



The 5T's in Implementing MATATAG Curriculum during Short Class: Teacher's Experiences

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Abstract

The implementation of the MATATAG curriculum has introduced a new time allocation of forty- five (45) minutes per subject. This study aimed to determine the opportunities and challenges faced by teachers in adapting to the shortened class periods. A descriptive phenomenological design was used to describe the lived experiences of teachers. Purposive sampling was employed to conduct in-depth interviews with eight (8) teachers. The data gathered was analyzed using Colaizzi's thematic analysis method, resulting in five (5) key themes, referred to as the "5T's": (1) Time Constraints and Management, (2) Teaching Strategies to Foster Student Engagement, (3) Teaching Challenges and Barriers to Effective Instruction, (4) Teacher Wellness, and (5) Trials Encountered by Students in their Learning Environment. The results showed that teachers face difficulties in delivering lessons within the limited time frame, but they adjust their teaching strategies to improve student engagement. To address these concerns, it is recommended that the class period be extended to allow for more in-depth interaction, offer professional development on time and stress management, and initiatives that promote teacher wellness. The study provides recommendations for policymakers, educators, and future research on enhancing the effectiveness of the MATATAG curriculum and supporting teachers in their roles.

Keywords: Class period, Education, Experiences, Matatag Curriculum, Philippines, Teachers

Introduction

The implementation of the new "MATATAG" curriculum allocates a shortened class duration that presents a series of opportunities and challenges of learning outcomes within a limited 45-minute class period. Several factors substantially affect the teachers' performance in implementing the new curriculum. With less time to cover subject matter, teachers can streamline their instructional approaches, improving classroom management and lowering the occurrence of disruptive behaviors (Johnson & Smith, 2020). However, the challenges of short class durations have raised concerns about its effectiveness, particularly from the teachers' perspectives. The adjustment, which was intended to simplify teaching and learning processes, has rendered teachers all over experiencing the pressure of limited time and higher levels of stress (Perez, 2024) ^[21]. The specific impacts of abbreviated class periods on teachers' guidelines and well-being amid the execution of the MATATAG Curriculum educational programs remain underexplored. This study aims to explore the experiences posed by shortening the class periods in the new MATATAG Curriculum implementation, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of teachers. The researchers will conduct interviews and focus groups to gather in-depth insights from educators.

The central purpose of MATATAG Curriculum, which was rolled out in Philippines, is to improve academic performance of learners through the utilization of systematic and total approach which takes into account the standardization of the twenty first century educational environment considering the requirements for the appropriate development of the implemented curriculum and the improvement of education standards for students. If those methods are not properly controlled, for example, if the class period is reduced too much, it may have negative effects on the quality of instructional development.

It suggests that the class length substantially affects several aspects of the teaching and teachers' practice. This paper aims to examine the opportunities and challenges posed by the implementation of the said curriculum and to further build on the context provided by the MATATAG Curriculum.

It is known that lengthy class periods could be advantageous to the learning process as it enhances the ability of learners to learn and improve the subject through minimizing the time spent on changing classes (Dela Cruz, 2022) ^[11]. Professional literature regarding several education systems suggests that prolonged periods of classes provide teachers with the opportunity for a higher variety of teaching techniques which leads to sophisticated teaching techniques and lower levels of anxiety (Kilag *et al.*, 2024) ^[2]. For example, in the United States, schools have reported that teachers granted with a block schedule were most likely satisfied with their job, particularly teaching.

Finally, it must be noted that as effective as short class durations are, a number of challenges have emanated from them, especially when viewed from the teachers' perspectives, which is not the focus of most national studies which have generally focused on the general implementation of the curriculum framework in the country. This paper seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities that teachers see within the framework of the MATATAG Curriculum and how these factors impact on the perceptions of the teachers. The authors seek to understand how the changes to class periods impact on the practices of the teachers and the levels of satisfaction amongst the teachers.

The research is of great importance to all students who are learning under the MATATAG curriculum framework as it finds a pertinent addition to the existing literature by presenting the implementation of short class periods within MATATAG Curriculum through lenses of the teachers. As the impacts on teaching practices and teachers' well-being are analyzed, the researchers look forward to providing policymakers and practitioners with useful and actionable advice. Important aims include portraying the experiences of class scheduling practices to date, teacher experiences, and making recommendations for restructuring class periods for better performance.

Philosophical Assumptions

In the study titled "Lived Experiences of Teachers in Implementing the Matatag Curriculum During Short Class Periods," the ontological assumptions are centered on the belief that reality is subjective and constructed through the experiences and perceptions of the teachers involved. This study aims to elucidate the challenges each teacher had to deal with as a result of short class periods and other issues which reached quite wide concerns within the current educational system already influenced by personal engagements within the educational systems. This study recognizes that every teacher's experience is valuable, and such experiences assist in developing profound understanding on the effect of the Matatag Curriculum implementation. Moreover, examining these subjective realities suggests that the focus of the study is to portray the experiences and challenges that teachers have encountered.

Methodology Research Design

Phenomenology is one of the most influential philosophical traditions and places its emphasis on 'conditions of experience', and how such conditions shape what and how it

is to be human in any situated context (Zigon & Jason, 2021) ^[22]. This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological design to explore and understand the lived experiences of elementary teachers during the implementation of the Matatag Curriculum. In the human sphere, this translates to gathering "deep" information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and observations.

Sampling Design, Research Respondents & Environments

Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques. It is a type of non-probability sampling where the researcher selects participants based on a range of factors, such as specialized knowledge of the study or the ability and interest to engage in the study. Therefore, a purposive sampling method was used in this study to effectively conduct interviews with eight elementary teachers from Cebu and other regions across the Philippines until data saturation was achieved.

Research Instrument

The researchers served as the study's main instrument and medium for discovering and interpreting meanings. The participants' responses were accumulated through individual interviews, where a semi-structured interview guide consisting of five (5) questions was utilized. In semi-structured interviews, the investigator was given the opportunity to delve into relevant ideas that arose during the interview, allowing the participant's distinctive point of view to be better understood rather than an overgeneralized understanding of an occurrence. The researchers asked the participants using semi-structured interview questions. The researchers used in-depth interviews to conduct detailed interviews with a small number of participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers aimed to describe the challenges of the teachers in implementing the 45-minute class duration in the Matatag Curriculum. Before conducting the interview, clearance was acquired from the research ethics committee. A letter of permission was sent to the adviser, asking for approval to conduct an interview with the teachers. Once the letter was approved, the researchers administered an individual interview through a face-to-face setup, which took fifteen minutes. The participants were asked five open-ended questions as soon as they gave their consent. However, when the researchers were not satisfied with the participants' responses, follow-up questions were asked during the interview.

After the panelists examined the proposal, the researchers used their necessary recommendations. The university's research ethics committee verified that ethical guidelines or standards were being followed before the study was conducted. The study was conducted as soon as approval was given. The participants received informed consent forms outlining the study's procedure, goal, and their rights. The interview process was video recorded. After the participants completed the interview questions, they received compensation that could be utilized in their professional work.

Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis in examining the data. Thematic analysis is used in analyzing data in qualitative

research to identify patterns and recurrent themes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) ^[14]. Analysis of data using Colaizzi method can be broken down into seven steps: (1) familiarizing the data, (2) distinguish important statements, (3) developing interpretations, (4) arranging themes, (5) generating a comprehensive description, (6) establishing the fundamental structure, (7) confirm the results of the study to the participants. (Colaizzi, as cited by Praveena & Sasikumar).

Rigor of the Study

The rigor of qualitative research is a vital part of the investigative process that offers critique and thus further development of the science (Cypress, 2017) ^[9]. Thus, the study was based on the identified four criteria. Credibility was assured by administering actual interviews that followed proper guidelines and by collecting data from a group of elementary teachers. Dependability was attained through the documentation of the research process and consultation with expert researchers to review the research methods and validate the study's findings. Confirmability was addressed by maintaining a clear audit trail and ensuring that the research findings were based on the data collected and not influenced by research biases. Transferability was enhanced by using the purposive sampling method and providing a thick description and robust data with the widest possible range of information through the detailed and accurate descriptions of teachers' opportunities and challenges encountered in an abbreviated class within the implementation of the Matatag Curriculum.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher guaranteed that the conduct of the study was void of any competing interests. The study observed certain ethical considerations. First, the participants' informed consent was obtained, ensuring that the interview was entirely voluntary. Second, the researchers treated the data and the identities of the participants with the highest confidentiality. To protect participant privacy, all verbatim responses are presented with pseudonyms in the results and discussion. Third, after the participants completed the interview questions, they received a conference notebook as a token of appreciation. Lastly, it was ensured in the final draft of the study's output that the data collected would be treated strictly, securely, and accessible only to the researchers. The teachers could benefit from the honest responses of the respondents as a guide to help them prevent students from becoming misinformed, misled, or intentionally misinformed. The research was conducted responsibly, as the study complied with the norms and ethical criteria established by the respective institutions.

Results and Discussion

After the thematic analysis, forty (40) significant statements were extracted from the interview transcripts of the eight informants. There were eighty-nine (89) codes, which generated five (5) emergent themes, referring to as the "5T's": time constraints and management, teaching strategies that teachers use to foster student engagement, teaching challenges and barriers to effective instruction, teacher wellness, and trials encountered by students in their learning environment.

Theme 1: Time Constraints and Management

Time constraints and management refer to the pressure

individuals or organizations face when balancing competing demands on their time. This often explores how limited time influences decision making, prioritization, and productivity. The result was expressed through the following responses from elementary teachers:

"I find it very hard balancing time while also ensuring that the key concepts are well covered." - Teacher Kristine
 "... it's too short. The lesson needs to be continued on the following day in order for competencies to be carried 100% and to attain all the parts of the lesson plan/ lesson exemplar..." - Teacher Aldrich

This means that teachers are facing time constraints, especially when they try to cover all the required content in a limited class time. According to Teacher Kristine, balancing time while also ensuring that key concepts are thoroughly covered is very challenging. Teacher Aldrich also explains that lessons often could not be finished in one session, so the next day was used to finish the remaining parts of the lesson and achieve all the learning objectives. This suggests that limited class time affects both the completeness and the depth of the learning experience, which can impact the quality of education for students. Other researchers also support these findings, linking time pressures in teaching to increased stress and reduced effectiveness in many cases (Davis, 2017) ^[10]. These pressures might be reduced by better managing the pace of lessons or adjusting the timing of classes. Additionally, teaching educators better time management strategies could lessen these pressures and improve both teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Theme 2: Teaching Strategies that Teachers Use to Foster Student Engagement

Teachers use strategies to foster student engagement refers to the numerous approaches and methods that educators implement to actively involve students in the learning process, maintaining their interest, motivation, and participation in classroom activities (Tanner *et al.*, 2017) ^[19]. The result was expressed through the following responses from elementary teachers:

"In keeping student engage in a 45-minute class period, it is a constant challenge but with the right strategies are definitely achievable. Give a captivating question, a thought- provoking scenario and give surprising facts related to the topic or lesson." -Teacher Elizabeth
 "I start with a quick recap of the previous lesson, then give students hands-on activities as motivation for the new lesson and lastly relating lessons to real life situations." - Teacher Kristine
 "The teacher should establish routine to the learners to diminish the unnecessary movements so that the lesson could start on time." - Teacher Nina
 "For now, I think that best and most effective strategy that we have is letting them watch a short video clips for today's competency, and then the teacher will need to discuss or elaborate more for the students to learn and finally give some kind of seat work to test whether they have learned something for that day." - Teacher Zenny

This means that teachers use various methods to improve learning, realizing that both traditional and modern

approaches are needed to keep students motivated and engaged. For example, many teachers mentioned using technology, such as PowerPoint presentations and videos, to encourage discussion and maintain interest. Experts say that lessons that begin with thought-provoking questions or real-life scenarios are effective in grabbing students' attention. At the same time, they suggested adding more activities geared towards diminished concentration disorder of the students and facilitate the interaction of learners through group discussions, think- pair-share and projects. With regard to technology as part of the interactive framework, it has been made possible through the work of Mellisa Bond (2020) ^[5]. This research looks at how active learning on the part of the students and collaborative approximation have a great deal of impact on the results of the students addressing their performance and the results. In the same vein demonstrated that clear routines as well as structured activities enhance the student's participation and consequently improve the results obtained. This indicates that it is appropriate to blend the techniques of teaching by incorporating active students' participation in the lessons through the use of tools and the internet.

Theme 3: Teaching Challenges and Barriers to Effective Instruction

Educators face significant challenges with the new "MATATAG" curriculum, particularly due to the reduction of class periods to only 45 minutes. Teachers have raised concerns that this limited time is insufficient to cover the full scope of the curriculum, especially for subjects that require more in-depth knowledge. Consequently, teachers struggle to engage students effectively and promote critical thinking. The limited instructional time also leads to increased pressure and stress among teachers, which impacts the overall quality of instruction (Perez, 2024) ^[21]. The results were evident in the following responses from elementary teachers who have experienced the 45- minute class periods:

"Well, teaching pupils in 45-minute is quite a short span of time, especially subjects that involve skills. I feel that most of the pupils can hardly develop critical thinking..." - Teacher Malcom

"Uhm there are a lot of challenges but one of them is the difficulty in choosing the kind of teaching strategies so everyone in the class would be able to grasp the lesson in spite of this shorter period." - Teacher Mary

"I find it very hard balancing time while also ensuring that the key concepts are well covered." - Teacher Kristine

"I feel pressured to finish one topic in just a short period of time. I also sometimes resort to spoon feeding type of teaching so that the discussion would not take much time." - Teacher Kristine

"Limited time for it can be difficult to dive deeply into complex topics, student engagement maintaining student interest and participation then pacing issues." - Teacher Aida

"Increase stress, the pressure to cover essential material in this time can lead to stress and anxiety affecting overall wellbeing." - Teacher Aida

This indicates that the 45-minute class periods present significant challenges, including insufficient class time, increased teacher stress, limited preparation time, and an overall impact on the quality of instruction. Arcellana (2024)

^[4] confirms that rapid transitions between subjects can result in fragmented learning experiences. The new time allocation will require teachers to revise and adjust their lesson plans and teaching strategies. The key challenge is maintaining instructional quality while adapting to the shortened time allotment. These challenges and barriers collectively create an environment in which teachers struggle to meet the demands of the new curriculum while ensuring that students experience a high-quality education.

As the MATATAG curriculum continues to be implemented, sustained collaboration among educators, administrators, and policymakers will be crucial. By acknowledging the challenges and working together to find effective solutions, it will be possible to establish a learning environment that supports and benefits both teachers and students. The success of this curriculum will ultimately depend on how well the needs of educators are addressed, enabling them to focus on their primary responsibility: providing high-quality education and inspiring the next generation.

Theme 4: Teacher Wellness

Wellness is defined as a sense of acceptance or contentment with one's current circumstances, reflecting a state of overall well-being (Barman, 2016) ^[6]. Therefore, it is concerning to see how our educators are now getting distress and at the same time having work overload in wellness education. Growing research and data over the past few decades have shown a sharp decline in teacher well-being, as seen by higher stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction levels (Syson, 2023) ^[17]. The result was expressed through the following responses from elementary teachers:

"Increase stress, the pressure to cover essential material in this time can lead to stress and anxiety affecting overall wellbeing." – Teacher Aida

"...teacher's time management and efficiency can also introduce significant challenges that may lead to increased stress ..." - Teacher Elizabeth

"My overall experience teaching in 45 minute class periods is very tiring to the point that teachers are drained everyday because of cramming in delivering the lessons for the children, especially in major subjects in the elementary grades." – Teacher Zenny

This means that the 45-minute class period in MATATAG curriculum creates a stressful and draining circumstance for teachers like Aida and Zenny who always rush to have enough time to finish the lesson. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2018) ^[18] confirm that teachers' well-being could decline as a result of the demands of their jobs. The given class period has a huge impact on teacher stress, exhaustion, and a sense of pressure trying to ensure that the topics and essential content are delivered within the time frame. It implies that a 45-minute class period undermines teacher wellness due to heightened stress and exhaustion from the pressure to ensure the lesson is completed and taught effectively. It is suggested that DepEd should implement a wellness program for teachers to address their well-being.

Theme 5. Trials Encountered by Students in their Learning Environment

Students encounter significant academic obstacles in their learning environments, particularly within elementary education settings. A primary challenge highlighted by

teachers is the limited class duration, often just 45 minutes, which restricts the depth of instruction and critical thinking development. This brevity can lead to insufficient engagement and retention difficulties, as students struggle to grasp complex topics within such a short time frame. There are many factors that increase the challenges students will be facing as they try and navigate through their academic work. (University of British Columbia). With this research, it indicates that limited instructional time can hinder deep engagement with complex subjects, resulting in difficulties with retention and understanding. The result was expressed through the following responses from elementary teachers:

"Well, teaching pupils in 45-minute is quite short span of time especially subjects that involve skills. I feel that most of the pupil can hardly develop critical thinking,..." – Teacher Malcom

"Uhm I find it hard especially with pupils having varied learning abilities that's why learners will be likely left behind." - Teacher Malcom

"Not effective because some students cannot execute or can respond you." - Teacher Elizabeth

"The students are having difficulty in retaining the things that we've discussed because of the small amount of time." - Teacher Kristine

"During shortened class periods, it is expected to have less interaction with learners." - Teacher Aldrich

"Limited time for it can be difficult to dive deeply into complex topics, student engagement maintaining student interest and participation then pacing issues." - Teacher Aida This indicates that the MATATAG curriculum's 45-minute class hour enhances student engagement and retention by solving the academic difficulties brought on by insufficient teaching time. It can be necessary for teachers to advocate for extended class periods or implement techniques that maximize learning within the constraints of the current schedule. Schools can aim to create a more efficient learning environment that supports all students in their educational journeys by acknowledging these challenges and their implications. The challenges students face in modern learning environments reflect broader concerns that complicate the learning process, such as time management and the need for open communication. Villaver & Kilag (2024) ^[2] states that students often experience frustration when they struggle with complex content, a problem exacerbated by the 45-minute class periods in the MATATAG Curriculum, where limited time makes it difficult for some students to fully absorb lessons. This frustration is further intensified by unclear expectations and insufficient feedback, which can lead to disengagement and feelings of isolation. To address these challenges, educators might consider strategies such as extending class durations to allow for deeper exploration of topics, adopting differentiated instruction to accommodate varied learning needs, incorporating interactive learning techniques like group activities to promote engagement, and establishing regular feedback mechanisms to clarify expectations and create a supportive learning environment. By implementing these approaches, educators can help mitigate academic obstacles and enhance student learning experiences and outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study highlights the challenges faced by teachers under

the MATATAG curriculum, particularly regarding stress, low engagement, and the ineffectiveness of teaching methods within the 45-minute class periods. Time Constraints is an issue for teachers because it creates a scenario where students are not able to be engaged and this in turn heightens the level of stress while decreasing the levels of teaching effectiveness. One strategy, amongst many, to consider counteracting this is for schools to consider increasing the time within class for better interaction and better lesson coverage. Where applicable, the use of interactive teaching methods such as group work and audio visuals can also be employed to enhance the teachers' productivity while accommodating various learners' needs. Professional development opportunities that focus on time management, stress management and lesson preparation are also good for teachers who have to contend with reduced lessons. What is more is that, wellbeing initiatives should be put in place to enhance the teachers' state of health and sense of purpose in that job. More studies have to be undertaken to assess the efficacy of these strategies in enhancing the teachers' performance and general educational standards under the said curriculum MATATAG.

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