculum, for its angle, it has made education a positive experience to both teachers and students as its praises have been its importance. Furthermore, they do appreciate the relevance of the curriculum in practice, stating that the curriculum enables them to modify the lessons for their specific and varied classrooms. The emphasis on different key areas such as literacy, numeracy and life skills has really changed the way students view education since they are more interested in lessons.

Based on the responses, themes were generated under Positive Experiences such as *Relevant and well-aligned to expected outcomes, Student-centered approach, Striving to stay motivated despite resource constraints, Training is helpful for implementation* and *Adapting teaching strategies to suit changing needs.*

Table 2: Positive Experiences towards MATATAG Curriculum

Themes
Relevant and well-aligned to expected outcomes
Student-centered approach
Striving to stay motivated despite resource constraints
Training is helpful for implementation
Adapting teaching strategies to suit changing needs

Table 2 above presents the themes on the Positive Experiences towards MATATAG Curriculum and the generated themes and its evidences are clearly presented below:

Theme 1. Relevant and well-aligned to expected outcomes

As to the participants' narratives, the evidence on ensuring that curriculum and teaching methods are closely aligned with educational goals is crucial for achieving desired student outcomes are narrated below:

"P1…It's nice sir, it's relevant for the learners but there are things to prepare…"

"P2… it is relevant chie but not flexible in upland schools…"

"P3 … the curriculum is relevant and is align to the expected outcomes…"

"P6…for me sir, it is very relevant actually and I can see that the content is localized and learner centered…"

The above responses by the participants imply that while the curriculum is seen as relevant,

localized, and learner-centered, its implementation needs careful preparation and adjustments to address challenges faced, particularly in upland schools. Lalor (2022) mentions that most educators and stakeholders think that the curriculum is typically relevant to students' needs and in line with current learning outcomes and educational goals. This view is crucial as meaningful learning experiences and student engagement are greatly influenced by relevance.

Theme 2. Student-centered approach

The responses below are demonstrated on the student-centered approach which prioritizes individual learning needs and interests, fostering a more engaging and effective educational experience:

"P2...helpful I think chie as long as it will be properly implemented then very student centered..."

"P3... chay, the main goal for MATATAG is very nice actually as it is student focus but needs to be properly executed..."

"P6 ...for me sir, it is very relevant actually and I can see that the content is localized and learner centered..."

According to the responses as reflected above, the MATATAG Curriculum is seen as relevant and student-centered, but its full potential depends on how well it is implemented. With an emphasis on the needs of the students, the MATATAG Curriculum promotes critical thinking, active learning, and student participation (Saro et al., 2024). By moving away from conventional rote learning techniques, this paradigm gives students the chance to interact meaningfully with the content. According to instructor feedback, the student-centered approach encourages students to take charge of their education and fosters greater comprehension (Uy et al., 2024). But in order for this strategy to work, teachers need to have sufficient training in student-centered teaching techniques that encourage involvement and engagement.

Theme 3. Striving to stay motivated despite resource constraints

The participants speak on maintaining motivation in the face of limited resources requires creativity, resilience, and a strong commitment to educational success as told below:

"P3 ... it has an influenced in terms of my motivation but not really fully and for the students, they will be engaged because I tried my best for them to understand

"P5 ... trying to be motivated to engage the children in my class..."

"P6 ... at some point, the motivation decreased knowing it was lacking and not ready yet but trying to make it more engage to the children..."

The responses infer that while it may be difficult to stay motivated when faced with few resources, instructors who are resilient, creative, and committed to encouraging student engagement can succeed. Lack of funding, subpar supplies, and a lack of professional assistance are just a few of the issues that educational institutions frequently deal with (National University, 2023). Students may get demotivated as a result of these restrictions if they think there aren't enough chances for involvement and education.

Theme 4. Training is helpful for implementation

As to the stories of the participants, effective training equips educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully implement new instructional strategies and curricula:

"P2...in my case chie since I am assigned in the upland area, the MATATAG goals are okay...helpful I think chie as long as it will be properly implemented..."

"P3... it is helpful in the future chai as long as it is properly implemented then the training for implementation was helpful but not totally..."

"P6 ...at some point, there is a positive influence especially in planning and lesson delivery since it can trigger the mind positively and you are more guided in what you're going to do and so good that there is a training even though it was just in few days..."

The responses suggest that while training plays a positive role in guiding educators for effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, its impact is limited by the depth and duration of the training provided. Gutierrez (2024) assessed teacher preparedness and training for the MATATAG Curriculum at Calubcob I National High School (CNHS) which reveals both strengths and areas for improvement. While teachers generally feel confident in their ability to deliver the new curriculum, with average confidence ratings between 7 and 9 out of 10, significant challenges remain. These include the broad scope of the curriculum, insufficient time for topic coverage, and ambiguities in scheduling MELC in Filipino.

Theme 5. Adapting teaching strategies to suit changing needs

The participants' responses on adapting teaching methods are evidenced below as to them it requires to meet the evolving needs of students as it is essential for maintaining a relevant and impactful learning environment:

"P4 … different sir rech, but mostly on differentiated instruction and depends on the topic…"

"P7… discovering still sir but more on different strategies…"

"P8 … the teaching strategy I used now depends on the content and the learners' needs…"

"P9 … it depends sir but mostly differentiated instruction like meaning it varies depending on the students' needs…"

The responses infer that while it may be difficult to stay motivated when faced with few resources, instructors who are resilient, creative, and committed to encouraging student engagement can succeed. Lack of funding, subpar supplies, and a lack of professional assistance are just a few of the issues that educational institutions frequently deal with (National University, 2023). Students may get demotivated as a result of these restrictions if they think there aren't enough chances for involvement and education. According to research, students' general interest in studying is impacted by the chance of immersive and engaging learning experiences being diminished by a lack of resources. In order to keep students motivated in the classroom, teachers must adjust to these difficulties.

Table 3: Challenging experiences towards MATATAG Curriculum

Themes
Limited materials and resources hindering effective teaching
Slow internet connectivity and struggles with accessing materials
Limited 10-day training perceived as inadequate for practical application
Decreased motivation due to lack of readiness and resource constraints
Content not suitable for learners in upland

Table 3 above presents the themes and essences on the Challenging Experiences towards MATATAG Curriculum and the generated themes and its evidences are clearly presented below:

Theme 1. Limited materials and resources hindering effective teaching

Insufficient materials and resources can significantly impede the effectiveness of teaching and the learning experience of students as shared by the participants:

"P7 … my daily routine sir rech of course to wake up early to arrive in school earlier. Since the things to do is already plotted but needs to be revised since the content is not fit for our learners. One of the challenges sir rech is the lack of materials since there are materials indicated in the exemplar but it does not suit…

"P8 … it's a small school, sir, materials and resources are lacking…"

"P9… in terms of class size it's okay, learning resources are still lacking and it hinders…"

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The responses speak of a major obstacle to successful teaching and the provision of a high-quality learning environment that is suited to the needs of the students is the absence of sufficient materials and resources. Ogott et al. (2020) revealed in the results of studies show a relationship between teacher effectiveness and the accessibility of educational resources. It was determined that there is a moderately positive association, indicating that teachers can provide higher-quality instruction more successfully if they have access to more resources. According to this study, having enough teaching resources directly improves the quality of instruction; conversely, not having them can make education less successful.

Theme 2. Slow internet connectivity and struggles with accessing materials

The concern on slow internet connectivity poses a major challenge in accessing digital resources, hampering the teaching and learning process as shared by the participants:

"P1 ... that's technology integration but the internet is very slow."

"P5 ... sir there is a link provided in the exemplar but slow internet. Then I integrate it but I don't have enough materials..."

"P8 ... sometimes I am stressed sir since slow internet and lacks good materials..."

As to participants' responses, it can be implied teachers' capacity to successfully integrate technology and access digital materials is severely limited by poor internet connectivity, which impedes the teaching and learning processes. According to research, teachers' capacity to successfully integrate digital technologies into their lessons is severely hampered by sluggish internet connections. Teachers' capacity to deliver an interesting and dynamic learning environment was impeded by their inability to access essential online resources and finish digital tasks (Sapin, 2024).

Theme 3. Limited 10-day training perceived as inadequate for practical application

The participants highlighted that A brief 10-day training period is often viewed as insufficient for teachers to effectively apply new strategies and curricula in the classroom.

"P3 ... training but it's good to have peers to help us but it's crucial is training actually to achieve what you want..."

"P4 ...10 days training is not enough man sir but I find ways to be ready in class..."

"P5... the training is very needed sir especially in implementation..."

"P7... training, preparation sir, that's crucial..."

... The training and professional development provided for implementing the MATATAG Curriculum is not enough since it is only 10 days only sir Rech so for me, it is not enough..."

"P8 ... Need preparation and more training to be readier to face..."

"P9...mostly on training and preparation is crucial to implementation as teachers as we are, it's nicer if we're prepared..."

The responses said that a 10-day training program is generally considered inadequate, underscoring the necessity of longer and more thorough professional development to sufficiently equip teachers for the successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. One-time professional development for teachers is unsuccessful when it comes to using educational digital tools, according to Langreo (2023). The majority of instructors claim that their training on new ed-tech tools has been mostly one-time experiences with little to no follow-up assistance, notwithstanding this research-supported result. According to experts, the best way to assist instructors in incorporating technology into their lesson plans would be to offer more individualized, adaptable, and continuous professional development.

Theme 4. Decreased motivation due to lack of readiness and resource constraints

As mentioned by the participants, a lack of readiness and resource constraints can lead to decreased motivation of the teachers, affecting overall educational outcomes. It is evident below:

"P5 ... lack of materials is affecting sir because you are not confident when delivering..."

"P8 ... sometimes I am stressed sir since slow internet and lacks good materials..."

"P9 ... sometimes you feel demotivated, especially if there is a lack of resources..."

It can be implied that lack of preparation and inadequate resources can seriously impair instructors' motivation, which will have a detrimental effect on the standard of instruction and learning results. The global trend of decreasing teacher motivation, which can result in teacher shortages and have a detrimental effect on student learning outcomes, is highlighted by the IIEP Learning Portal (2024). The article examines the many elements that affect teacher motivation, such as pay, benefits, possibilities for professional growth, and working environment. It also looks at how difficult it is for governments to deal with these problems, especially in low-income nations with little financial means.

Theme 5. Content not suitable for learners in upland

The participants believe that the Curriculum content that does not resonate with the unique context of learners in upland areas can lead to disengagement and hinder their educational progress as apparent below:

"*P1 ... regarding on the planning and lesson delivery sir is that there are things to have modifications to fit for students' learning outcomes...*"

"*P2... we have to change the lesson plans to make it fit for the learners but there are parts that are okay...*"

"*P3...the planning and lesson delivery have changes to make especially in lesson plan and then needs to be restructured to be delivered appropriately...*

"*P4......there are modifications to do in terms of planning and lesson delivery to be aligned to the learners' needs in upland and I noticed that it is more on the homogenous learners in terms of content...*"

"*P5 ...the MATATAG Curriculum is very nice especially the goals however, it is not adaptable and flexible for the learners in the upland area...*

"*P7 ...after reading the lesson exemplar sir, I need to have modifications to be more fit for the learners...*"

The responses indicate that curriculum content that is not tailored to the unique requirements and circumstances of upland learners may cause disengagement and reduce the process' efficacy. Curriculum adaptation for upland communities requires the use of culturally responsive pedagogy. According to research, students are more likely to appreciate the value of their education and connect with the subject more deeply when teachers use culturally appropriate resources and instructional strategies. This improves educational results by giving students a feeling of community and motivating them to actively engage in their studies (NYU Steinhardt, 2020).

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in upland schools has faced positive and challenging experience for educators and requires more training, planning on preparation and resource allocation. The school may have a more training period to provide educators with a deeper understanding of the curriculum and practical strategies for implementation, allocate additional resources and teaching materials tailored to the unique needs of upland learners and lastly, a comparison on experiences of teachers towards the MATATAG curriculum in upland and in road schools.

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