

Implementation Of MATATAG Curriculum Vis-A-Vis Reading Skill Among Grade 1 Pupils

Samantha Grace Elegio Imperial, LPT

Teacher I, Guinsangaan Elementary School, Schools Division Office of Dipolog City, Department of Education – Region IX, Philippines

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Email of Corresponding Author: samanthagraceimperial54@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and its influence on the reading and literacy skills of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School in Dipolog City, Philippines. Anchored in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, and the Phonics Theory of Reading, the research explored how structured literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum affects learners' foundational reading competencies. The study employed a quantitative comparative research design using secondary data from the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA). Respondents included all Grade 1 pupils whose literacy assessment records were available from two academic periods: pupils taught under the old curriculum during School Year 2023–2024 and pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum during School Year 2024–2025. Data were analyzed using mean difference analysis and the Independent Samples T-Test. Findings revealed that pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum achieved significantly higher literacy scores compared to those taught under the old curriculum. The MATATAG group obtained a mean CRLA score of 29.63, while the old curriculum group obtained a mean score of 15.54, resulting in a mean difference of 14.09. Statistical analysis further showed a significant difference between the two groups, with a computed t-value of 18.144 and a p-value of .000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The results indicate that the MATATAG Curriculum positively influences the reading literacy performance of Grade 1 pupils through its emphasis on foundational literacy, phonics-based instruction, and learner-centered strategies. The study concluded that the MATATAG Curriculum contributes to improved literacy outcomes among early learners and supports its continued implementation in primary education. It recommends strengthening curriculum implementation, providing continuous literacy intervention programs, and conducting further studies on additional literacy dimensions and long-term curriculum effects. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education by promoting equitable and effective foundational literacy instruction, and with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities through its focus on literacy development in rural and under-resourced schools. Its sustainability impact lies in supporting inclusive educational development, strengthening institutional literacy practices, and improving long-term learning opportunities for young learners.

Keywords: Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment, Grade 1 Pupils, Literacy Development, MATATAG Curriculum, Phonics-Based Instruction, Quantitative Comparative Research, Reading Comprehension, Reading Literacy, Rural Education, Sustainable Education

1. Introduction

The MATATAG Curriculum, introduced by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, was designed to address persistent challenges in literacy and foundational learning among Filipino learners. The curriculum emphasizes mastery of essential competencies in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning while reducing cognitive overload through streamlined content. This reform emerged in response to poor performance in international assessments, particularly the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), where the Philippines ranked lowest in reading comprehension. Comparative studies in Southeast Asia further emphasized the need for curriculum reforms that strengthen foundational literacy through simplified competencies and improved teacher preparation (Cahya et al. 2024). This study examined the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and its relationship to the reading and literacy skills of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School. Anchored in Sociocultural Theory, Cognitive Development Theory, and Phonics Theory, the study explored how curriculum implementation, innovative teaching practices, and socio-economic conditions influence literacy outcomes. The research also addressed gaps in localized studies on the curriculum's effectiveness in rural Philippine schools and its implications for equitable and sustainable educational development.

1.1 Background of the MATATAG Curriculum and Reading Literacy Development Among Grade 1 Pupils

The MATATAG Curriculum was introduced to strengthen foundational competencies among Filipino learners by prioritizing literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development. The curriculum reduces excessive competencies to

allow deeper mastery of essential skills, particularly reading comprehension. This initiative directly responds to the poor literacy performance of Filipino students in global assessments, including the 2018 PISA results. Comparative research by Cahya et al. (2024) showed that both the Philippines and Indonesia face challenges in literacy instruction due to overloaded curricula and insufficient teacher training, reinforcing the importance of streamlined frameworks such as the MATATAG Curriculum. Research emphasizes that early-grade literacy skills strongly predict future academic achievement. The MATATAG Curriculum incorporates evidence-based approaches such as phonics-based instruction, culturally relevant materials, collaborative learning, and differentiated instruction to improve reading comprehension and learner engagement. Studies by (Baluyot et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2024; Cabuyao, 2024) highlighted the importance of reducing curriculum congestion, strengthening phonological awareness, and contextualizing learning materials to improve literacy outcomes. However, successful implementation depends on addressing systemic issues such as limited teacher preparation, resource inequities, and socio-economic barriers affecting learners.

1.2 Themes and Insights on MATATAG Curriculum Implementation and Literacy Skills of Grade 1 Pupils

Related literature emphasizes several major themes regarding literacy development and curriculum implementation. One recurring theme is the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction in improving reading fluency and comprehension among early learners. (Cabuyao 2024) stressed that phonological awareness enables learners to decode words more effectively, strengthening comprehension and literacy acquisition. Similarly, Li (2016) emphasized that structured literacy activities such as guided reading and phonics drills build stronger cognitive foundations for literacy development. Another important theme involves the integration of culturally relevant and learner-centered teaching practices. (Kilag et al., 2024) and (Baluyot et al., 2024) noted that incorporating local stories, traditions, storytelling, and group discussions creates meaningful learning experiences that improve engagement, empathy, and critical thinking. Task-Based Instruction and Content-Based Language Instruction were also identified as effective strategies for improving comprehension and motivation among learners (Ismail et al., 2023; Lin, 2009). The literature also highlights challenges affecting curriculum implementation. Studies by (Cebu Teachers 2025), (Kilag et al., 2024), and (Aquino 2024) identified insufficient teacher training, lack of instructional resources, technological limitations, and resistance to change as major barriers. These findings underscore the importance of professional development, access to instructional materials, and institutional support in ensuring successful literacy instruction.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of the MATATAG Curriculum and Grade 1 Literacy Instruction

Locally, this study focused on Guinsangaan Elementary School, a rural public school in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte, where literacy challenges may be influenced by socio-economic conditions and limited educational resources. The study specifically examined Grade 1 pupils' reading and literacy skills under the MATATAG Curriculum using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment. Nationally, the MATATAG Curriculum represents the Philippine government's response to declining literacy performance and persistent educational inequalities. The curriculum aims to strengthen foundational competencies while promoting developmentally appropriate instruction and reducing learning overload. However, national studies continue to report disparities in teacher preparedness, funding, and access to instructional resources across schools (Kilag et al. 2024; Cebu Teachers 2025). Globally, literacy reforms in countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia demonstrate the importance of structured curricula, teacher support, and evidence-based literacy instruction. (Wangid et al. 2023) highlighted Singapore's strong literacy policies and structured frameworks, while international studies emphasized the value of critical reading instruction, formative assessment, and performance-based evaluation in improving literacy outcomes (Bozkurt and Bozkurt 2021; Alqahtani and Laxmikanth 2020; Ketabi and Tavakoli 2022; Moghadam et al. 2023; Al-Roomy 2022).

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Basis of the MATATAG Curriculum and Reading Literacy Skills

This study was anchored in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, and the Phonics Theory of Reading. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction, language, and cultural tools in learning (Vygotsky 1978). The MATATAG Curriculum supports this perspective through collaborative learning, culturally relevant materials, storytelling, and scaffolded instruction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development explains that children actively construct knowledge according to developmental readiness (Piaget 1952). The curriculum aligns instructional methods with learners' cognitive stages through phonics activities, picture books, interactive reading tasks, and differentiated instruction appropriate for Grade 1 pupils transitioning from the preoperational to concrete operational stage. The Phonics Theory of Reading emphasizes the systematic relationship between letters and sounds as a foundation for reading fluency and comprehension (Chall 1983 and Ehri 2005). The MATATAG Curriculum integrates phonics-based instruction through sound-letter matching, blending activities, and sight word practice to strengthen decoding and comprehension skills. These theories collectively provide a framework for understanding literacy development as a product of cognitive readiness, social interaction, and structured literacy instruction. The conceptual framework of the study identified the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and innovative teaching practices as independent variables influencing the dependent variables, namely reading skills and literacy skills such as vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency among Grade 1 pupils. Innovative practices including

differentiated instruction, multimedia integration, and collaborative learning were viewed as mechanisms that enhance literacy outcomes through interactive and inclusive instruction.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale on the Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and Reading Literacy Outcomes

Despite the growing body of literature on literacy reform and curriculum implementation, limited localized research has examined the impact of the MATATAG Curriculum on Grade 1 pupils' reading comprehension in rural Philippine schools. Existing studies largely focus on general literacy trends or national-level curriculum reforms, leaving insufficient evidence regarding how socio-economic barriers, absenteeism, and resource limitations influence literacy outcomes under the new curriculum. Furthermore, few studies have compared literacy outcomes before and after the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum using localized assessment data. This study addressed these gaps by examining the relationship between curriculum implementation and literacy outcomes among Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment. The findings aim to contribute empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum in improving foundational literacy skills within a rural educational context.

1.6 Alignment of the Study on MATATAG Curriculum and Reading Literacy with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns primarily with SDG 4 – Quality Education by examining strategies that improve foundational literacy and equitable access to effective early education. The MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on reading comprehension, teacher development, and evidence-based literacy instruction supports inclusive and quality learning opportunities for young learners. The study also relates to SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities by addressing disparities in literacy development among learners in rural and under-resourced schools. Its focus on socio-economic barriers and equitable curriculum implementation contributes to discussions on reducing educational inequities across communities. Additionally, the integration of innovative teaching practices and technology-based literacy instruction connects with SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure through the promotion of educational innovation and digital learning support.

1.7 Importance of the Study on MATATAG Curriculum and Reading Literacy to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This study contributes to educational sustainability by supporting reforms that strengthen foundational literacy and long-term learning outcomes among young learners. Improving literacy skills in early education enhances academic readiness, lifelong learning, and educational continuity, particularly among disadvantaged populations. The research also contributes to socio-economic sustainability by addressing literacy gaps that affect future educational and employment opportunities. By examining barriers related to resource inequities and socio-economic conditions, the study supports efforts toward more inclusive and equitable educational systems. In terms of institutional sustainability, the findings may assist educators, school administrators, and policymakers in improving curriculum implementation, teacher training, and literacy interventions. The study further contributes to technological and innovation sustainability through its discussion of multimedia resources and digital literacy tools that support differentiated and learner-centered instruction.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative comparative research design to determine the influence of the MATATAG Curriculum on the reading and literacy skills of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School. The design compared literacy outcomes between two independent groups: pupils taught under the old curriculum during School Year 2023–2024 and pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum during School Year 2024–2025. The study focused on identifying significant differences in literacy performance between the two groups.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Guinsangaan Elementary School in Dipolog City, Philippines. The research focused specifically on Grade 1 pupils enrolled in the school and utilized existing literacy assessment records maintained by the institution.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were all Grade 1 pupils of Guinsangaan Elementary School whose Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment records were available. The study included pupils from two academic periods: those taught before the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and those taught under the newly implemented curriculum. Since the participants were minors, informed consent was obtained from parents or legal guardians. Confidentiality and data privacy were maintained by coding the data and excluding personally identifiable information. Permission from school authorities and ethical clearance from an accredited review board were also secured to ensure compliance with ethical standards in research involving children.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized purposive sampling through the selection of secondary data relevant to the research objectives. Specifically, the researcher used existing Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment records of Grade 1 pupils maintained by the school. Since the data collection covered the entire population of Grade 1 pupils in Guinsangaan Elementary School, the study adopted a census approach rather than selecting only a sample subset.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in the study was the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), developed through the USAID–DepEd ABC+ Project and commonly utilized in Philippine public schools. The CRLA measures pupils' phonological awareness, word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. The assessment generates quantitative scores appropriate for inferential statistical analysis, including the Independent Samples T-Test. Microsoft Excel was also used as a supporting tool for organizing, managing, and analyzing the secondary data collected for the study.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study employed secondary data collection by utilizing previously gathered Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment records of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School. Two sets of literacy data were collected and compared: records from pupils prior to the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and records from pupils under the MATATAG Curriculum. These data sets were statistically analyzed to determine the level of association and differences in reading and literacy performance between the two groups. The entire data gathering process was conducted at Guinsangaan Elementary School in Dipolog City.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using the Independent Samples T-Test to determine whether significant differences existed between the reading literacy scores of pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum and those taught under the old curriculum. Mean difference analysis was also used to compare the average literacy scores of the two groups. Results showed a mean difference of 14.09, indicating that pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum obtained higher average scores than those taught under the old curriculum.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Reading Literacy Performance of Grade 1 Pupils Under Different Curriculums

3.1.1 Distribution of Pupils According to Curriculum Intervention

The findings showed that among the 21 Grade 1 pupils included in the study, 13 pupils or 61.9% were taught under the old curriculum, while 8 pupils or 38.1% were taught under the MATATAG Curriculum. The larger proportion of pupils belonged to the old curriculum group, while fewer pupils were enrolled under the MATATAG Curriculum. The distribution of respondents provided the basis for comparing the effects of the two curriculum interventions on reading literacy performance. Although the group sizes differed, the data still allowed for statistical comparison between pupils exposed to the traditional curriculum and those exposed to the MATATAG Curriculum. This comparison helped establish the context for interpreting literacy outcomes and evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum intervention.

3.1.2 Comparison of Mean CRLA Scores Between the MATATAG and Old Curriculum Groups

The results revealed that pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum obtained higher mean CRLA scores compared to pupils taught under the old curriculum. The MATATAG group obtained a mean score of 29.63 with a standard deviation of 0.74, indicating highly consistent performance among pupils. In contrast, the old curriculum group obtained a lower mean score of 15.54 with a higher standard deviation of 2.63, showing greater variability in performance. These findings suggest that the MATATAG Curriculum may be more effective in improving reading literacy and comprehension skills among Grade 1 pupils. The consistently higher scores of pupils under the MATATAG Curriculum indicate that the curriculum's structured literacy instruction and foundational learning focus may positively influence learners' reading performance. The lower variability among MATATAG pupils further suggests more consistent literacy outcomes compared to the old curriculum group.

3.1.3 Significant Difference in Reading Literacy Scores Across Curriculum Interventions

The independent samples t-test showed a significant difference in CRLA total scores between pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum and those taught under the old curriculum. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances obtained a significance value of 0.001, indicating unequal variances between groups. Based on the unequal variances assumption, the computed t-value was 18.144 with 14.885 degrees of freedom and a two-tailed significance value of 0.000. The mean difference between the two groups was 14.09 points. As a result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in CRLA scores between the two groups was rejected. The statistical findings indicate that the MATATAG Curriculum had a significant positive effect on the reading literacy performance of Grade 1 pupils compared to the old

curriculum. The large mean difference and highly significant p-value demonstrate that the improvement in literacy scores was unlikely due to chance. These results support the effectiveness of the MATATAG Curriculum in strengthening foundational literacy competencies among early learners. The findings are consistent with the claim that curriculum reforms emphasizing foundational skills and structured literacy instruction contribute to improved academic outcomes (Baluyot, et al. 2024, p.7).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study revealed a significant difference in the reading literacy performance of Grade 1 pupils taught under the MATATAG Curriculum and those taught under the old curriculum. The comparative analysis using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment showed that pupils under the MATATAG Curriculum obtained significantly higher scores, with a mean difference of 14.09. The computed t-value of 18.144 and p-value of .000 indicated that the difference was statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings demonstrate that the MATATAG Curriculum has a positive effect on the reading literacy skills of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School and supports its continued implementation in early childhood education.

Based on the findings, school administrators and curriculum planners are encouraged to strengthen and expand the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum across early grade levels while ensuring continuous monitoring and support. Schools should continue providing literacy support programs, including remedial and enrichment reading activities, to address learners' varying needs. Future studies are encouraged to examine additional aspects of literacy such as comprehension, vocabulary development, fluency, and phonemic awareness, as well as employ longitudinal approaches to better understand the long-term effects of curriculum implementation on reading development. The findings should also be disseminated through research presentations, publications, and teacher training activities to support literacy instruction improvement in different educational contexts.

This study was limited to the reading literacy performance of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School using secondary data from the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment. The research focused primarily on overall CRLA scores and did not extensively examine other dimensions of literacy such as vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and phonemic awareness. In addition, the findings were confined to a specific educational context and may not fully represent the literacy performance of pupils in other schools or learning environments.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study utilized secondary data from the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment records of Grade 1 pupils at Guinsangaan Elementary School. Confidentiality and data privacy were maintained by coding the data and excluding personally identifiable information. Permission from school authorities was secured, and the study complied with ethical standards for research involving children.

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